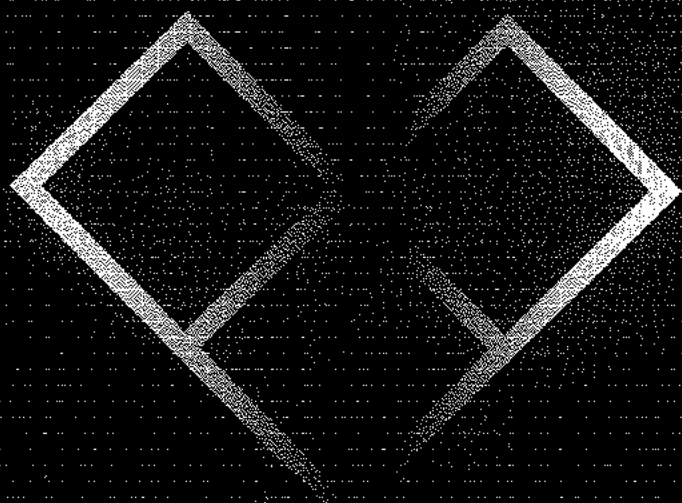


# LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION IN POSTCOLONIAL HONG KONG

香港語言教育論文集：  
後殖民地時期的發展



LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF HONG KONG

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We, the editors, are solely responsible for any inadequacies pertaining to the editing of the book.

# Language and Education in Postcolonial Hong Kong: An Introduction

---

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It has been eight years since the LSHK volume on language and education in Hong Kong (Luke, ed., 1992) was published. Since then significant changes have taken place, of which the most salient is probably the fact that Hong Kong has ceased to be a British colony and become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The political transition has accentuated some issues pertaining to language and education in the SAR, notably the medium of instruction, the revision of the secondary school syllabuses, and more recently, the impending benchmark test to be implemented in 2001 amidst a great deal of social tension and controversy. In short, many issues related to language and education continue to be the focus of interest and concern among linguists, educationalists, and language teaching practitioners. At the turn of the millennium, therefore, we believe at least some of the topics covered in the Luke (ed.) volume should be revisited or updated, while other, yet unexplored, topics may be included in a volume which we hope will be found useful and informative by the reader.

The book contains 16 chapters falling into four different sections. Part One, 'Language Planning and Language Use in Society', consists of five articles. **Daniel So's** article provides a comprehensive review of the dualistic linguistic streaming policy of the Hong Kong government. It provides a convincing critique of the monolingual reductionism that underlies the government's policy. So argues that if biliteracy and trilingualism are to be achieved in the society, then the use of these languages for authentic communication (e.g., as the medium of instruction for some subjects) must permeate the entire course of the primary and secondary education, albeit in varying degrees of intensity according to different backgrounds of schools. **Robert S. Bauer** examines the prospects of Hong Kong Cantonese as its relationship with Putonghua evolves over the next century. He begins by saying that Cantonese right now is in excellent shape as it stands at the peak of its prestige. But in considering that history 'mirrors' the future, he takes the ascendancy of Putonghua and corresponding decline of Cantonese in



Guangdong province as a lesson for Hong Kong. He predicts that Hong Kong Cantonese will very likely lose its vitality in various domains in which it is taken for granted today *if* nothing is done to teach children to value their home language. The future health of Cantonese becomes especially critical after Putonghua becomes the medium of instruction in school. An alternative trilingual model would preserve Cantonese as the mother tongue in the early years of primary school. **Joseph Boyle**'s article provides us with an updated picture of attitudes to languages in Hong Kong and changes in these attitudes over the past decade. The results of recent surveys on people's attitudes towards English and Putonghua show that Hong Kong people's pragmatism has prevailed, with both English and Putonghua being considered primarily as useful tools for successful commerce. However, there are also signs of changes in attitudes, with a broader international outlook emerging, especially among younger Hong Kong People, who no longer see English as a threat to their Chinese identity. Boyle thus recommends the encouragement of this broadening of outlook in education and provides some specific suggestions of both on-line and in-print materials on global issues that teachers can draw on in developing their English curriculums. **Doreen Dongying Wu** examines the spread of orality features in the local Chinese print media, in particular advertisements, local news and entertainment news stories. The orality features exemplified in her study include: question-answer pairs; general emphatics and first and second person pronouns; and colloquial Cantonese expressions. Wu argues that orality features in printed adverts allow them to achieve various functions, from signaling involvement and in-group solidarity to increasing the text's general appeal and memorability among its readers. At the same time, in news reporting, orality features help project the news maker's voice, thereby making the story seem more objective and credible to the reader. **Micky Lee** presents an interesting analysis of the mixing of Chinese, English and other foreign languages in the fashion discourses found in popular magazines in Hong Kong. By showing the heteroglossic nature of these popular media texts, Lee proposes that a process of 'voice-quoting' is at work and that these hybridized texts cohere with the grand narrative of the Hong Kong society: Hong Kong as a place where East meets West. Lee further argues that Hong Kong people do have a Hong Kong identity and the quality of being Westernized Chinese may be part of this identity. Language use in the fashion discourses thus provides a window on the ways young people in Hong Kong perform the hybridized selves they perceive themselves to be.

Part Two contains three articles concerning 'Medium of Instruction'. **TSE Shek Kam** and his colleagues introduce the main design features of the Language Fund-supported Centre for Teachers Using Chinese as the Medium of Instruction at the University of Hong Kong, focusing on how a broad range of services were developed in response to teachers' urgent needs for the change of medium of instruction from English to Chinese. The main target users of this web site are teachers in Chinese-medium schools. The main objective of the Centre is to facilitate teaching and to enhance the quality of teaching by providing various online services to teachers in need. Among the outstanding features are:

innovative methods in teaching; a bank of teaching ideas, worksheets and alternative teaching strategies; Cyber Conference Corner to encourage discussion and sharing among teachers; data bank of glossary and useful web site addresses; a bank of examination papers collected from schools; self-learning of Chinese programs; on-line help to teachers; articles about the use of Chinese language across curriculum. **Anita Poon's** study uses qualitative research methods of interviews and observations to assess whether the medium of instruction policy was being implemented in four Hong Kong schools in the first year of its implementation between September 1994 and November 1995. The results indicate that the policy was being implemented only to a limited extent in the four schools. Poon identifies five impeding factors: English proficiency, the school's own language policy, the 'principal factor', the 'teacher factor', and social values. The issues of actual implementation of a medium of instruction policy in schools emerging from this study throw light on the implementation of the current mother tongue education policy. **Angel Lin** argues that the often taken-for-granted notion of "mixed code" as a presumably stable, monolithic and debased language variety is in fact a rhetorical construct. By examining a diverse range of complex language use phenomena that can all be named "mixed code", she argues that the notion of "mixed code" as asserted in the public and official discourses plays an important role in naturalizing and normalizing a certain language ideology, which, in turn, is appealed to as a rationale for a socially inequitable language education policy. Lin concludes with the proposal that language and education issues in Hong Kong can be seen in a clearer light only when the official and popular media notion of "mixed code" is problematized and deconstructed, and the diverse range of social interactive actions mediated by multilingual resources seen and understood in their situated contexts, and not through the hidden ideological lens of the construct of "mixed code".

The three papers in Part Three are all concerned with 'Chinese Language Teaching'. **SHI Dingxu** describes the written Chinese being used in Hong Kong as a continuum, with Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) at one end and written Cantonese at the other. While the form being taught in the Hong Kong school system is MSC, language teachers should distinguish grammatical errors from Cantonese features, which are not mistakes but should not appear in MSC. In order to help students detect Cantonese features, Shi proposes that the best way is to start from the obvious and then take care of the subtle cases one by one. The strategy is to tackle structural issues first and lexical items second; to identify Cantonese functional words in written Chinese first and content words second. **HUANG Yueyuan** and **YANG Suying's** article is a comparative study of the effectiveness of Putonghua teaching to two groups of Primary One pupils in two different classroom settings: immersion with all subjects taught in Putonghua and two hours weekly of Putonghua taught as a language subject. While the rate of progress of the immersion group is clearly superior to that of the language-subject group, the authors found that a similar level of attainment of Putonghua may be achieved by the latter group provided three conditions are met: (a) the cognitive development patterns governing effective language acquisition should be

respected, (b) Putonghua input should be of high quality, and (c) the classroom atmosphere and Putonghua learning environment should be interesting and lively. **P. K. Wong** proposes three reform measures in light of recent changes in the syllabus of the Chinese language in secondary school: (1) to incorporate the development of language awareness as a teaching objective into the teaching of Chinese, (2) to integrate the teaching of Chinese literature, Putonghua and Chinese language, and (3) to stimulate student initiatives by introducing creative and interactive elements into the teaching of Chinese.

In Part Four, the last section, there are five articles devoted to 'English Language Teaching'. **Evelyn Man's** paper gives statement to the voices of in-service language teachers enrolled in a teacher education programme in Hong Kong. Findings from questionnaires and focus group interviews show that many teachers are having a hard time responding to the unending government-initiated calls for change. The author argues that unless the gap between new professionalism and old practices is bridged and the necessary support given to language teachers in Hong Kong, there seems little hope that big strides will be made to significantly improve students' English standard in school. **Gladys Tang and GU Yang** report on a follow-up study on the development of learner autonomy by New Arrival Children (NAC) via their adopting the English Self-Learning Packages (ESLPs). The production of the ESLPs was funded by the Hong Kong SAR to help the NAC catch up with local English instruction. The results suggest that young second language learners, like their adult counterparts, could be instilled with the responsibility for organizing their own learning process. The study also shows that in the process of developing learner autonomy in young learners, teacher guidance in establishing the learning routines as well as nurturing decision-making capability is extremely crucial in this joint venture. **Michelle Kwan** presents her findings in a study of the verbal play of some Cantonese junior form secondary school students in an English reading lesson. By examining how these students employ their indigenous linguistic and cultural resources to subvert the teacher's pedagogical agenda, Kwan argues that the students' subversive play reflects their resistance to an alienating English curriculum. Kwan concludes with the proposal that the comical effects created by the impish play of the students can be pedagogically capitalized on and used as alternative classroom resources whereby the conflicting agendas of the teacher and students can be brought into a dialogue and a more animated learning environment can be achieved. **Wai King Tsang, Matilda Wong, and Hak Keung Yuen** report a study of the effects of different kinds of feedback to writing on the quality of re-writes of 38 Cantonese-speaking undergraduate students of English. The participants were randomly assigned to four groups, receiving, respectively: (1) no feedback; (2) feedback on grammar; (3) feedback on content; and (4) feedback on grammar and content. The authors draw the following implications for writing pedagogy: (1) to improve content, feedback may not be necessary; (2) to improve grammar score, feedback focusing on content only, or that on both grammar and content, is effective; (3) to improve overall impression of writing, feedback may not be necessary; and (4) to reduce

error ratios, feedback on grammar is necessary. Finally, **David C.S. Li** and **Alice Y.W. Chan** explore a model of remedial instruction which they hope will help ESL teachers deliver pedagogically sound remedial feedback in class. Informed by the theoretical notion of consciousness raising, this model is structurally characterized by two main features: (a) an algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps such that the cognitive effort required to proceed from one step to the next is minimal, and (b) the provision of explicit rules where possible. To be effective, the remedial instruction should be followed by reinforcement exercises and a handout containing the remedial input for students' convenient reference and retrieval. Two common errors are used to exemplify this model of remedial instruction: the misuse of -ing vs. -ed adjectives, and the expression 'too ADJ to VP'.

If there is any regret when seeing this volume appear in print, it is the fact that the benchmark test issue has not been covered. This is because the content chapters were already set before the benchmark test became an issue of widespread social concern.

This book would not have been possible without the patience of all the contributors. We are particularly indebted to a number of colleagues who kindly accepted to help out in the long, sometimes tedious review process. Any inadequacies pertaining to the editing and layout of the volume are the sole responsibility of the editors.

## **PART ONE**

# **LANGUAGE PLANNING AND LANGUAGE USE IN SOCIETY**

# Achieving Biliteracy and Trilingualism Without MOI-based Bifurcation of the Schools: A Plea for Third-alternatives

---

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## ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to address the issue of Medium of Instruction (MOI) in Hong Kong with reference to the promotion of biliterate (Standard Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Putonghua and English) skills in its schools. It starts with the premise that neither the status quo *ante* September 1998 nor the status quo *post* August 1998 is desirable or inevitable. And it ends with an indication and a plea that to achieve the language-in-education (LiE) agenda of the SAR; there are better, more viable third-alternatives to tracking the schools into Chinese-medium instruction (CMI) and English-medium instruction (EMI) streams<sup>1</sup>.

**(1) The Background.** The status quo of LiE of Hong Kong *ante* September 1998 was characterized by an over-whelming number of secondary schools which claimed to practise EMI. Most of the investigators of the MOI issue in Hong Kong are agreed that the popularity of EMI secondary schools are largely a product of the following inter-related factors: (1) the language policy of the British administration, (2) the status and function of English in Hong Kong and in the international communities of the professions and higher education as well as trade and commerce, (3) the demographic and economic characteristics of Hong Kong, (4) the attitude of Hong Kong parents towards education, (5) the perception of the public that EMI facilitates the development of English proficiency and that (6) most of the schools run by prestigious sponsoring bodies of education in Hong Kong practise EMI<sup>2</sup>. However, as to the question of which of the aforementioned factor(s) is/are primary, views of the investigators are quite diverse. For example, some regard the language policy of the British regime to be a primary factor (e.g. Cheng et al., 1973; Fu, 1975; 郭 1998); many

like Cheung (1990) believe the crux of the problem lies with the majority of Hong Kong parents who are more concerned about their children to get ahead than to get an education; a few like So (1984) accords priority to historical (particularly the change of regime in China in 1949) and infrastructural (i.e. demographic and economic) factors.

Similarly, most of the investigators of the issue are agreed that the EMI schools have been over-selected<sup>3</sup> in the sense that a large number of students at these schools are learning through a linguistic medium that they have not yet mastered and not a few teachers of these schools are teaching in a linguistic medium of which they have not developed a firm grip. This over-selection has given rise to a wide range of consequences many of which have been considered undesirable by educators. Here it may suffice to identify just three of them: First, in order to compensate for the lack of English skills on the part of students and/or teachers, much of the classroom talk in many schools is conducted in mostly Cantonese and/or a mix of English and Cantonese. Many investigators believe such practices are not conducive to developing proficiency in English, which, as noted earlier, has been the *raison d'être* of EMI in the schools (Johnson, 1983).

Second, the over-selection turns the processes of teaching in many EMI schools into a dreary chore of translating textbook texts to students many of whom, in turn, have to resort to crude coping measures such as rote-memorization of key words and phrases to survive (Johnson, 1997). Third, the down-side of EMI has given rise to a widely held belief that EMI may have serious damaging effects on students' cognitive and linguistic developments (Siu et al. 1979).<sup>4</sup>

However, partly because of the aforementioned disagreement among the investigators and partly because of the magnitude of the vested interest involved, there has been no satisfactory answer to the question What should be done to tackle the over-selection of EMI schools and its undesirable consequences? Therefore a viable policy option has yet to emerge. In spite of these constraints, the government through the Department of Education (DoE) has been experimenting with a number of measures ever since the promulgation in 1982 of the report of the Llewelyn Commission which was asked to examine, among other major educational issues, the use of the EM in Hong Kong schools.<sup>5</sup> The latest attempt of the DoE to resolve the issue is to implement a MoI-based tracking of the entire secondary education system. This attempt has become a central feature of the status quo *post* August 1998. The essential details of this new MoI policy are spelled out in the document *Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools* issued in September 1997.<sup>6</sup> The implementation of this policy, which is to be done in a phased manner, will in a few years' time lead to a drastic reduction of the number of EMI secondary schools and the streaming of the secondary schools into government-sanctioned CMI and EMI streams.<sup>7</sup> After the announcement of the new policy, some stakeholders applauded the DoE's policy to require secondary schools to use Chinese as a MoI (e.g. The Association of Chinese Middle Schools; the Hong

Kong Federation of Education Workers); a few had reservations about its policy to exclude the schools from adopting a mixed mode approach—i.e. adopting CMI and EMI for different subjects—to resolve the issue (This option was brought up in the deliberations of the Appeals Committee of the Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools, re: *Ming Pao* 11 March 1998). But a far greater number of stakeholders were critical of the way schools are being tracked into streams of CMI and EMI (e.g. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union; see also Cheung 1997, 程 1997). In view of the magnitude of resistance against the streaming approach in its new policy, the government announced on 13 March 1998 that a Joint Working Group on MoI would be established and "the Board of Education and the Standing Committee on Language Education & Research would be invited to carry out jointly a study on promoting and implementing the Government's MoI objectives and to make recommendations in a year's time" (Press Statement from the Secretary for Education & Manpower's office). In early September 2000, the Education & Manpower Bureau announced that, based on the recommendations of the Group, the streaming policy will be maintained until the 2003/2004 school year. It appears that the status quo *post* August 1998 has yet to be regarded as the way forward to resolve the MoI issue.

Actually, promulgated with the new MoI policy was a confirmation of the government's intention to promote biliteracy and trilingualism. In the "Forward" of *Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools*, it is stated that "Our aim is for our students to be biliterate (ie master written Chinese and English) and trilingual (i.e. speak fluent Cantonese, Putonghua and English) [emphases in the original]". Later in January 1999, the Education Commission issued the consultation document *Review of Academic System: Aims of Education* wherein under § 3.4 it is stated that "We wish to ... ensure the attainment of basic standards: School education should enable every student to acquire a basic level of competence in knowledge and skills, including biliteracy and trilingualism ...".<sup>8</sup> The importance of these statements is that it is the first time in the history of Hong Kong that the DoE and a high-powered advisory body put on public record the commitment of the government to foster, in addition to skills of Cantonese, English, and Written Standard Chinese (WSC), the skills of Putonghua as well among all the students of Hong Kong. Amidst the turbulence generated by the new MoI policy, a two-language agenda has evolved into a three-language agenda but not much attention has been given to examine how these two important policy developments would impact on each other. Nor have there been clarifications to date concerning what exactly is meant by "a basic level of competence in" biliterate and trilingual skills.

The promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism among the students of Hong Kong is a bold and far-sighted move and sets the LiE policy of the government on the right course. But the government has unwittingly undermined the success of this bold move by its adoption of a MoI-based tracking of the secondary schools. It



is indeed intriguing to find the government indulging in a simplistic form of monolingual reductionism in education while at the same time making the fostering of bilingual abilities a major aim of its education policy. The fact that these two closely related policies appear to be out of sync indicates that the major issues related to its LiE policies have not yet been thoroughly thought through and sorted out.

This paper attempts to help sort out the important issues, re-cast the MoI issue in a proper perspective, pin-point its crucial relationship with the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism and show the stakeholders that there are better third-alternatives to the present MoI-based tracking of the schools into exclusively CMI and EMI streams. Once the fundamental issues are sorted out, it will become evident that a sound MoI policy does not necessarily entail a choice between the status quo *ante* September 1998 and *post* September 1998.

This paper is organized around five postulations, they are (a) It is neither necessary nor advisable for the HKSAR government to make use the mother tongue hypothesis as a principal tenet for the formulation and promotion of its MoI policy. It is also counter-productive to define the MoI issue in a dichotomous (mother tongue vs. other tongues) fashion which, among other things, drives the government further down the direction of monolingual reductionism. (b) Tracking the schools into monolingual streams both vertically (along the axis of time) and horizontally (on the basis of MoI) limits their capacity to foster biliteracy and trilingualism. (c) The parents' demand for EMI should be met rather than repressed; to ridicule their perception concerning the correlation between EMI and English proficiency and to condemn the extent of sacrifice that they are willing to make to avail their children of an EMI education would simply put the government in a state of denial and alienate it from the population-at-large. (d) In spite of their over-selection, EMI schools have made a significant contribution to the spread of English skills in Hong Kong and it must be reckoned that their popularity is a product of forces much larger than government policy, and (e) the success of the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism is vital to the retention of the status of Hong Kong as the leading metropolis of China. Being an essentially monolingual, Cantonese-speaking society, Hong Kong will have to learn, as a society, to incorporate bilingual (vs. monolingual) norms<sup>9</sup> in its judgment of matters concerning language and education. The rest of this paper is an elaboration of these postulations.

(2) It is neither necessary nor advisable for the HKSAR government to make use the mother tongue hypothesis as a principal tenet for the formulation and promotion of its MoI policy. It is also counter-productive to define the MoI issue in a dichotomous (mother tongue vs. other tongue) fashion which, among other things, drives the government further down the direction of monolingual reductionism. In the opening paragraph of the document *Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools*, the

government justifies its new MoI policy by making a strong statement concerning the educational benefits of mother tongue teaching without specifying the meaning of the term "mother tongue" in the context of Hong Kong. The 24th of March 1997<sup>10</sup> must have been a happy day for local advocates of mother tongue education (MTE) because after decades of promotion, it appears that the government has finally incorporated the mother tongue hypothesis<sup>11</sup> in the making of its LiE policy. The Promote MTE Campaign in Hong Kong is in many ways a continuation of the Promote Chinese as an Official Language Campaign.<sup>12</sup> The latter campaign was launched in 1970 and achieved its objective in the form of the enactment in 1974 of the Official Languages Ordinance which declares both the English and Chinese languages the official languages of Hong Kong. As for the Promote MTE Campaign, one may use the publication of the pamphlet *At What Cost?*<sup>13</sup> in 1973 to date its launch. But it was not until 1978-1979 that one saw the Campaign gaining public and therefore government attention. One of the agents that put it in the spotlight was the Hong Kong Examinations Authority. Up to and including 1978, students who wished to sit the Chinese University Matriculation Examination conducted by the university had to have, among other qualifications, at least a grade E in **both** Chinese and English (Syllabus A or B) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination.

In June 1978, the newly established Hong Kong Examinations Authority, which took up the administration of the examination from the university,<sup>14</sup> announced that with effect from 1979 the requirements concerned were reduced to having at least a grade E in either Chinese or English (Syllabus A or B).<sup>15</sup> Whereas the language qualifications required for sitting the Advanced Level Examination of the University of Hong Kong conducted by the university were a grade E in English (Syllabus B) or a grade C in English (Syllabus A) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, there were no requirements for Chinese language qualifications.<sup>16</sup> Such different treatments of Chinese and English in the entry requirements of the two of the most important public examinations in Hong Kong helped refocus, four years after the enactment of the Official Languages Act, the public's attention on the *de facto* status of the Chinese language in society at large and in education in particular.

In 1979, public attention on MTE gathered further momentum with respectively the release of aforementioned Siu et al.'s research report on the effects of EMI on students' cognitive development and academic achievement, the publication of the monograph *Issues in Language of Instruction in Hong Kong* (Cheng, 1979), and the holding of a symposium on the topic Language and Education in Hong Kong at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Ever since 1979, the issues of MTE and EMI have been widely covered by and debated in the media and have remained hot items in the agenda of LiE in Hong Kong.

Obviously the Promote Chinese as an Official Language Campaign has made a significant contribution to the empowerment of the Hong Kong Chinese people

and to the elevation of the status of the Chinese language in Hong Kong. Similarly, the Promote MTE Campaign has made an important contribution to drawing the attention of the public and of the government to the many undesirable effects of the over-selection of EMI schools a large number of which fail to offer an authentic and effective EMI education to their students. Leaders of both campaigns made extensive use of the mother tongue hypothesis to further their cause. Which is understandable because the hypothesis could in a nutshell expose the inequity and the cost of using a non-native language as a MoI. Furthermore the concept mother tongue has proven to be an effective tool for minority leaders to motivate and unite their fellowmen to struggle against oppressors of a different ethnic extraction; and for revolutionary governments to send a message to its citizens that they have now through the revolution become the master of their own fate.

But given the fact that in the Basic Law the Chinese language has already been given its proper place in the SAR and that the SAR government is neither struggling against groups of different ethnic extraction nor revolutionary in its pedigree, it is not clear why it has chosen to make a high-profile use of the hypothesis to define, highlight and promote its new MoI policy. Not only is the term mother tongue emotive and provocative, it is also imprecise as it could be understood in many different ways.<sup>17</sup> For example, the term mother tongue is usually understood to be a person's first language. Which means it is the language to which a person is first exposed and the language of which s/he has developed a stronger grasp (Richards, 1985; hereafter referred to as the common definition). The common definition makes good sense in a monolingual frame of reference but in sociolinguistically complex situations where languages are sometimes being learnt simultaneously from the time of infancy, the temporal priority of one's stronger language is not necessarily a given. As the world and especially metropolises like Hong Kong are getting more and more complex sociolinguistically, the monolingual frame of reference and the assumptions that underpin it have been found increasingly wanting.<sup>18</sup> For example, in today's world of widespread mass migration, the language first learned by people might not be their stronger language. For those migrants who leave their native place while still an infant, the language first learned by them might have been forgotten in their later life. These are SWONALs (Speakers Without Native Languages). And there are a growing number of them in Hong Kong among its new immigrants from the Chinese Mainland. In a bilingual frame of reference, there is nothing unusual about cases where the languages of one's parents are not his/her stronger languages. In fact more often is the case that people's stronger languages are the languages of their peers. The language shift to Cantonese in the past fifty years among the children of the non-Cantonese-speaking immigrants from the Chinese mainland has attested to this interesting feature of language acquisition in sociolinguistically complex societies.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, people may have more than one mother tongue. The fact that the term mother tongue is usually understood in the singular underscores again the

inadequacy of the monolingual frame of reference in dealing with the sociolinguistic complexities of contemporary metropolises. Indeed among the members of the middle class in these metropolises, it is not uncommon to find in their linguistic repertoire more than one language of which they have a strong grip. Moreover people in these metropolises may not choose to use their mother tongues (the common definition) to perform certain functions. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the context of work and formal functions. In these domains many people may find it necessary, convenient and appropriate to conduct their businesses in a language other than their mother tongues (the common definition). In other words, many people's stronger language for the performance of certain functions may not be their mother tongues (the common definition). To take into account of these situations, the concept mother tongue has been understood more broadly as a speakers' usual/preferred language for certain functions in particular contexts (hereafter referred to as the revised definition). For example, for many Hong Kong lawyers, at home their preferred language is Cantonese, whereas at work it is English. Therefore both languages could be taken to be their mother tongues according to the revised definition. And such scenarios are more common than many MTE advocates would want us to believe.

What constitutes "the mother tongue/the stronger language" is dependent upon the context and the function concerned. Therefore, in addressing the question of which language constitutes the appropriate Mol for a people, it would be necessary first to determine whether the term mother tongue is to be understood according to the common definition or the revised definition. Since these two definitions are pitched at the individual level whereas Mol-related decisions have implications for the social group concerned, it would also be necessary to pin down the understanding of the term at the group level where it has respectively a broad definition as well as a narrow definition. China offers a good example for the former definition. In the Chinese mainland, it is taken that Putonghua is the mother tongue of all Han Chinese because according to the broad definition, it is the linguistic variety which serves as a boundary-marker for the entire Han-Chinese nationality regardless of the fact that many members of the group neither speak nor comprehend it. As a result the mother tongue of the Han Chinese is a tongue that is not learnt from parents at home but from teachers in school;<sup>20</sup> whereas the tongues learnt at home are regarded as the dialects of this tongue.

As for the narrow definition, a good example may be found in Taiwan of the post-Chiang era. In the past ten years there has been a strong growth of ethnic consciousness in Taiwan. To the Hakkas and Hokkiens of Taiwan who are determined to project their "other-ness" in the community of Han Chinese, they would incline to subscribe to a narrow definition by which one's mother tongue is taken to be that linguistic boundary-marker of their ethnicity that is normally learnt at home and spoken by most if not all of its members.

This exposition on the possible definitions of the term mother tongue may be elaborated further but for now it should suffice the purpose of showing the dilemma the government has created for itself through its loose use of the term: given the centrality of the concept in its new MoI policy, one would expect the government to provide a precise definition of the term in its policy statements; but perhaps because of the aforementioned nature of the term, it has chosen to leave it loosely defined and as a result the fashion in which the term has been used has generated much confusion and embarrassment in Hong Kong.<sup>21</sup>

The problem of definition is further compounded by the fact that MTE as an ideology tends to be exclusive.<sup>22</sup> Indeed if it is taken that the mother tongue is the best medium for the education of the young, then any attempt to allocate status and function to another language in education will be met with suspicion and resentment. It explains why once the mother tongue hypothesis is factored into the deliberation of LiE policy in Hong Kong, there is a tendency to define the policy options in a dichotomous fashion because according to the logic of the hypothesis, the use of a language other than the mother tongue is by definition counter-educational and smacks of being a sell-out to utilitarian and/or political considerations. Such logic tends to crowd out other important factors in educational planning, which may have serious consequences as Bull points out so eloquently in his critique of the UNESCO committee's mother tongue hypothesis:

"The Committee, rather obviously, strongly believes that what is best for the child psychologically and pedagogically should be the prime point of departure in planning for universal education. This proposition appears, however, to be somewhat unrealistic. What is best for the child psychologically may not be what is best for the adult socially, economically or politically and, what is even more significant, what is best for both the child and the adult may not be best or even possible for the society." (1964: 528)

Lest it be misunderstood, Bull is not rejecting the mother tongue hypothesis *per se*. He simply highlights the fact that the hypothesis holds only when all things are being equal and that in real life *ceteris paribus* conditions are rare. In many polities, according primacy to the hypothesis in making educational decisions carries a downside that MTE advocates tend to ignore. That is in actual practice an education received exclusively in one's stronger language may entail costs at other levels. For polities like Hong Kong, would it indeed be appropriate if students were led to believe that they have nothing to lose and everything to gain by having their entire education through CMI?<sup>23</sup> The case being made here hitherto is that (a) while the mother tongue hypothesis is a very potent tool for political activists in ethnic and revolutionary politics, for policy-making it lacks precision when used in sociolinguistically complex situations, therefore (b) it may not be very helpful to use it as a central tenet for making policies related to LiE in Hong Kong, and (c) under certain conditions in sociolinguistically

complex communities, students' stronger language may be neither the only appropriate medium—as its exclusive use might lead to inequitable social stratification—nor the preferred medium—as its exclusive use might not be deemed helpful *vis-à-vis* the students' aspirations—for their education. The second and the third points will be elaborated further below.

If one examines the new MoI policy from the perspective of the entire educational system, it appears that in practice what the policy does is simply to extend CMI, which has been the prevailing mode of MoI at pre-school and primary levels, to the secondary level. In other words, the present CMI-dominant primary sector and the EMI-dominant secondary sector will be, in a few years' time, replaced by a CMI-dominant primary and secondary sector with a small compartment of EMI secondary schools (Figure 1). This CMI mode is characterized by using WSC as the language of textbooks and assignments/assessment, and Cantonese as the verbal medium in the classroom. This is by no means MTE in its more authentic form<sup>24</sup> and begs the question Whether or not it is necessary to employ this value-laden hypothesis as the corner stone of a weak version of MTE.

August 1998 & Before		September 1998 & After	
Primary Sector	Secondary Sector	Primary Sector	Secondary Sector
CMI (Appro. 100%)	EMI (Appro. 90%)  CMI	CMI (Appro. 100%)	EMI (Appro. 30%)  CMI (Appro. 70%)

Figure 1: MoI-based Streaming of Hong Kong Schools: The Change after September 1998

That this extension will reduce many of the undesirable effects of the over-selection of EMI schools is well taken. But this new measure also puts a twist to the question "At what cost?" and raises many issues of fundamental importance: Is it really the intention of the government to sanction a bifurcation of the secondary education system into CMI and EMI sectors? Is the government aware of the long-term socio-political implications of such a bifurcation? Could the government ignore for long the contradiction that a MoI policy founded upon the mother tongue hypothesis should require a fraction of the schools to

teach most of the subjects exclusively in English? How is the goal of biliteracy and trilingualism to be fulfilled if the schools are tracked into monolingual CMI and EMI streams? Will the learning of English be adversely affected in the CMI schools in spite of the additional resources they receive to strengthen their teaching of English? Will the learning of Chinese be adversely affected in the EMI schools which do not enjoy the benefits of having additional resources to strengthen their teaching of Chinese? With the high-profile promotion of the mother tongue hypothesis, will there be room for the schools to experiment with different means of promoting Putonghua other than teaching it as a subject?

Because of space considerations, the following discussion is mainly confined to the question Would an extension of CMI into the secondary sector by such a large measure and the associated tracking of the schools into monolingual streams facilitate the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism in Hong Kong?

**(3) Tracking the schools into monolingual streams both vertically (along the axis of time) and horizontally (on the basis of MoI) limits their capacity to foster biliteracy and trilingualism.** A common frustration among people concerned about Hong Kong students' level of English proficiency may best be summarized by a paraphrase of Tollefson (1991:7): Why, in spite of the significant amount of resources being spent by government and the considerable length of time in which English is being taught and sometimes used in the schools, do thousands of Hong Kong school graduates fail to develop a high level of English proficiency that would enhance their career prospects? To a lesser extent many people have a similar frustration with students' standards of WSC as well.

So (1998) puts the frustration over the standards of English in perspective by documenting the fact that while the quality of English of its students may not be found to be of a particularly high quality, Hong Kong has made big strides in the down-ward spread (along the social spectrum) of English proficiency at a functional level in the past fifty years. For example, according to Choi (1998: 185), "about 14,000 [EMI School] Form 5 candidates [of the Hong Kong English School Certification Examination] took English Language . . . in 1966 and the passing percentages were 61.8% [and] 11.1% were awarded a credit or distinction (i.e. grades A-C). [Whereas] in 1996, 75,000 school candidates [of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination from both CMI & EMI schools] took English Language (Syllabus B) . . . and the percentages awarded grade E or better were 52.5% . . . The corresponding grade-C-or-better percentage . . . was 7.2%." Given the standards for grade C of English Language (Syllabus B) are pegged to that of a GCE O-Level pass (Choi 1998: 187) and are therefore relatively stable over time, one may adduce from these figures that the number of Form 5 students achieving GCE O-Level standards in English language has increased by about 350% (from about 1,554 to 5,400) between 1966 and 1996. During the same period, the percentage of the school candidates enrolled at EMI schools increased from 72% to more than 90% (So 1992: 70). In

other words, the great majority of these Form 5 graduates were from EMI schools. Whether or not the same magnitude of spread of English proficiency could also be achieved via a CMI-dominant instead of an EMI-dominant system is a matter of debate. But the fact remains that this particular spread has been achieved mainly through the efforts of EMI schools, especially the authentic ones, and given the sociolinguistic ecology of Hong Kong at the time (e.g. see So 1998), their contribution could hardly be dismissed.

So (1987) also postulates that the upward-spread of English proficiency (along the skills spectrum) has been hampered by tracking the schools into monolingual streams both vertically and horizontally. From the post-war years until 1998, the MoI-based vertical and the horizontal tracking of the schools<sup>25</sup> produced a linguistic ecology in the schools where the classroom language experience of the students were largely monolingual: the language for authentic communication<sup>26</sup> was either Chinese or English, seldom both. Therefore when the majority of the primary school leavers furthered their education in EMI schools, their previous classroom language experience in a Cantonese-WSC environment provided them with little foundation for another monolingual classroom experience in English; Cantonese by habit and by necessity remained therefore dominant in classroom talk initially and for many of these students, they never got beyond this talk-in-Cantonese and reading-&-assessment-in-English mode. The extension of CMI into the secondary sector reduces the number of students affected by the linguistic mismatch, but for students at EMI schools and for those who move on to EM universities, the mismatch remains except from now on these students constitute a smaller fraction of the population.

In addition to the linguistic mismatch, another outcome of the MoI-based tracking of the schools has given rise to an apparent imbalance in linguistic skills among the secondary graduates, which has been taken for granted<sup>27</sup> but yet to be documented and researched. The imbalance refers to the general impression that *vis-à-vis* their counterparts at EMI schools, CMI schools tend to produce graduates with a stronger grasp of WSC and a relatively weaker grasp of English, and *vice versa* in case of the EMI schools, notwithstanding claims in recent years that the secondary school graduates of Hong Kong are good in neither WSC nor English.<sup>28</sup> If the vertical and horizontal tracking of schools are to be continued, it is unlikely that the linguistic mismatch and imbalance will be redressed. The heart of the problem lies in the dichotomous and exclusive nature of the new MoI policy which would intensify the monolingual experience of students in the schools and impose unnecessary constraints respectively on making use of these target languages as authentic means of communication, and on the joint use of the languages as MoI at both primary and secondary levels. It is against such backgrounds that many educators are pessimistic about the effects of promoting Putonghua by teaching it as a subject for one to two hours per (a six-day) cycle from primary-one to secondary-five.



Given the local sociolinguistic conditions, if biliteracy and trilingualism are part of the desired educational outcomes, the use of these languages for authentic communication must permeate the entire course of the primary and secondary education, albeit in varying degrees of intensity according to different backgrounds of the schools. The development of such a new linguistic ecology in the schools would entail a revision of the school curriculum to enlarge the range of application and use of the languages concerned by students at both primary and secondary levels. Which in turn would mean that MoI-based tracking and streaming should be abandoned as the leading organizing principle of our school system. Otherwise by default the mismatch between the demand for EMI and students' proficiency in English will persist; an unbalanced grip of Chinese and English with a smatter of Putonghua will remain the major characteristic of the school graduates of Hong Kong.

**(4) The parents' demand for EMI should be met rather than repressed; to ridicule their perception concerning the correlation between EMI and English proficiency and to condemn the extent of sacrifice that they are willing to make to avail their children of an EMI education would simply put the government in a state of denial and alienate it from the population-at-large. In spite of their over-selection, EMI schools have made a significant contribution to the spread of English skills in Hong Kong and it must be reckoned that their popularity is a product of forces much larger than government policy (e.g. see So 1984). English proficiency being a social desideratum in Hong Kong requires no further elaboration and as such one must learn to grapple with the paradox that it is exactly because the Hong Kong children's English has been found wanting that they are being sent by their parents to EMI schools to further their secondary education. If their children could pick up English at home or in the streets, we will not have to grapple with this vexing issue of MoI today. As educators we may disagree with the practice of these parents but it would be wrong if we believe we could rectify the situation by taking the EMI option away from them. One may ridicule these parents as lemmings driven by the herd-instinct and obsessed with the profit-motive. But the fact is that Hong Kong parents' aspiration for EMI for their children is based on the same logic—that proficiency in a target language may be significantly enhanced by using it as a MoI—that drove the Anglophones in Montreal to seek the assistance of Wallace Lambert to devise an instrument to enable their children to achieve a higher level of French proficiency (Lambert, 1972). Just like learning English in Hong Kong, learning French for Anglophone children in Montreal was and still is very hard to do well because of the social segregation between the Anglophone and Francophone communities there. However, a viable option has been made available for the Anglophone parents to fulfill their aspiration for higher French proficiency for their children because some members of the educational community understood and respected their desire and devised an instrument to meet the challenge, albeit immersion programmes like most remedies also carry a cost.<sup>29</sup>**

Similar to the immersion programmes the EMI schools in Hong Kong also attempt to develop higher English standards among their students by using it as a MoI. If the majority of the CMI schools could demonstrate that the same level of English proficiency could be achieved among the majority of their students without the necessity of using EMI, the parents of Hong Kong would not have found EMI schools that attractive. But the lackadaisical performance of CMI schools in promoting English proficiency must be understood in the light of the fact that worldwide, especially in societies with a sociolinguistic profile similar to Hong Kong, teaching a non-indigenous language as a subject has not been found effective to spread fluency in the language among a significant portion of the school population. Indeed if in a bilingual metropolis like Montreal—which is situated in a French-speaking province of a country with a federal government strongly committed to the implementation of its bilingual policy—Anglophone school children of middle class background still fail to attain a satisfactory level of proficiency in French, what is the chance for a mostly monolingual city like Hong Kong—which is situated next to a Cantonese-speaking province of a country subscribed largely to a monolingual language policy—to be able to develop biliteracy and trilingualism among its school children?

As noted earlier, many EMI schools have failed to properly execute their MoI policy and there are many problems associated with EMI. But the bashing of EMI schools in the past couple of years from sources both inside and outside the government may have prevented us from assessing properly the historical role of the many EMI schools which have made genuine efforts to provide an education and at the same time help spread English proficiency among the local population. Ever since Hong Kong became a crown colony, there have been not a few graduates of EMI schools who have become skilled in English without showing any signs of significant negative cognitive, educational effects. The question is whether these schools could be replicated in sufficient numbers with necessary modifications to meet the objective of biliteracy and trilingualism. The answer to this question at present is negative. There are two ways of dealing with this issue. The way adopted by the government is to restrict students' access to EMI. Since it requires a lot of political will and political cost to do so, the restriction ends up being too loose to have any credibility. Who with some knowledge of the local situation would believe and accept that these 114 secondary schools could teach their students exclusively in the EM? On the other hand, who could say with confidence that none of the teachers and/or the students in those schools which failed to obtain sanction from the DoE to instruct their 1998 cohort in the EM can properly conduct and benefit from EMI respectively?

An alternative to the present policy is to enhance the system's capability to conduct both CMI and EMI. One laudable aspect of the new MoI policy is the government's acknowledgement of and commitment to providing assistance to teachers to conduct CMI. Contrary to popular belief, teachers who are Chinese still require training to enable them to teach effectively in the CM. On the other hand, if there are indeed an insufficient number of teachers to teach effectively

in the EM to meet the popular demand for EMI, for a resourceful government, one obvious measure is to develop ways and means to increase the number of such teachers. Refusing to do so would put the government in a state of denial of the fact that there remains a popular aspiration for EMI in Hong Kong and it is the product of forces much larger than government policy. The popularity of EMI schools in Hong Kong after the transfer of sovereignty has demonstrated the inadequacy of the view that attributes the primary cause of the over-selection to government policy. One should not continue to mislead the government into thinking that the demand for EMI may be capped by policy and propaganda. In the formulation of its new MoI policy, it appears the government has adopted an ahistorical and astructural approach, which is unfortunate. The popular demand for EMI is deeply rooted in the historical milieu of Hong Kong and in the status enjoyed by English worldwide. The fact that so much reference material that students at secondary and tertiary levels have to consult are only available in the EM further belies the appropriateness of forcing the schools to teach either in Chinese or English. These are very large forces that drive people's MoI choices and affect the outcomes of education in polities like Hong Kong. If the government persists in its MoI policy to restrict the majority of the students' access to EMI, the structural inequality so ensued may one day jeopardize the socio-political stability of Hong Kong.

**(5) The success of the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism is vital to the retention of the status of Hong Kong as the leading metropolis of China.** Being a SAR of China, there is no question about the need for the school graduates of Hong Kong to attain a high level of proficiency in WSC and Putonghua, in addition to achieving proficiency in Cantonese in its full measure.

On the other hand, as China's major window to the West, it is crucial that the school graduates can master the skills of conducting themselves in English with confidence. It is envisaged that whether one likes it or not in the next millennium the English language is going to be the *lingua franca* of members of international communities in trade & commerce as well as in science and technology. Being able to use English and use it well will be a mark of membership of these communities. For people without such a mark, it would be difficult for them to gain access to these communities. For example, the World Wide Web where the common medium is English is growing in leaps and bounds and there are already millions of Web sites by the end of the millennium. A growing proportion of inter-institution, inter-personal communication as well as commercial transaction such as retail sales will be done via the Web. Hence the run-up to the end of this millennium has seen the emergence of an ideology of English as a tool of empowerment. (Tollefson, 1991:11) As So (1984) observes, to many people in Hong Kong in the better part of the Twentieth Century, EMI and the factors associated with it played a pivotal role in their upward mobility. If there were any changes to this situation in the next millennium, it could be that the role played by English in people's upward mobility would be greater rather than smaller.

Ever since 1979, many educators concerned with the undesirable effects of the over-selection of EMI schools have questioned whether or not as a society Hong Kong has over-estimated the importance of English. While much of this questioning has served the purpose of generating a search for a corrective of the over-selection, part of it has also been rather misleading. Some typical examples of the misleading bits are views phrased in rhetorical questions like (a) most Japanese do not speak English well but Japan is a world power; (b) many Filipinos speak English well but The Philippines is poor and weak; and (c) many well-developed countries like Germany do not find it necessary to resort to EMI to attain a good level of English among their citizens.

Given the insidious influence of these misconceived views in the education community over the years, their debunking has become necessary. First and foremost EMI and a high level of English proficiency have never been taken as both a necessary and sufficient cause for the prosperity of Hong Kong. To conceive them as such is simply a convenient way for some critics of the over-selection of EMI schools to get themselves a balloon to shoot down. What has been said about the spread of English proficiency *vis-à-vis* the prosperity of Hong Kong is that it is evidently a positive factor. No more and no less.

Second, the critics of EMI are making a comparison between apples and oranges: Hong Kong thrives primarily on tourism, trade and the provision of financial services, where English proficiency of the workforce is a major asset. Whereas the economic base of the well-developed countries like Japan and Germany is much broader and the contribution of internal consumption to their economy is much greater. For these countries, it may indeed be true that the level of English proficiency among its workforce is a less important factor in their overall well being. However, while it is true that the average Japanese does not speak good English, it does not mean that many of them are not trying hard to learn it well. For example, in Japan there are still more than a dozen branch campuses of U.S. tertiary institutions offering thousands of Japanese students English-language training, and courses leading to different levels of academic qualification, in spite of the recent economic down-turn and in spite of the fact that the Ministry of Education has steadfastly refused to recognize such branch campuses as legitimate academic institutions. We should take note of such efforts because for us the question to ask is not "Why does Japan do relatively well without widespread English proficiency?" but rather "Where would Japan be today had its middle class mastered the skills of speaking English well?" Similarly, the question to ask is not "Why does The Philippines remain relatively weak while English proficiency is widespread there?" but rather "Where would it be today had it not had such an attribute in its national profile?"

It would also be wrong to mislead the public into thinking that countries like Germany engender widespread English proficiency without resorting to special means. In 1991 the Commission of the European Communities of which

Germany is a member made a strong statement affirming the significance of the promotion of trilingualism among the citizens of the member states (1991: 33):

Language competence is regarded as being of central importance to the creation and progress of Europe . . . Higher education institutions should present a multi-lingual voice to their clientele . . . Language competence is necessary to support mobility, economic and administrative interaction and cooperation in practically every sphere of activity . . . It would appear reasonable that all Community<sup>30</sup> citizens should have the opportunity to acquire communicative competence in at least one Community language in addition to their mother tongue and that substantial portions of the population should be expected to acquire a knowledge of two Community foreign languages.

Although the use of the target languages as a MoI in the schools is not a central feature in the promotion of trilingualism in the European Union, much resource has been spent on instituting programmes to provide the citizens with opportunities to learn the target languages in situations where the languages can be used for authentic communication.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the use of a non-native language as MoI is by no means a rare phenomenon. Mandarin (i.e. Putonghua) is now the dominant MoI in Taiwan although at the end of its governance by Japan in 1945 the number of Taiwanese who spoke it as a usual language was around one per cent (黃 1993: 97). Similarly English is now the dominant MoI in the entire educational system in Singapore where according to its 1957 population census only 1.8 per cent of its total population were native-speakers of English (Chua, 1964). In Holland, advanced courses at tertiary level are widely taught in English (Crystal, 1997: 103). Even the nationalistic governments of Indonesia and Malaysia are now opening up their country to universities like Monash to operate offshore campuses on their soil.

**(6) Pointers to a Future with Additive Bilingualism.** It has been shown that the present MoI-based bifurcation of the schools under the guise of promoting MTE is not the right way forward. To qualify to be the right way forward, the LiE policy should facilitate the achievement of biliteracy and trilingualism, accommodate the concerns of the MTE advocates and have the support of the majority if not all of the stakeholders. In order to meet these criteria, the policy-makers would have to sort out these three issues: (a) the flip side of the mother tongue hypothesis spelled out in this paper; (b) the need to provide opportunities for the use of the languages concerned as means for authentic communication in the schools, and in this connection (c) the need to make appropriate use of English and Putonghua as a MoI.

It is believed that the concept additive bilingualism provides a framework for the resolution of all these three issues. According to this concept, bilingual skills should be added to students' linguistic repertoire only after s/he has developed fluency in the use of a basic/foundation language and that the learning of these additional languages should not impede the further development of fluency in the basic/foundation language.<sup>32</sup> In other words, students of Hong Kong should start their education in Cantonese and WSC which will then be used as the building block for the learning and use of English and Putonghua through the latter course of primary and secondary education. The concept additive bilingualism is therefore well suited to be a guiding and organizing principle for a new LiE policy as it takes good care of the second and the third issues by providing room for the parallel use of more than one language as MoI in the schools. At the same time it accommodates the concerns of the MTE advocates because students' basic/foundation language will serve as the bedrock for the building of this bilingualism. So unlike the mother tongue hypothesis which puts tension between the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism and the promotion of MTE, the concept of additive bilingualism aligns the two objectives in the same direction. In this connection it is also proposed that the term mother tongue be replaced by less emotive terms like basic/foundation language in policy statements so as to create a more rational environment for policy discussion and implementation.

It is accepted that the government has the responsibility to ensure that the use of the CM, EM and the PM<sup>33</sup> as a MoI is done in an appropriate manner. So it is taken that an "appropriate-medium test" is required to make sure that the use of multiple-languages in the schools is done properly. To administer the test, the government may target the students, and/or the schools, and/or the teachers. In its new MoI policy, the government has opted to target the students and the schools although teachers may be regarded as part of the schools. The reason behind the government's choice is not hard to understand as the SSPA<sup>34</sup> exercise provides the government with an opportunity to conduct the MIGA<sup>35</sup> to stream students into EMI and CMI categories, and schools can then be categorized according to the type of students that they admit.<sup>36</sup> While this practice may be administratively convenient, it has an enormous downside. As repeatedly mentioned in this paper, the dominant aspect of this downside is the tracking of the schools into monolingual streams.<sup>37</sup>

It is believed that the administration of the "appropriate-medium test" does not necessarily entail a MoI-based bifurcation of the schools. One option the government may consider is to target the test at the teachers. Notwithstanding the fact that in Canada the immersion programmes are mostly instituted at kindergarten and primary levels, it is worth noting that the Anglophone students come to these programmes with zero or close to zero proficiency in the language used as the MoI (i.e. French); the programmes work largely because the teachers are skilled in French, in addition to English and are well trained in bilingual

instruction (Baker, 1996:333). It may therefore be more appropriate if the test is targeted at the teachers instead of students.

The principal merit of this option is that with the exception of those schools which for reasons of philosophy and/or tradition wish and have the ability to remain CMI/EMI schools, it would convert the abrupt, major MoI-switches in the majority of the schools in the present system of vertical tracking—either at secondary-one or at secondary-four—into a larger number of smaller switches because the unit of switch will no longer be schools but teachers and the subjects that they teach. For students learning in the EM/PM<sup>38</sup> in these schools, there will be a leveling of the steep learning curve. At the same time, the two MoI-based streams in the present system of horizontal tracking will be integrated into a single spectrum with the CMI and EMI schools situated at its two ends and all the rest of the schools in between. For the schools distributed between the two ends of the spectrum, the labels CMI/EMI will be irrelevant because the MoI-related information that these schools provide for the public will simply be the number of teachers who are qualified to teach in the various mediums.

And the teachers do not have to be labeled exclusively as CMI or EMI or PMI either because they could seek certification to teach in more than one medium so that they may teach the same subject or different grades in whichever medium that the school deems fit. Indeed, what would constitute a better means to promote biliteracy and trilingualism than having biliterate and trilingual teachers? Having teachers as the unit of the “appropriate-medium test” would mean that it would not be necessary for parents to choose between CMI and EMI.<sup>39</sup> And when the choice between CMI and EMI is behind us, then all the stakeholders will be able to really focus on education, instead of its medium.

It is conceded that because of the number of teachers involved, the teacher-based MoI selection in schools will take much more time to implement. But small steps in the right direction are much better than a big, decisive step in a wrong direction. After all, education is an enterprise that takes hundreds of years to perfect; there are no quick fixes.

It is also conceded that some stakeholders may not find this alternative attractive. Teachers initially may not welcome the “appropriate-medium test”. But if benchmarking, pre-service and in-service training are to be respectively part of the certification process of teachers and their professional life, there may be room to incorporate this test with these exercises in an unthreatening manner. The provision of appropriate incentives for the teachers should be considered as well. If indeed there is a general consensus that our future generation should be biliterate and trilingual, one would expect a significant number if not the majority of those personnel who mould this generation to be able, in due course, to demonstrate such attributes in their professional life. At this point in time, it

is perhaps also the only effective way for the SAR to enhance the linguistic capacity of the education system to meet its own LiE objectives.

In the past twenty years, many strong statements about the causal relationship between pedagogical practices and educational outcomes have been made in the local literature in the area of LiE. To put these statements in perspective, one may refer to an observation made by the most cited social scientist in history: "I don't think modern linguistics can tell you much of practical utility . . . Psychology and linguistics have caused a great deal of harm by pretending to have answers to those questions and telling teachers and people dealing with children how they should behave." (Chomsky, 1988)

Also, many advocates of MTE and MoI-based streaming do not have the benefit of a parent perspective or the perspective of a parent with children receiving their education in local schools. For their benefit this paper is concluded with a personal anecdote. My daughter is attending a CM school in Hong Kong. While she was in grade four, her performance in the subject English-language in the mid-term examinations was found lackluster. When my wife met with her form-master to discuss her school performance, my daughter's examination results in the subject was brought up and the master in earnest told my wife that if our daughter did not improve her English skills, she might end up having her secondary education in a CMI school. My wife and I hold no bias against CMI schools. We also have the option of sending our daughter to North America to continue with her secondary education. This encounter however has reinforced our belief that if the new MoI policy is allowed to go its full course, the ecology for CMI schools after 1998 could be worse than before. Our hearts go out to those parents whose children may not reach the benchmark that qualify them for the EMI schools, and who at the same time do not have the options of sending their children abroad to continue their education like we do.



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## NOTES

1 Hitherto, the MoI debate has been confined mainly to the secondary schools as it has been assumed, albeit not by this writer, that Chinese should remain the principal MoI for the primary sector. In the past schools that used Chinese as a MoI were usually called Chinese Middle Schools and those that used English as a MoI were usually called Anglo-Chinese Secondary Schools. Since 1997, it has become more common to use the labels CMI and EMI to refer to these two types of schools respectively. To avoid confusion, the new labels are used for the periods both before and after September 1997.

2 For a summary account of these factors, see Fu 1975: Chapter 2, So 1984: Chapters 4 & 5.

3 For example, between 1983 and 1988, more than 90 per cent of the school population were enrolled in EMI schools. (So, 1992:70) This situation persisted until September 1998.

4 Many of the concerns raised by investigators like Siu and Johnson are legitimate and require the close attention of the stakeholders. However it is believed that some of the alleged consequences of EMI such as cognitive retardation and semilingualism may be overstated. Space constraints preclude a discussion of these concerns here but in the case of semilingualism, it may suffice it to point out that the concept was first used to explain academic difficulties of minority students (Hanssgard 1972), i.e. not the type of students that we have in the SAR. Ever since the concept gained currency in the early 1970s, many investigators have cast doubt on its theoretical value. Also, a precise operational definition of the term is still not in evidence.

5 To resolve the MoI issue, the Commission stipulated several options for the consideration of the government and appeared to be in favour of "a wholehearted push towards genuine bilingualism after P6, including the tertiary level" (Llewellyn, 1982: 29-30). Unfortunately, it chose to leave the phrase genuine bilingualism undefined.

6 In the document, the rationale that underpins the new policy is spelled out as follows: Mother tongue teaching has positive effects on students' learning. Most students prefer learning in the mother tongue. Students learning in the mother tongue generally perform better than their counterparts using English as MoI, and students of traditional Chinese-medium schools consistently achieve a higher pass percentage than the territory-wide average in both Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. This shows the positive impact of mother tongue teaching on the learning of Chinese and English as a subject. The gist of the policy is as follows: To encourage secondary schools to use Chinese as MOI; To discourage the use of mixed code, i.e. a mixture of Chinese and English, in teaching and learning.

7 As of September 1998, 114 schools were in the latter category (the number was 100 as of 1 December 1997 and revised up to 114 on 13 March 1998), about 300 were in the former category. These sanctions are applicable to only the secondary-one intakes of the schools with effect from September 1998.

8 These statements are anticipated by a speech titled 《新時代香港教育的要求和挑戰》 (The Demands on and the Challenges of Education for Hong Kong in a New Era) made by Mr. Antony Leung, whose public service portfolio includes Executive Council member, a former Chairman of the University Grants Committee and current Chairman of the Education Commission, to a seminar on 9 May 1997, in which he spelled out six demands on the education system one of which is to produce graduates with high levels of literacy in SC and English and high levels of oral fluency in Cantonese, Putonghua and English.

9 The term refers to the fact that in terms of language development and language behaviour, what consider to be normal for monolingual speakers may not be so for bilingual speakers. Accordingly a different normative frame of reference for assessing language development and judging language behaviour of bilingual speakers has to be developed so that bilingual speakers will be compared with bilingual speakers and that they will not be unfairly subject to the norms which are meant for monolingual speakers.

10 It is the date when the DoE issued the consultation document Medium of Instruction Firm Guidance for Secondary Schools.

11 A well-known version of the mother tongue hypothesis can be found in the report on a meeting on bilingualism and education convened by UNESCO in Paris in 1951: "It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than an unfamiliar linguistic medium" (p. 11).

12 Indeed it is sometimes referred to as the Second Promote Chinese as an Official Language Campaign.

13 The full title of the pamphlet is *At what Cost: Instruction through the Medium of English in Hong Kong Schools* and is centred around a report on the findings of a questionnaire-survey and is "prepared" by Cheng Ngai-lung, Shek Kang Chuen, Tse Ka-kui and Wong Siu-fun.

14 The Chinese University Matriculation Examination was then re-titled the Hong Kong Higher Level Examination. It was conducted by the Examinations Authority from 1979 until 1992 when it was held for the last time.

15 The new requirements for the Higher Level Examination were implemented in 1979 only and the previous requirements for The Chinese University Matriculation Examination were reinstated in the Higher Level Examination with effect from 1980.

16 In 1980 the Hong Kong Examinations Authority conducted the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination which replaced the Advanced Level Examination of the University of Hong Kong but retained its language requirements. It was not until 1992 with the phasing out of the Hong Kong Higher Level Examination and with the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination becoming the entry examination to all tertiary institutions (except the Open Learning Institute/Open University) that a grade B in Chinese language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination became part of the entry requirement of the Advanced Level Examination.

17 For a more detailed discussion of the different definitions of the mother tongue, please see 蘇 1998.

18 For a debunking of the monolingual frame of reference which has been taken to be normative in the Anglo-American culture, see Grosjean 1982: Chapter 1; Bactens Beardsmore 1982: Chapter 4; Wardhaugh 1986: Chapter 4 & Edwards 1994: Chapter 1.

19 This shift towards Cantonese among the other Chinese ethnic groups in Hong Kong was first noted in T'sou 1978. For a more recent treatment of the topic, see So 1998.

20 By the narrow definition stipulated in this paper, nobody speaks the standard dialect Putonghua as a mother tongue; it has to be learnt in school. In terms of grammar Putonghua draws its norms from the exemplary literary works written in the Northern Vernacular since the Thirteenth Century. In terms of pronunciation, it derives its norms from the Beijing Dialect.

21 Given this background, it would not be hard to understand why Nobel Laureate Steven Chu (朱) was hailed in Hong Kong as a vindication of the efficacy of MTE even though: (1) he was a native from a province in central China and did not understand, let alone speak Cantonese when he came to Hong Kong as an adolescent. (2) In the 1950s verbal instruction at his alma mater The Pui Ching Middle School of Hong Kong was largely conducted in Cantonese, sprinkled *inter alia* with English phrases. Also, English textbooks for science subjects were extensively used after Secondary-3, a practice retained up to the present albeit the school has been repeatedly hailed by the DoE and the media as an exemplar of MTE.

22 Had the Chairman of the Board of Education been told about this tendency of MTE, he would not have been surprised to find during a visit to Britain that the new Mol policy had been taken by the media there as an act of the HKSAR government to do away with English-medium education. (Ming Pao 16 January 1998)

23 It is indisputable that both students and teachers in Hong Kong will in general find it easier to conduct classroom activities in Cantonese and to have all reading materials provided in Chinese. But the quality of learning is also affected to a large extent by other factors such as the entry levels of students at the school (Cooley & Lohes, 1976:65). As EMI schools tend to admit students with higher initial abilities than their CMI counterparts (a factor that could become even more pronounced as a result of the implementation of the new Mol policy), it would be interesting to see in a few years' time if the use of a more convenient Mol in CMI schools could indeed enable their students to catch up with their counterparts at EMI schools at the end of their secondary education. It would also be interesting to see if providers of prestige jobs which involve skilled use of English would, in recruiting their personnel, give equal weighting to educational credentials earned through learning in the CM and those earned through learning in the EM.

24 A more authentic form of MTE in Hong Kong will involve respectively the use of High Cantonese as the Mol of textbooks & assessment as well as classroom talk for all Cantonese-speaking children, and the provision of instruction in their respective dialects for all children of immigrants who speak a dialect other than Cantonese.

25 The classroom language experience of most of the students took the following form as a result of the tracking: at primary level the Chinese language (i.e. Cantonese-WSC) was taught as a subject and at the same time used as a Mol except for English which was learned as a subject. At secondary level at EMI schools, English was learned as a subject and in principle used as a Mol except for the Chinese language which was learned as a subject.

26 The significance of the target language being an authentic means of communication can be seen, for example, from Byrnes et al 1992 which puts this condition at the top of a list of 11 principles for effective additional language learning

27 An indication of this assumption is that for many years the examination paper for the English Language in the Certificate of Education Examinations has two different syllabuses: Syllabus A and Syllabus B. The former is less demanding and it is widely understood that its target candidates are students from CMI schools.

28 It is believed this is an over-statement. For example, according to Johnson & Cheung 1995, although the reading literacy achievement of Hong Kong students in English is below international norms, their achievement in Chinese is 'average at primary 4 and above the international mean at secondary 3.' (p.2)

29 For example, in most French total-immersion programmes students typically spend the first two years mainly learning to follow their teachers' delivery in French. As a result, vis-à-vis mainstream students instructed in their stronger language, immersion students at this stage appear to be much more passive in class and interaction between students and teachers is at a much lower level. Furthermore, much English is used by the students in class, albeit not by the teachers. Usually the situation improves over time but if one assesses such programmes by focusing on this initial stage, then all she sees could be the adverse effects of not using the students' stronger language as a 'Mol'. Also, lest it be forgotten, what French immersion programmes have succeeded in doing is that their graduates achieve much better standards in French vis-à-vis their counterparts who learn it as a subject without significant cost to their academic development. But the standards so achieved are far below native-like control levels. For a critique of the linguistic outcomes of these programmes, see Hammerly, 1989

30 The European Community became the European Union in 1993.

31 For example the Erasmus programme provides funds to enable students of higher education to spend part of their studies in an institution of another member state. Whereas the Lingua programme finances the exchange of staff, materials and students in secondary education between member states

32 This is a modified version of the concept first put forward by Lambert (1977) to account for the differential outcomes of bilingual education

33 Putonghua-medium

34 Secondary School Placement Assessment

35 Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment. One major problem with MIGA is that it provides no direct measurement of the students' English abilities as the assessment results are by a large measure a function of the results of the Academic Aptitude Test which does not measure the students' English proficiency.

36 According to the new policy, to be qualified as an EMI school, no less than 85% of the secondary-one intake of the school has to be classified for three years prior to 1997 as either 'able to learn effectively in either Chinese or English' or 'able to learn better in Chinese but may also learn effectively in English'

37 In addition to its social divisiveness and its being a hindering factor for the promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism, it also generates a lot of anomalies in practice. For example, it forces teachers at 114 government-sanctioned EMI schools who may not be EMI-competent to use the EM to instruct their students. It will also take away the option of CMI schools to make use of English textbooks and/or reference materials in their teaching, especially in the science-related subjects

38 The time and timing for the introduction of the PM and EM should not be standardized. So long as the teachers involved are competent in the use of the medium concerned, schools should be given space to improvise and to experiment so as to identify the best ways for them to achieve the bilingual objectives of the government's LIE policy.

39 For a discussion on what the parents in Hong Kong want is a joint CMI and EMI for their children, see So (1992)

# Hong Kong Cantonese and the Road Ahead

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## ABSTRACT

At the start of the new millennium and three years after the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, Cantonese continues to thrive in the territory. Indeed, on the basis of comparative Census figures, we can assume that more Cantonese is being spoken now than at any time in Hong Kong's history. Is this the Golden Age of Hong Kong Cantonese? How rosy is its future over the next century? With the world trend of declining linguistic diversity as backdrop, the author of this paper imagines how the future development of Hong Kong Cantonese may be impacted by the changing contact relationship among Cantonese, Putonghua, and English, the changing demographics of Hong Kong's population, and the expected increase in the use of Putonghua as the standard language of instruction in Hong Kong schools. The author concludes with the suggestion that Hong Kong educators foster in students the belief that their knowledge of two or more dialects or languages is better than knowing just one speech variety.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"The magazine [The Futurist], whose forecasts came from leading scientists, researchers and scholars, ... said that by 2100, all but 10 per cent of the world's 6,000 languages could become extinct." (Cited from 'Looking forward', South China Morning Post, Vol. LV, No. 337, December 5, 1999, page 8.)*

*"Most of the world's 6,000-plus languages will have died out by the end of the century, experts have predicted — partly because of the popularity of Putonghua ... the continuing drive for the young to communicate in one of the three most popular tongues — English, Spanish, or*

*Putonghua — threatens to destroy a key ingredient of humanity's cultural heritage.*" (Connor 2000)

*"... the use of Portuguese is already slipping [against Cantonese and English], barely four months after [Macau's] return to Chinese rule."* (Cited from an editorial entitled 'Preserving Portuguese', *South China Morning Post*, April 16, 2000, Vol. LVI, No. 105, page 10.)

*"These experiences [of not being able to find an English-language application for a government top-up loan] are sending a clear message — you are not welcome in Hong Kong if you cannot read, write, and speak Chinese and you will be disadvantaged/discriminated against until you do."* (Cited from letter by Mike Wall to the editors, *South China Morning Post*, Vol. LVI, No. 157, June 7, 2000, page 17.)

*"Cantonese is a dead end, it has no future."* Professor Cheng Kai-ming, pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong and member of the Education Commission. (Tacey 2000)

The above quotations remind us of several important social characteristics about language: Languages are a bit like people in that they have a lifespan. It's when children stop learning them that they die out. We might try to carry this metaphor further and say that some languages are like Methuselah and have been around for centuries (English, French, Spanish) or even millennia (Chinese). Of course, such "old" languages aren't really old, because they have the phenomenal ability to continually renew themselves as they adapt to the changing needs of their speakers who may even have renamed them over time: Modern English is descended from Old English but in the span of a thousand years the former has changed so much from its precursor that their historical connection is barely recognizable; and ironically, Putonghua as the standard spoken form of Chinese didn't really exist until the middle of the 20th century.

Languages are also like fashions with some fading and others rising in popularity. How much longer can Portuguese remain viable in the Macau SAR?

A language is also a tool: Knowledge of a language can be the key that opens doors to desirable social and economic opportunities for its speakers: In multilingual communities people who haven't learned one of the community's languages may feel they are excluded from or denied access to certain benefits that are somehow language-dependent.

And finally, a *language* typically commands prestige, a *dialect* rarely does. Just why one form of speech is deemed a language and some other a dialect can be difficult to pin down, and this seems especially so in the case of Putonghua and Cantonese. Despite significant differences in phonology, lexicon, and grammar that divide the two, here the labeling depends more on political, social, and his-



torical rather than linguistic factors. When the community's choice of language of instruction is between the official, national language and a regional dialect with no official status, can there be any doubt about the outcome?

With these thoughts in mind, I consider in this paper some of the following questions: Will Cantonese still be Hong Kong's principal spoken Chinese variety at the end of this century or will it have been supplanted by Putonghua? How does the language-of-education issue relate to the future health of Cantonese? What kind of realistic language policy can Hong Kong pursue in promoting Putonghua as the official, standard language and at the same time maintaining Cantonese as the community's thriving language of local identity?

My interest in these questions began in the mid-1980s when I started thinking about how the promotion of Putonghua in Hong Kong after 1997 might impact the development of Cantonese in the community. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century I have joined a few other so-called experts who find foretelling the future to be an irresistible enterprise, and in this paper I have tried to imagine how Cantonese may fare in the coming decades. Since I possess no prescient powers with which to forecast the future, I frankly acknowledge that the best I am able to do here is to offer educated, informed guesses. In doing this, I would like to let the reader know at the outset that I have relied on the occasional anecdote as a possible clue of things to come. I am one of those people who believe that the historical record of our times is reflected in the minute details of our daily lives and that these may tell us where we are headed<sup>1</sup>.

In giving my appraisal of the position of Cantonese in Hong Kong, I have reflected on my 25 years of learning and researching the language. It is my view that Cantonese has achieved in Hong Kong a unique and very special status in comparison to any other Chinese dialects wherever they are spoken. I would go so far as to say that Cantonese is now enjoying its Golden Age in Hong Kong. Where else in China, or the world for that matter, can one witness Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed in Cantonese; read a newspaper article, novel, or adult comic book written in Cantonese; watch a movie in which the dialogue has been originally recorded in Cantonese; attend a university lecture delivered in Cantonese; listen to a radio play or international news program broadcast in Cantonese; or hear legislative councillors and the Chief Executive vigorously debate proposed laws in Cantonese? The answer is obvious, and most Cantonese speakers take all these things for granted because they perceive no threat to the language and feel there is nothing to get excited about. Their attitude reflects the healthy state of the language, but it also makes me wonder that if we now live in the Golden Age of Cantonese, how much longer can it continue?

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<sup>1</sup> I take this opportunity to thank the LSHK's two reviewers and the editor for their comments, corrections, and suggestions for clarification which I have tried to follow in revising this paper.

## 2. THE STATUS OF CANTONESE IN HONG KONG

### 2.1 Hong Kong government language policy: past, present, and future

During British colonial rule of Hong Kong the main language of government and education was English, while Cantonese was the spoken (but becoming an increasingly written) language of the masses. Under British colonialism Cantonese was more or less ignored, although English and "Chinese" were the official languages. The use of Putonghua was neither encouraged nor discouraged, although for political reasons the colonial preference was for Cantonese (one more division or barrier between Hong Kong and the mainland). The colonial government's indifference to Cantonese was a state of affairs which I think very much benefited its development. Furthermore, rather clear-cut differences toward the use of the three languages had separated Hong Kong from the mainland, with the most obvious being the different status of Putonghua and Cantonese in the two places. Within Hong Kong Cantonese was relatively protected and did not enter into any direct competition with Putonghua.

In 1974 in order to promote its greater use within the government 中文 *tsōy-mēn* 'Chinese language' was recognized as Hong Kong's second official language alongside English. As far as speech and writing are concerned, the term 中文 is ambiguous, as it can refer to just about any kind of Chinese, that is, its written forms, such as classical, modern vernacular, dialectal, and its spoken forms, including Putonghua and any of the Chinese dialects, such as Cantonese (cf. Norman 1988: 137-138). Upon the change of Hong Kong's sovereignty in the middle of 1997, the Basic Law that governs the Special Administrative Region came into effect. As Yau (1992: 15) has noted, it has very little to say about language policy, but what it does say retains the earlier ambiguity: "In addition to Chinese language [中文], the English language may also be used..."

Although Hong Kong may not have an officially declared form of speech, from a practical, everyday point of view, it is fair to say that the community's predominant spoken language continues to be Cantonese. According to the 1996 Census, 89% of the population speaks Cantonese as the usual language or dialect (only 1.1% speak Putonghua as the usual language or dialect) (Census and Statistics Department 1996: 22). At present we observe that most members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council speak Cantonese as their principal language, but this situation probably has more to do with many legislators' poor abilities to speak Putonghua than anything else. The Chief Executive himself is adroitly trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. In many of Hong Kong's schools (see section below on mother-tongue education), Cantonese is now being promoted as the language of instruction, much to the dismay and even anger of many parents who prefer the use of English (not surprisingly, in late 1999 a Department of Education study found that many students were learning their lessons much better through the medium of Cantonese than they had in the past when English was

mixed with Cantonese). Television and radio newsreaders continue to broadcast news and entertainment programs in Cantonese.

Generally speaking, we have to conclude that, three years after the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, Cantonese seems to be doing quite well in Hong Kong. Indeed, I predict that over the next 25 years or so, Cantonese will continue to be used in Hong Kong in most social domains more or less as now; yet, at the same time, I also believe that a general trend will develop in which Cantonese gives ground to Putonghua in some important areas. It was only in the last couple of decades of the 20th century that government officials and education experts began to anticipate how the change in sovereignty in 1997 would bring about changes in the community's use of its three languages. Since Putonghua is China's official standard language and Hong Kong is now a part of China, the central government's ultimate goal is for Putonghua to eventually replace Cantonese in those areas of public life where Putonghua is used in China, namely, in the classroom, within the civil service, in the courts, legislature, official meetings, on television and radio broadcasts, and in motion pictures. As for the written language, standard written Chinese would be used in place of written Cantonese. One may ask: What is left then for Cantonese? Obviously, not a lot, although Cantonese will continue to be spoken as the language of daily life for many people in Hong Kong for at least the next half century.

## 2.2 Community attitudes toward Cantonese and Putonghua

How do Cantonese speakers themselves feel about their language? Down through the years of my research on Cantonese I have discovered unexpectedly that some Cantonese-speakers look down on their own language.

In late 1976 after I had moved back to Berkeley from Hong Kong following a year of studying Cantonese and Taiwanese in Hong Kong and Taiwan, I became acquainted with a young Hong Kong Cantonese-speaker who could not understand why I had learned to speak Cantonese in addition to Putonghua. To him being able to speak Putonghua was quite enough. He worked part-time as a singer in nightclubs in San Francisco's Chinatown. I remember feeling quite surprised to hear him say that Cantonese was a vulgar, ugly language, while Putonghua/Mandarin in which he preferred to sing songs was more refined and beautiful. In 1979 I moved back to Hong Kong to carry out my Ph.D. dissertation research. One day in about 1981 while taking the ferry from Lamma Island over to Central, I was reading a detective story written in Cantonese and published in a little magazine called <藍皮書 *Blue Cover Mystery*> (considered by most educated people to be a very low-class, sex-obsessed publication, although really quite tame in comparison to what is available now). One of my neighbors from my village of Yungshuewan 榕樹灣 observed me reading this and asked me why I was wasting my time reading such trashy material. In a very serious tone of voice he suggested that I should be reading something that was more worthwhile and written in genuinely good Chinese, such as <紅樓夢> (*Dream of the Red Cham-*

ber). I tried to explain to him that I found reading stories written in Cantonese to be a good way to learn more Cantonese, but he didn't seem to be able to see any beneficial connection.

In previous works I have noted the Hong Kong community's ambivalence toward the phenomenon of written Cantonese which has now become a brazen competitor with standard written Chinese by appearing in almost every domain in which written language is used. During my Ph.D. dissertation research work 20 years ago I requested my informants to read aloud a story (遇新年) and a nursery rhyme (月光光) that had been transcribed in Chinese and Cantonese characters. I remember a number of my subjects shaking their heads doubtfully and telling me that Cantonese was not a written language but only a spoken dialect. Some gave me the impression that anything to be taken seriously should not or would not be written in Cantonese. Recently one of my M.A. students who is a teacher of Chinese language said to me that if written Cantonese were ever officially standardized, this would create a competing standard that would cause confusion, particularly among educators and students.

### 2.3 Status of Putonghua and Chinese dialects in mainland China and Taiwan

According to the volume on language and script of the Chinese Encyclopedia [*<中国大百科全书, 语言文字>*] (1988: 310), a clause in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China has made it is a national duty that is based in law for the country to promote Putonghua or 'common speech' for use nationwide ("‘国际推广全国通用的普通话’条文, 使推广普通话成了国家的任务, 有了法律的依据"). My own observations from living in central China and traveling around the north, south, east, and southwest in the 1980's suggest to me that the promotion of Putonghua has been relatively successful, in that Putonghua is widely spoken, although the kind and extent of the speakers' local accents vary according to a host of factors. As for the local dialects, they seem to coexist with Putonghua. My general impression has been a mixed one, in that I have noticed some younger speakers (particularly university-educated ones) prefer to speak Putonghua, while others their local dialects. I still remember talking in Shanghai with some saucy young shop assistants who told me that they could speak Putonghua but they like speaking the Shanghai dialect more.

As an example of the marginal status that Cantonese is being relegated to in China, I will describe a couple of personal experiences which ironically documents it. In 1995 I participated in the Fifth International Yue dialects Conference which was held in Guangzhou. Now, one might have assumed that at a Yue dialects conference — if anywhere — at least *some* of the papers would have been presented in Cantonese. However, over the three days or so of presentations I observed that *only* one participant actually spoke Cantonese in giving her paper, while everyone else delivered their papers in Putonghua (including myself, as I

felt I might as well go along with the majority). Of course, a fair number of the conference participants were *not* Cantonese speakers and had come from various non-Cantonese-speaking areas of China. So for them Putonghua was the obvious lingua franca for this conference.

During this same conference I also tried to speak Cantonese with some of the maids and other workers at the university guest house where I was staying. Although they seemed quite happy to talk to me in Putonghua (and even looked relieved that I could speak to them in their own language, thus eliminating any need for them to try to speak English with me), they showed some hesitation and *even* reluctance to speak Cantonese. However, after some persistence over the few days of my stay I was able to coax them into conversing with me in Cantonese. (I also recall feeling quite surprised upon entering the guest-house foyer to encounter a colorfully-painted, almost life-size wooden cutout of Santa Claus standing next to a Christmas tree decorated with lights and ornaments in the traditional Western style — things had obviously changed quite a bit since my last stay in 1988 as a so-called foreign expert in Hubei). Anyway, two years later in 1997, at the Sixth International Yue Dialects Conference which convened in Macau, I was pleasantly surprised to hear much more Cantonese being spoken, especially by the organizers, although once again the language of first choice among most of the conference participants, notably those from the mainland, was Putonghua. In 1999 the Seventh International Yue Dialects Conference was held at the University of Hong Kong, and Cantonese, Putonghua, and English were the languages spoken, with their frequency of use in that order.

The way Cantonese is treated by mainland officials gives me the impression that they perceive Cantonese as being somewhere between an inconvenient obstacle to and threatening competitor with Putonghua. Official announcements periodically urge the populace of Guangdong to speak more Putonghua and less (Cantonese or other Yue) dialect. Bruche-Schulz (1997:311-312) quoted an item from the *South China Morning Post* of April 3, 1992 which stated that mainland authorities had imposed a ban on the use of Cantonese-language radio and television advertisements in all provinces except Guangdong. This ban was in response to the "craze for studying Cantonese" that had swept across China in the wake of Guangdong's economic success. However, it is my understanding (which I am not able to document but confirmation was provided by a linguist friend from the mainland), this ban has not been limited to just advertisements but includes any kind of broadcast (except international broadcasts to Cantonese-speakers outside China). Making the use of Cantonese illegal indicates that the authorities fear Cantonese poses a serious threat to the pre-eminent position of Putonghua, but I think whatever perceived strength Cantonese has in China is highly exaggerated.

In ethnic minority regions of China where local languages have been supported and developed by the central government, steps are now being taken to strengthen and enhance the position of standard Chinese and to head off any attempt to link

ethnic minority languages to separatist movements. According to a news item in the *South China Morning Post* (Chan 2000), during the middle of the year 2000 the National People's Congress Standing Committee proposed the draft law on Nationwide Written and Spoken Language that defines the standard Chinese characters as the only legal written language for official documents, street signs, restaurant and shop signboards, and packaging, and Putonghua as the only legal kind of speech to be used by cadres in "public areas and at official functions". The law will apply to schools, news media, and public conferences (but not to the use of language at "private occasions") and implies that it will cover the whole of China (although presumably not Hong Kong). This law would seem to have potentially far-reaching implications for China's many languages and dialects, but what these will be remains to be seen. Passing a law is one thing, enforcing it is another. Chinese dialectal characters, beware!

As for the promotion of standard Chinese on Taiwan, under the Kuomintang government's harsh language policy Taiwanese school children were punished for speaking Min or Hakka dialects at school instead of *Guoyu*; according to a Taiwanese linguist friend who witnessed such incidents, a student would be forced to wear a sign around his or her neck saying "I will not speak dialect", or the teacher would even hit the guilty student with a ruler (also described by Erbaugh 1995:88 who noted that beatings, fines, and other punishments ended in 1987; in this same section she reviewed the suppression of and legal restrictions on Taiwan's local dialects and languages). As far as I am aware, no one is punished for speaking Cantonese in China.

#### 2.4 Language-of-instruction controversy and future of Cantonese in Hong Kong

*"It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium."* (UNESCO 1953: 11, quoted in Fasold 1984: 293)

*"Cantonese is a dead end, it has no future ... No other place in the world would use a dialect as the medium of instruction. It is killing our students."* Prof. Cheng Kai-ming, pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong and member of the Education Commission. (Tacey 2000)

*"For several years now, figures for pass-rates in history at Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Advanced levels have consistently shown that students studying in Cantonese perform better, on average, than those studying in English."* (Cited from letter to the editors of *South China Morning Post*, Vickers 2000.)

One of the most perennially contentious issues in the history of education in Hong Kong must be the choice of language of instruction. During British rule most of Hong Kong's schools had been teaching nominally in English, although in reality the teacher used a mixed code of Cantonese and English. While education experts realized this method was failing many students, parents strongly supported it in the belief that learning in English was their children's ticket to a better future. Even after the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty this issue refuses to go away and still has the potential to stir up even more rancor in the community. In 1998 the Education Department decreed that more than 400 secondary schools must switch from teaching in English to Cantonese; however, 114 schools were permitted to continue using English as their medium of instruction (Wan 2000b). As expected, the switch to Cantonese met with some resistance, but it was sold to the community with the rationale that so-called *mother-tongue* education would serve the best interests of the students by enabling them to learn more effectively. In a newspaper article entitled "Lessons of mother tongue learning" Tacey (2000) reported that almost two years after the changeover to Cantonese a study by the University of Hong Kong found that test pass rates had improved between 40% and 80%. Prof. Amy Tsui, head of the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Hong Kong, was quoted as saying that "I'm a supporter of Cantonese after going into classrooms and seeing children from a whole range of abilities learning so much better. The students are much better able to relate to teachers, there is richer interaction, the level of discussion is quite different — there is a lot more inquiry instead of simply giving and memorising and regurgitating facts. The students find it very enjoyable."

In the same newspaper article, however, Prof. Cheng Kai-ming, pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong and a member of the Education Commission, was quoted as stating that using Cantonese as the medium of instruction was "killing" Hong Kong's students (Tacey 2000; Wan 2000a). In his view the language used in the classroom "has to be some form of imposed language" (Tacey 2000), and presumably what he has in mind is Putonghua. The problem here is that though Cantonese and Putonghua are undoubtedly related varieties of Chinese, nonetheless, they are mutually unintelligible and about as similar to each other as Dutch is to German. So, intuitively speaking, instructing children in their mother tongue does sound more reasonable than imposing an unfamiliar language on them.

We might assume that scientific studies would help resolve for the community the question of what is the best language for the child to learn in by clearly supporting either mother tongue or the unfamiliar (or outsider) language; but, surprisingly, Fasold (1984: 292-315) in his review of vernacular language education noted the absence of scientifically-controlled studies in support of one or the other choice of language. According to Fasold, at the end of the day the choice of language of instruction has almost nothing to do with linguistic or educational

concerns; instead, sociopolitical considerations determine whether the community educates its children in their mother tongue or imposes the outsider's language.

As for the future of Cantonese as a language of instruction in Hong Kong schools, there is no doubt in my mind that its days are numbered. From my own reading of statements made by officials and experts in education and government, the ultimate goal of the Hong Kong Education Department appears to be to introduce Putonghua as the medium of instruction, but this plan will take some time to be accepted by the community and implemented fully by the schools. When the switch is made to Putonghua, students will then learn to read the Chinese characters in Putonghua rather than Cantonese. This development could eventually reduce the use of written Cantonese if readers cannot read the Chinese characters with their Cantonese pronunciations.

### 3. THE FUTURE OF CANTONESE IN HONG KONG

#### 3.1 On predicting the future of Cantonese and Putonghua in Hong Kong

*"The importance of Putonghua can be expected to soar in the years to come and eventually eclipse Cantonese which will be reduced to the regional dialect status it now has in the PRC. While the Cantonese language itself will not vanish from Hong Kong, what will be the fate of the pop song with Cantonese lyrics, the Cantonese television soap opera, the live stage drama performed in Cantonese, the Cantonese speaker's knowledge of Cantonese reading pronunciation, and written Cantonese? These linguistic traditions may not suddenly and completely fade from the community, but in the Hong Kong of the 21st century dominated by Putonghua they will not be able to flourish as they do now."* (Bauer 1984: 309)

*"... a shift to Putonghua is to be expected."* (Ansaldo 1995: 27)

*"The outlook [for Cantonese] is probably brighter than many of its academic supporters seem to fear."* (Whelpton 1999: 55)

Over the past two decades my main academic interest has focused on sociolinguistic aspects of Cantonese, particularly phonetic variation and change. At the same time, a more abstract aspect that I can never forget is the status of Cantonese as a regional Chinese dialect overshadowed by Putonghua. So, another of my concerns about Cantonese has been how changes in the sociopolitical situation of Hong Kong will affect the status of Cantonese here. Also helping to keep my mind focused on this issue has been the fact that the period of my work on Cantonese has neatly coincided with clearly observable changes in official and unofficial attitudes toward and the roles of Hong Kong's three principal languages of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English.



In considering the future of Cantonese, I think we should keep in mind the big picture of the future health of the world's languages. From my reading of articles in newspapers and linguistic journals, I have the impression that the general trend is toward the loss of linguistic diversity around the world. Languages like Putonghua, English, and Spanish which are already being spoken by millions of speakers continue to grow in strength, while languages with a few hundred or a few thousand speakers are not being learned by children and face extinction. As indicated by the two quotations at the beginning of this paper, the number of the world's languages has been predicted to decline from the current 6,000 or so to about 600 by the beginning of the next century ('Looking forward' 1999; Connor 2000).

There is no question that languages do die out. To see a language in its death throes, we in Hong Kong need look no further than the New Territories where Hakka or Kejia once flourished but is now on the verge of extinction. Young children there no longer learn to speak it, and fluent speakers are limited to a few very old people in their 70's and 80's; once they are gone, that is the end of Hakka in Hong Kong. (However, while it is true that languages become extinct when their last speakers have died, this line of thinking fails to recognize that new languages can be expected to emerge as evidenced by pidgins and creoles). Nonetheless, what should we make of this possible linguistic impoverishment of civilization (which was cautiously hedged with the word *could*)? Would the disappearance of 5,400 languages harm the human family? Should this be a matter of concern to anyone? Can or should linguists try to do anything about it? Closer to home, will Cantonese be one among those 600 very lucky languages that will still be spoken at the end of this century?

Now, predicting the future of anything, whether the direction of a stock market or the development of a language, is a risky venture. You may just get it right or be completely wrong. If you guess things right with the stock market, you might make a lot of money. But in the case of a language there does not seem to be any such concrete payoff. Nonetheless, over the past few years I, along with a few other language experts, have been thinking about the future of Cantonese in Hong Kong. Back in 1984 I peered into my own crystal ball and briefly sketched out in print what I foresaw the future holding for Cantonese in post-1997 Hong Kong (Bauer 1984). Then a few years later I proposed that written Cantonese be formally standardized as a step forward in its future development (Bauer 1988). More recently, in "Postscript, Cantonese in the 21st century" to *Modern Cantonese Phonology* (Bauer and Benedict 1997: 429-434) I set forth a scenario (in hindsight perhaps overly pessimistic) on how contact between Cantonese and Putonghua would influence the development of Cantonese in Hong Kong.

In the past few years at least three English-language publications concerned with the future of Hong Kong Cantonese have appeared, and I will briefly mention some of their main points. Yau (1992) reported and interpreted the results of his

questionnaires conducted in the mid-1980s regarding attitudes of students toward Putonghua, their self-evaluations of their Putonghua ability, and the attitudes of the students toward possible developments in the relationship between Putonghua and Cantonese in Hong Kong. He (1992: 20, 25) found that the majority of his respondents favored maintaining the status quo with Cantonese as "their everyday language" and "the common spoken language"; they also did not support the idea of establishing Putonghua as the "legal vernacular" after 1997. Ansaldo (1995: 27) foresaw "a shift to Putonghua" that he regarded as inevitable within the linguistic, political, cultural, and economic factors that he briefly analyzed. Although he did not actually specify what this phrase implies, I interpret him to mean that he foresees Putonghua eventually dominating and replacing Cantonese in the community. Whelpton (1999: 55), on the other hand, took a rather more optimistic view which seems to be based more on his intuitions about the significance of current attitudes Cantonese speakers (his students) harbor toward Cantonese and Putonghua than on anything else. At any rate when he views the future, he feels relatively hopeful about the prospects for Cantonese.

At this stage I think it is reasonable to suppose that the future status of Cantonese will lie somewhere between the two extremes of language shift or replacement by Putonghua and status quo coexistence and survival.

As a starting point for presenting my own predictions about the future of Cantonese and its relationship to Putonghua, I suggest that a projection based on the current situations in Hong Kong and Guangzhou may be a reasonable guide to developments over the next two or three decades. At the same time, however, I will not go so far as to say that all we need to do is simply look at Guangzhou and/or Shenzhen in order to know what is going to happen to Cantonese in Hong Kong — a responsible prediction will be rather more complicated than that. Many factors need to be taken into account, not least among these are official government policy, the choice of language in education, the changing demographics of Hong Kong (which we are right now witnessing), economic and cultural developments, and even the interests, needs, and wishes of ordinary people. All of these factors and others are now affecting the status of Cantonese in Hong Kong and will continue to do so into the future.

Currently, Cantonese in Hong Kong holds the status of predominant language with about 90% of the population claiming Cantonese as their mother tongue or first language (according to figures from the 1996 Hong Kong Population By-census, Census and Statistics Department 1996: 22). Cantonese is also the principal lingua franca among Hong Kong's indigenous population from different language backgrounds (including Chinese dialects of Toishan, Min, Shanghai, Hakka, Mandarin, and non-Chinese languages, such as Pilipino, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, etc.). Among ethnic Chinese communities of the region that include China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, Hong Kong is the only one in which a variety of Chinese other than Mandarin is the majority language with quasi-official status: Cantonese is the main language of the Legislative Council,

radio and TV broadcasts, motion pictures, etc. Cantonese in Hong Kong has also evolved an informal written form which is used in newspapers, advertisements, comic books, government announcements, etc. Furthermore, Cantonese (and its related dialects) with approximately 40 million speakers in China and the overseas diaspora practically forms a linguistic chain that girdles the globe, from Southeast Asia to Australasia, North America, and Europe. Given that almost 90% of Hong Kong's 6.7 million residents speak Cantonese, do we really need to be concerned about the future of Cantonese in Hong Kong? On what basis would anyone reasonably predict that by the end of this century Cantonese could become a minority or endangered language in Hong Kong?

### **3.2 Change in relationship between Cantonese and Putonghua in Hong Kong**

My most pessimistic prediction is this: As Putonghua waxes into the dominant and pre-eminent language of the Hong Kong SAR by the middle of this century, Cantonese wanes in prestige and the number of domains in which it is used sharply contracts. In support of this view, we need look no further than Guangzhou where official language policy promotes Putonghua and regards Cantonese as an obstacle rather than as an additional asset to be positively valued.

The future of Hong Kong Cantonese has everything to do with political, social, and demographic developments. The general decline of Hong Kong Cantonese will be the result of the following developments over the next 50 years:

- (1) By the middle of the next century Putonghua will have been thoroughly implemented as the medium of instruction in almost all of Hong Kong schools;
- (2) With Putonghua-speaking teachers teaching students to read the standard Chinese characters with Putonghua pronunciation, the tradition of Hong Kong students formally learning to read the standard Chinese characters with Cantonese pronunciation will be lost (this knowledge may still be acquired informally by some youngsters from their parents and older people);
- (3) The disappearance of the Cantonese pronunciation of the Chinese characters among the younger generations will reduce the readership for publications written in Cantonese (to the delight of language purists who do not think Cantonese should be a written language), and the publishing industry will respond by decreasing and eventually eliminating its use of written Cantonese in newspapers, comic books, advertisements, etc.;
- (4) Young people will have established the habit of speaking among themselves in Putonghua; they will continue to use their peer-group language

outside the classroom, and will regard Cantonese as the language they speak at home with parents, grandparents, and other old people with whom they occasionally come into contact;

and finally, and quite significantly:

- (5) increasing immigration of Putonghua speakers from the mainland will mean a corresponding decline in the proportion of the population for whom Cantonese is the first language, and eventually the number of Cantonese speakers will fall below the critical mass that had maintained its status as Hong Kong's predominant community language.

On a somewhat more optimistic note, I suggest that well into this century Cantonese will still be spoken among family members and close friends. Public demand will probably ensure its continued but still declining use in live drama, radio and television programs, and popular songs. With school children no longer learning to read the Chinese characters with their Cantonese pronunciations, the readership for publications written in Cantonese will contract; yet the use of written Cantonese may survive in a few novels, comic books, entertainment periodicals, and advertisements written deliberately by authors intent on preserving their language. By the end of the 21st century Cantonese will have become a minority language in Hong Kong, and early in the 22nd century it may even have become endangered.

Although the promotion of Putonghua is not intended to replace the Chinese dialects, yet it has not been accompanied by any efforts to teach children who speak other Chinese dialects to value that knowledge so that the ability to speak two (or more) Chinese varieties is regarded as better than knowing only one. Just as on the mainland, Putonghua's gains in Hong Kong will come at the expense of Cantonese. The gradual decline in the number of young people retaining the language of their Cantonese-speaking parents and the sharp increase in the number of immigrants into Hong Kong from non-Cantonese speaking areas will cause the number of Cantonese speakers to decline sharply over the coming decades.

Despite adverse changes in its fortunes, Cantonese may still be able to tenaciously hang on here and there within the community in whatever places it can compete with Putonghua, or wherever it has been forced to retreat to in response to sociolinguistic pressures. One should never underestimate the power of language to symbolize the individual speaker's social identity and to serve as the major means for one group of people who feel bound together by their shared social beliefs, customs, values, and language to distinguish themselves from other groups. Yes, Cantonese will be pushed out of many domains in which its use is now taken for granted. Will this retreat force future generations of Cantonese speakers to develop a deeper appreciation for and attachment to their language which speakers today may not feel? We should not underestimate such a possibility.

It is only a matter of time for Putonghua to be considered Hong Kong's second essential language of wider communication and upward mobility alongside English; that is, for the foreseeable future it will not eclipse English in importance in the community, although that could happen further down the road. Cantonese will not lose its usefulness in the economic domain. Shenzhen factory managers find their knowledge of Cantonese especially useful in talking to their Cantonese-speaking workers. However, many factory workers are not Cantonese-speaking because they have migrated from other non-Cantonese-speaking parts of China, and for them the lingua franca is Putonghua. I predict that the proportion of Putonghua-speaking workers in Shenzhen will continue to grow over the coming decades. Indeed, in fifty years time the demographics of Hong Kong will have become much more like Shenzhen, in that the population will be much more diverse in terms of its place of origin. The proportion of the population that is Cantonese-speaking will fall over the coming decades as more Putonghua speakers migrate to Hong Kong. I can imagine that by the end of the century this predominantly Cantonese-speaking community will have been transformed into a predominantly Putonghua-speaking megalopolis that will have merged with Shenzhen.

### 3.3 Mutual influence among Cantonese, Putonghua, and English in Hong Kong

Whether the language purists like it or not, standard Chinese is (and very likely has been for much of its history) a pluricentric language, like English, Spanish, and other languages with far-flung geographical distributions from which they have acquired their distinctively local, indigenous characteristics. Bradley (1992) has pointed out that there are three geographical "centres" of standard Chinese, namely, mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore. I predict that after Putonghua has become well established in Hong Kong, Hong Kong will have become the fourth such centre, that is, as Putonghua develops in Hong Kong it will acquire its own unique characteristics that will distinguish it from the other three varieties.

During the period of the promotion of Putonghua in Hong Kong it will undergo so many changes in phonology, lexicon, and grammar through its contact with both Cantonese and English that the language purists may end up wishing that Putonghua had never come near Hong Kong. Indeed, this process may already be underway. For example, I have noticed that the female voice that announces the arrival of MTR airport trains at Kowloon Station incorrectly retroflexes the vowel in 車 (Putonghua [tʃhɿ], Cantonese [tshē:] in the word 列車 'train') as [tʃhɿ̌], possibly a case of hypercorrection. At any rate, the model upon which I base this prediction is the freewheeling linguistic environment of Taiwan over the past few decades. As a result of its contact with Taiwanese, Taiwan Guoyu has been losing some of the phonemic distinctions in the initials that characterize the standard variety. In addition to the collapse of the standard three series of dental, alveopalatal, and retroflex affricates and fricative to simply dental/alveolar, I also ob-

served during my stays in Taiwan during the 1980's that some young Taiwanese speakers of Guoyu had merged the retroflex approximant initial /z/ with the lateral approximant /l/ so that 熱 (Guoyu /zɿ/) 'hot' was pronounced the same as 樂 /lɿ/ 'happy'. Hansell (1992, 1994, 1995, forthcoming) has described in detail the processes by which Taiwan Guoyu has been borrowing English words and meanings. One can presume that similar developments are occurring in Putonghua on the mainland as it opens up more and more to outside economic and cultural influences that are cloaked in English. The same kinds of changes will happen to Putonghua in Hong Kong where English has become much better established over a longer period of time. The graphic representation of Chinese in both Taiwan and Hong Kong has been undergoing interesting changes through contact with the English alphabet, and these changes have been documented in Bauer (1982, 1988), Hansell (1994), and Li (1999).

Through increasingly close contact between the two languages, Cantonese and Putonghua will mutually affect each other's development in Hong Kong. For example, some phonological contrasts previously lost in Cantonese may be resurrected under the influence of Putonghua (for more details, see Bauer and Benedict 1997: 430-431). At the same time, Cantonese vocabulary will be much influenced by its contact with Putonghua. This has already been happening for some time in Guangzhou (and documented by Zeng 1995). In Hong Kong Cantonese speakers will continue to replace their native lexical items with the semantically-equivalent standard Chinese forms: I once overheard my Cantonese-speaking travel agent who was talking on the telephone say 謝謝 [tsɛː-tsɛː] 'thank you' instead of the expected Cantonese 多謝 [tɔː-tsɛː]. We may also see Cantonese 佢哋 *khēy-téj* 'they' be replaced with 他們 but pronounced in Cantonese as *thā-mūn* (Bauer and Benedict 1997: 431-432).

Some Hong Kong teachers bemoan the fact that their students write essays in which they mix in Cantonese vocabulary with standard Chinese, for example, writing Cantonese 冷氣機 *lāŋ-hej-kěj* 'air-conditioner' instead of standard Chinese 空調 *hōŋ-thīw*; Cantonese 行路 *hāŋ lów* 'walk, go on foot' instead of standard Chinese 走路 *tsew lów*; Cantonese 餸 *sog* 'food, side dishes for a meal' instead of standard Chinese 菜 *tshɔːj*; Cantonese 幾多 *kěj tɔː* 'how many' instead of standard Chinese 多少 *tɔː-sīw*. One of my M.A. students has written his M.A. thesis on the attitudes of Chinese-language teachers to this type of transfer of local Cantonese vocabulary into their students' standard Chinese essays (Chen 2000). Some teachers are more lenient than others in responding to their students' use of such words, apparently because they feel it is simply impossible to stop their students from doing so. In the present circumstances the problem seems unavoidable. If the student carries around in his/her head a dual vocabulary but is not sure which one of the two seemingly perfectly good words (in some cases semantic translations of items originally from English) is appropriate in

standard Chinese and s/he is accustomed to using one instead of the other in speech, then trying to decide which one is appropriate for the written style is no simple matter. In the case of the occasional English loanword, for example, Cantonese 沙律 *sāi-lét\** 'salad' in correspondence with standard Chinese 沙拉 *sā-lā*, the preference for the standard Chinese form seems to be somewhat arbitrary from the point of view of the Cantonese-speaking writer — unless s/he is particularly concerned with communicating with readers who do not speak Cantonese.

The use of Cantonese as the language of instruction in the schools, especially for Chinese language subjects, underscores the clash or gap between spoken Cantonese and standard written Chinese. Hong Kong's Putonghua teachers are well aware of this problem and see it as exacerbating their Cantonese-speaking students' difficulties in learning Putonghua. These differences are lurking in the students' minds and naturally affect their written and oral performance. Presumably, the teacher says something like: when we speak Putonghua, we do not say or write Cantonese X, but we say Putonghua Y instead. The perceived solution is to replace Cantonese with Putonghua as the language of instruction in the Chinese-language subjects. If the teacher and her students are reading and discussing in Putonghua, then the differences between Putonghua and Cantonese vocabulary and grammar — at least on the surface — do not arise.

In the coming decades Cantonese will continue to be much influenced by English as long as the two languages remain in intimate contact in Hong Kong. Whether this is politically correct or not is another matter. There is no question that Cantonese likes to borrow English words through the process of phonetic transliteration. Some linguists regard as unnecessary, undesirable, and politically incorrect the borrowing of words from foreign languages when the semantically-equivalent words already exist in Chinese. Chen Yuan (1998: 55) has described such borrowing with the bizarre and anachronistic term 語言污染 (Cantonese [*jy-jjɛn wu-jjɛn*] 'language pollution'; among the examples he cited is the widely-used Cantonese borrowing of English 'ball' as 波 *pō*, even though 球 *khēw* 'ball' already exists in standard Chinese. The fact of the matter is 波 *pō*, 菲林 *fēi-lēm*, 巴士 *pā-si\**, 的士 *tēk-si\**, 士多 *si-tō*, 沙律 *sāi-lét\**, 梳化 *sō-fā\** are the Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking community's words for 'ball', 'film', 'bus', 'taxi', 'store', 'salad', and 'sofa', respectively. Furthermore, Cantonese speakers who do not speak English have no idea these are actually English loanwords but think of them as Cantonese words. These and scores of other words just like them are so firmly entrenched in Cantonese, that there is little anyone can do to expunge them from the language short of washing people's mouths out with soap. Chen's astonishing use of the term *language pollution* may be based more on political rather than linguistic considerations, in that he may disapprove of the historical behavior of the colonialist nation which is the home of the source language. Whatever his reason for using this term, I believe that neither the concept

nor the term *language pollution* has any place in the scientific study of language. In my view, human languages are not at all like the air we breathe or the water we drink and cannot become polluted. Languages simply respond to the needs of their speakers who take words from other languages because that suits their purpose. Any normal language, and that includes Putonghua, borrows words from other languages, although the scale on which this is done varies from one language to another. Pity the poor language purist who peers closely at Hong Kong Cantonese, Japanese, or English; he will be so overwhelmed by borrowed words (his language pollution) on such a massive scale that all he will be able to do is to throw up his hands in complete despair.

In Bauer and Benedict (1997) I described how Cantonese has been borrowing English words over the past two hundred years and listed numerous phonetic correspondences between the two languages. Despite the long list of major differences in the phonotactic organization of Cantonese and English words, as well as the fact that Cantonese exploits lexical tone as opposed to lexical stress in English, the extraordinary flexibility of the Cantonese phonological system has facilitated the phonetic adaptation of hundreds of English words into the Cantonese lexicon. Given such extensive differences between Cantonese and English, one can only marvel at the collective ingenuity of Cantonese speakers to phonetically transform English words according to their own speech habits. A brief but very interesting example will show what I mean. In February 2000 I saw a Hong Kong-made film entitled <刀手> (*Killers*) and heard one of the triad characters say to another 你冇口口 *něj mōw thēj-sí*: 'You have no taste' (in regard to the choice of high quality silverware). To my delight as a close observer of the Cantonese lexicon I discovered that Cantonese has borrowed English *taste* [t<sup>h</sup>ejst] as *thēj-sí*; and in the process added a new syllable *thēj* to the Cantonese syllabary, since *thēj* does not occur as either the reading pronunciation of a standard Chinese character or as a colloquial Cantonese word. Although English *taste* has one of the numerous final consonant clusters which typically occur in English and which are not permitted in Cantonese, it presents no difficulty: Cantonese has deftly separated the cluster from the diphthong, lopped off the final alveolar stop -t, and turned the alveolar fricative *s* into the initial consonant of a second syllable. The result conforms to a common pattern in which Cantonese syllable *sí* corresponds to English syllable final *s* or *z* or final consonant cluster *st*, as witnessed by a couple of dozen or more Cantonese adaptations of originally monosyllabic English loanwords: 巴士 *pā-sí*: 'bus', 多士 *tō-sí*: 'toast', K 士 *khē-sí*: 'case', 口口 *pēn-sí*: 'Benz' (as in Mercedes Benz), 芝士 *təi-sí*: 'cheese', 波士 *pō-sí*: 'boss', 刁士 *tīw-sí*: 'duce', 籬士 *lēj-sí*: 'lace', 口口 *mēit-sí*: 'maths', 口口 *mīit-sí*: 'Miss' (address term); 安士 *ān-sí*: 'ounce', 派士 *phā-sí*: 'pass', 披士 *phēj-sí*: 'place', 甫士 *phōw-sí*: 'pose', etc. (Bauer and Benedict 1997: 363-364).



#### 4. THE FUTURE IS *NOW*: HONGKONGERS HAVE A STANDARD, OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

*"Putonghua is your standard language. You should learn it...."* Prof. Goran Malmqvist, sinologist and translator, in response to a question from a member of his audience attending his lecture at the Open University of Hong Kong, November 5, 1999.

On November 5, 1999 I attended a public lecture entitled "On the Art of Translation" at the Open University of Hong Kong given by Prof. Goran Malmqvist, the world-famous Swedish sinologist, translator, linguist, and member of the Nobel Prize literature committee. At the time I was supervising students engaged in final-year translation projects and found his speech particularly illuminating, informative, and insightful. After Prof. Malmqvist spoke, he took questions from his audience. His last questioner was a young woman from Hong Kong who said she was an interpreter and translator who spoke Cantonese but not Putonghua and felt at times rather uncomfortable and even embarrassed about this shortcoming in her linguistic abilities. What should she do? Without any hesitation Prof. Malmqvist replied that since Putonghua was the standard language everyone in Hong Kong should accept this fact and learn Putonghua. His reply received loud, resounding applause from his audience. Clearly, many people in Hong Kong agreed with him that they need to learn to speak the nation's standard language. While I also agree with him, I do so with some qualification: Yes, Hong Kong Cantonese-speakers should learn to speak Putonghua, but they should not assume or be made to think that doing this requires them to abandon their use of Cantonese (or any other minority Chinese dialect they may speak). Those involved in the promotion of Putonghua in Hong Kong should also consider including in their propaganda package the notion that knowledge of other Chinese dialects and foreign languages should be positively valued by the community. Doing this might even increase the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong and help raise the standard of Putonghua pronunciation. Undoubtedly, learning to speak Putonghua benefits Cantonese-speakers by opening up to them a wider world of new economic and social opportunities and cultural experiences; at the same time, however, retaining their use of Cantonese speech keeps them in touch with the rich cultural heritage on which their Hong Kong Chinese identity is based.

From this point of view, I felt Prof. Malmqvist's response to his questioner was rather ironic. In concluding his lecture, he had projected onto a large screen behind him the first three lines of the lyric poem "聲聲慢" which was composed by the 12th century Song Dynasty poet Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084-1151), whom he described as the greatest female poet in the history of Chinese literature. Prof. Malmqvist read out these three lines in Putonghua as follows (transcription in IPA):

Table 1. First three lines of “聲聲慢” phonetically transcribed in Putonghua

- 
- (1) 尋 [ɕyn135] 尋 [ɕyn135] 覓 [miŋ51] 覓 [miŋ51],  
 (2) 冷 [ləŋ 4214] 冷 [ləŋ 4214] 清 [tɕhiŋ155] 清 [tɕhiŋ155],  
 (3) 淒 [tɕhi155] 淒 [tɕhi155] 慘 [tʃan4214] 慘 [tʃan4214] 感 [tɕhi155] 感 [tɕhi155]<sup>2</sup>.
- 

He then pointed out to his audience that the sound system of the Chinese language spoken by Li Qingzhao was probably similar to that of Old Mandarin of the 13th century. In order to appreciate what the rhymes may have sounded like in the language of the poet, he projected onto the screen the phonetic transcription of the Old Mandarin sound values for each of the Chinese characters as they have been reconstructed in historical Chinese phonology as follows (N.B.: Malmqvist did not indicate the tones, and I have slightly modified his phonetic symbols for the sake of consistency in comparing Old Mandarin, Putonghua, and Cantonese):

Table 2. First three lines of “聲聲慢” phonetically transcribed in Old Mandarin

- 
- (1) 尋 [sim] 尋 [sim] 覓 [miek] 覓 [miek],  
 (2) 冷 [leŋ] 冷 [leŋ] 清 [tʃhiŋ] 清 [tʃhiŋ],  
 (3) 淒 [tʃhi] 淒 [tʃhi] 慘 [tʃham] 慘 [tʃham] 感 [tʃhiək] 感 [tʃhiək].
- 

Prof. Malmqvist noted that the comparison of the readings in Old Mandarin and modern Putonghua reveals that much of the original rhyming and alliteration have been practically lost due to the historical changes that have taken place in Mandarin phonology over the past 800 years or so. What struck me as ironic as I listened to Prof. Malmqvist was simply this: When one reads these lines of poetry with their *modern* Cantonese pronunciations, they sound remarkably similar to what they are presumed to have done in Old Mandarin:

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<sup>2</sup> At my request, Brian Holton, my colleague and fine translator of Chinese poetry, has kindly rendered these lines into English as follows:

“Seeking, seeking  
 Searching, searching  
 Cold, cold  
 Clear, clear  
 Desolate, desolate  
 Wretched, wretched  
 Despair, despair”.

Table 3. First three lines of “聲聲慢” phonetically transcribed in Cantonese

- 
- (1) 尋 [tshəmJ21] 尋 [tshəmJ21] 覓 [mekJ2] 覓 [mekJ2],  
 (2) 冷 [laŋJ23] 冷 [laŋJ23] 清 [tshɛŋJ55] 清 [tshɛŋJ55],  
 (3) 淒 [tshɛjJ55] 淒 [tshɛjJ55] 慘 [tshəmJ25] 慘 [tshəmJ25] 感 [tshɛkJ5] 感 [tshɛkJ5].
- 

I suspect that many of the Cantonese speakers sitting in the audience must have also observed just as I did the striking resemblance between the modern Cantonese and Old Mandarin pronunciations of these Chinese characters. I can only assume that Prof. Malmqvist does not speak Cantonese and that's why he did not draw his audience's attention to the similarity. As for the audience, no one there saw any need to enlighten their speaker.

Clearly, historical change has affected the Cantonese sound system less radically than that of Putonghua (or at least in different ways), and as a consequence Cantonese has better preserved the ancient Chinese initial consonants and rhymes. Almost any educated Cantonese-speaker knows that poetry from the Tang and Song dynasties rhymes much better when read with Cantonese pronunciation than Putonghua. Indeed, Cantonese speakers do not need to look to historical linguists to help them savor the rhymes, alliteration, and other devices of ancient poetry. In Hong Kong, school children have traditionally learned to read the standard Chinese characters with Cantonese pronunciation, yet one wonders if they are taught to treasure the spoken Cantonese language as one of their community's most unique and versatile cultural resources, or do they and their teachers simply take it for granted? That the modern Cantonese phonological system which speakers carry around in their heads resembles more closely the ancient Chinese sound system than does Putonghua could or even should be just one more reason why Cantonese speakers need not be made to feel guilty about speaking Cantonese.

## 5. CONCLUSION

A language is not simply a tool of communication or national unification; it is also a very powerful symbol of the cultural and social identity of the man or woman who speaks it. When the people who speak a minority language are encouraged to give up their vernacular by replacing it with the official standard language, does anyone ever consider both the gains *and* the losses in the language equation? What I wish Prof. Malmqvist and anyone involved in teaching and promoting Putonghua among speakers of other dialects in Hong Kong (and elsewhere) would couple their words of advice with is this: By all means, you as a speaker of Cantonese or any other dialect should learn to speak Putonghua, your standard language. But at the same time you should never forget that learning to

speaking Putonghua does *not* mean that you must give up speaking Cantonese; knowing how to speak two (or more) varieties of Chinese is far better than knowing just one.

Let us consider one approach to the teaching of languages in Hong Kong which may serve as a possible model, namely, the fairly complex trilingual system that is used in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (which in geographical size is about two and a half times larger than Hong Kong but has less than 6% of Hong Kong's population). At least, one can to some extent discern a parallel between the trilingual outcome in Luxembourg and Hong Kong's own trilingual objectives that many people would like to achieve. In Luxembourg the precise distribution of three languages at different grade levels succeeds in producing people who are proficient trilinguals. Briefly, according to Lebrun and Baetens Beardsmore (1993), Luxemburger, a dialect of Low German (which in turn is a dialect of standard German), is the national language, it has an official orthography, and is a compulsory subject in elementary school; although people from all social strata speak it, it is still mainly associated with the countryside and its vocabulary has not been modernized. Luxembourg's indigenous inhabitants first learn to speak the home language of Luxemburger which is also the language of instruction in the first years of primary school. However, German is taught as a subject in Grade 1, and it gradually replaces Luxemburger by Grade 6. In primary Grade 2 French is introduced as a subject, and in secondary school it and German are used as the languages of instruction for different subjects. Although French and German are regarded as the languages of higher education and wider communication, Luxemburger is the language of national identity which the people want to preserve. Their determination is fittingly reflected in Luxembourg's national motto: *Mir welle bleiwe wat mir sin*, that is, 'We wish to remain what we are' (Lebrun and Baetens Beardsmore 1993: 102). Some form of the Luxembourg model might be feasible for Hong Kong: lessons in the early primary grades would be taught in Cantonese, while Putonghua and English would be systematically phased in as both subjects and languages of instruction.

Finally, it seems to me that if Hong Kong society makes clear to speakers of Cantonese, other Chinese dialects, and non-Chinese languages that their speech varieties also have inherent value and deserve our respect, then these speech varieties will continue to be spoken for many more years to come. In specific terms, what I propose is this: First, Cantonese (and other speech varieties) should not be treated or regarded as an obstruction in the pathway of Putonghua; second, school children should be taught that in the process of learning Putonghua they need not give up or forget their home dialects and languages; and third, teachers should emphasize to their students that knowing two or more varieties of Chinese (and other languages) is an invaluable asset that will pay dividends throughout the speaker's life. Cantonese can have a bright future in Hong Kong in which it coexists with and even flourishes alongside Putonghua — but only if the community actively pursues a policy of tolerant, *live-and-let-live* multilingualism which is based on the principle of mutual respect for all its different speech varieties.

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# International Attitudes to Languages and the Study of Global Issues

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## ABSTRACT

This Chapter considers attitudes to language in Hong Kong and changes in these attitudes over the past few decades. Though the main focus of interest is attitudes to the English language, the results of surveys which have included attitudes to Chinese are also reported. These surveys have shown that Hong Kong's pragmatism has prevailed, even in its attitudes to language learning, with both English and Putonghua being considered primarily as useful tools for successful commerce. However, there are also signs of changes in attitudes, with a broader international outlook emerging, especially among younger Hong Kong people, who no longer see the English language as a threat to their Chinese identity, but as a useful tool for Internet use at home and for travel abroad. The Chapter recommends the encouragement by Hong Kong educators of this broadening of outlook and gives some specific suggestions of on-line and in-print materials on global issues to further this end.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong has always had difficulties with its language situation, and since it became a Special Administrative Region of China, the problems have become if anything even more complicated. There are various reasons for this: economic – the increased demand for good English speakers, especially in the growing service sector of the economy; educational – the problem of attracting good English teachers, with an interest in improving curriculum design and classroom practices to motivate students in the learning of English; socio-political – the increasing influence of the Mother Country and its link language, Putonghua, on the new step-child Hong Kong.

Grim forecasts have been made about the gradual demise of effective international English in Hong Kong. However, instead of bemoaning the decreasing standard of English in the new SAR, and offering bleak prospects for the future, this Chapter will suggest a positive way forward, through the fostering of a more international outlook among Hong Kong people, especially the young, and through increasing their perception of English as a language belonging to the world. The nurturing of a proper sense of nationalism in Hong Kong, now part of China, is a legitimate goal of education, and can be a positive force. At the same time, educators should also encourage young Hong Kong people to extend their horizons beyond the borders of their own country and to look on themselves as citizens of a wider world.

In this context, the English language has become, whether we like it or not, the most widespread language in the world. This spread has little to do with any internal superiority of the English language, but is a result of the colonial and trading history of England, and more recently, the economic and military might of America. Attitudes to this new world language vary from country to country, ranging from eager acceptance to resentful resistance.

The first, and main part of this Chapter considers the question of attitudes to language in Hong Kong and how these attitudes have changed over the past twenty or so years. The emphasis is on attitudes to English, but attitudes to Chinese are also discussed. The results of studies conducted before and after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 are considered. The second part of the Chapter is more pedagogical in approach, advocating the use of Global Issues in education and in English language teaching, as a means of nurturing more international attitudes among young Hong Kong people. Suggestions are given of useful on-line and in-print materials as resources for Hong Kong English language teachers, materials which can help to foster this more global outlook in their students.

## 2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES THEORY

One of the comforting aspects for the applied linguist who studies language attitudes is that the concept of attitudes is one which is familiar to everyone: "Attitude tends to be a natural part of the language of everyday discussion of language life. The administrator and not just the academic, the teacher and not just the theorist, the raconteur and not just the researcher tend to use the term attitude as part of everyday expression" (Baker 1992: 20).

Since most Hong Kong studies on language attitudes over the past two decades have drawn heavily on the work of the psychologist R.C. Gardner, and this has not always been sufficiently recognised, a preliminary summary of Gardner's approach to the study of language attitudes will first be given. In a seminal work, summing up over a decade of research, together with his colleague Lambert, Gardner examined the place



of attitudes in second-language learning (Gardner & Lambert 1972). Gardner continued steadily with his research into language attitudes (Gardner 1985), and gave attitudes a central position in his Socio-Educational Model of Second-Language Learning (Gardner 1988), updated in Gardner and MacIntyre (1993).

In this model, Gardner posits a strong connection between attitudes and motivation. He describes the essential ingredients of motivation as desire, effort and satisfaction: the motivated individual is "one who wants to achieve a particular goal, devotes considerable effort to achieve this goal, and experiences satisfaction in the activities associated with achieving this goal" (Gardner 1993:2). However, he maintains that motivation needs an affective basis to be maintained, and that attitudes serve this function.

The concept of language attitudes "refers to any attitudinal variables that might be implicated in the language-learning context" (Gardner 1993:9). The two main classes of attitudinal variables are "Integrativeness", and "Attitudes Towards the Learning Situation". By Integrativeness Gardner means attributes which reflect a positive outlook towards the language group which speaks the target language and also towards out-groups in general. Attitudes Towards the Learning Situation incorporate a number of different variables – the teacher, the class, the course, the textbook, the language itself – all of which affect the success or failure of language learning.

Another important affective variable which he included in his model was Language Anxiety, which he defines as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient, and the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking, listening, reading, or writing in the second language" (Gardner 1993:5). Anxiety is linked to the more general trait of Self-confidence, the feeling that this task is or is not beyond my capabilities. Apart from the affective variables, Gardner's comprehensive model also incorporates cognitive variables – Intelligence, Language Aptitude and Language-learning Strategies.

While Gardner's model for research into attitudes has been very significant, it has not of course been the only influential model, and researchers, especially those involved in classroom teaching, have taken account of comments like those of Johnstone (1995: 131): "While the fundamental importance of the Gardnerian social-psychological model is acknowledged, Dornyei and others have been calling for a more pragmatic, education-centred approach to motivation which would be more in line with the perceptions of practising teachers. They argue that Gardner's model, incorporating instrumental and integrative orientations, is grounded in the social milieu rather than the foreign language classroom".

There is also an increasing realisation that Gardner's distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation is not entirely satisfactory and does not sufficiently

capture the complex and dynamic process of motivation and its relatedness to attitudes – though, to be fair to Gardner, he himself readily acknowledges this.

### 3. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES RESEARCH IN HONG KONG

In Hong Kong there is a fairly strong recent history of research among applied linguists into the topic of attitudes to language, and more particularly to attitudes to the English language. Useful surveys of the literature and research, about a decade apart, can be found in Pierson (1987) and in Pennington (1998). Early work into attitudes to English in Hong Kong was done mostly with secondary school students as subjects (Fu 1975; Pierson, Fu & Lee 1980) and revealed on the one hand a strong desire to learn English and an appreciation of its importance, but on the other hand an antipathy to the colonial connection of the language, which was seen as being a threat to the Chinese identity of the subjects.

Later studies (Pennington & Yue 1994; Axler, Yang & Stevens 1998) replicated the earlier studies and found similar results with regard to the importance of English and the desire for proficiency in it for the students' future. However, the later studies produced very different results with regard to the perception of English as a threat to the subjects' Chinese identity. Students of the 1990s did not see their use of English as in any way a lessening of their Chineseness, looking on the English language much more dispassionately, as a useful tool for international business and travel (Boyle 1997a).

One of the most thorough pre-handover surveys of Hong Kong attitudes to English was done by Littlewood & Liu (1996). Working with tertiary students, and with a much larger number of subjects (N. 2,156), they considered language attitudes under three headings, Affective, Socio-political, and Pragmatic. These they defined as follows: "Affective attitudes refer to one's sense of ease or liking for English, English-speaking people and cultures. Socio-political attitudes denote beliefs about the use and status of English in Hong Kong. Pragmatic attitudes focus on the practical value of English for personal success in the modern world" (Littlewood & Liu 1996:76). This tripartite distinction goes beyond Gardner's dual Integrative/Instrumental distinction, though Affective and Integrative are clearly close, and Socio-political and Pragmatic both share elements of Instrumental.

In Littlewood & Liu's study, the four statements in each category which elicited the highest percentage of agreement from the respondents are given below.

The results show very clearly that while pragmatic motivation is the strongest, there also exists a sense of social concern for Hong Kong's future with regard to proficiency in English. On the affective scale, though the percentages are not so high, there is still strong evidence of positive attitudes to the English language and to its native-speakers and their way of life.

<u>Affective</u>	<u>% of Agreement</u>
I like the sound of the English language	77%
I like talking with foreign people in English	76%
I often feel comfortable when I speak English	57%
I like English-speaking people (British, Americans, etc. and their way of life)	56%
<u>Socio-political</u>	
English ought to be important in Hong Kong after 1997.	81%
English ought to be used more widely in Hong Kong.	79%
English ought to be a compulsory subject at University in Hong Kong	79%
English ought to be the medium of instruction in most Hong Kong schools.	74%
<u>Pragmatic</u>	
English is an important world language.	96%
I learn English in order to improve my career prospects.	93%
The use of English is one of the most important factors which has contributed to Hong Kong's success.	84%
English is the sign of an educated person in Hong Kong.	80%

Perhaps the most significant result, however, is the 96% agreement (the highest score for all the Statements) on "English is an important world language", compared with an 11% agreement (by far the lowest score for all the Statements) on "I will lose my Chinese identity if I am good at English". This underlines that while young Hong Kong University students nowadays recognise the importance of English as a world language and would like to be proficient users of it, at the same time they are comfortable with their Chinese identity and feel little threat to it from the English language.

Much of Hong Kong research into attitudes to language and to the English language in particular has been done in secondary and tertiary educational settings. This has its advantages, in that when research is replicated, very similar target populations can readily be found. However, it has obvious limitations too, since the problem of declining English language proficiency goes far beyond the classroom in present-day Hong Kong. As well as the socially upward-mobile (students from good schools and the universities) who will become Hong Kong's professional middle-class, there is also a growing number of disadvantaged populations in Hong Kong (students in low-banding schools, school-leavers who are unable to gain admission to university,

new immigrants, other ethnic minorities, manual workers, the unemployed). Much remains to be done in the study of language attitudes among these latter groups, where language attitudes may well be markedly different.

#### 4. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

One large-scale survey (N. 1093), conducted shortly before the handover of Hong Kong to China (Boyle 1996), did look beyond the student population, taking a wide range of young working adults (aged 20 to 40) as subjects, though it did not aim explicitly at the disadvantaged groups cited above. This survey will be described in some detail, since as well as broadening the range of subjects, it also went beyond attitudes to English, and investigated attitudes to Chinese. The occupations of the respondents were wide-ranging, including civil servants (mostly fairly low-level), business people at all levels (managerial to office clerk), workers in the financial sector (banking, insurance and property), travel agents, teachers, medical workers, engineers, police, firemen, and others.

A small-scale pilot survey was first conducted, the location being a busy shopping mall adjoining Shatin railway station. An analysis of the results of this pilot survey led to the simplifying of several questions. The large-scale survey was then conducted at the same location, by a team of ten pre-trained interviewers with a common set of questions, covering attitudes to English and to Putonghua, and including questions on the background of the subjects. Subjects were interviewed individually in Chinese and were explicitly told they need not answer any question which they did not want to. The questions were deliberately kept shorter than in the pilot survey, but subjects were encouraged to ask for verbal clarification if they wished.

Three questions were asked on attitudes to English, three on attitudes to Chinese (Putonghua and Cantonese), two on a comparison of attitudes to English and Putonghua, and finally three questions on the subjects' predictions for the post-1997 future of English, Cantonese and Putonghua. In describing the results of this survey, each question will be taken in turn, with percentages given, followed by a brief discussion, including direct quotation where pertinent.

##### **Attitudes to English**

###### *Question 1. Do you feel embarrassment speaking English in public?*

Fifty-three percent of the respondents said they did not feel embarrassment, 42% said they did, and 5% did not wish to respond.

The fact that a majority claimed not to feel embarrassment was surprising, in view of the repeated assertion in Hong Kong that standards in English are falling and that recent recruits to the business sector have an inadequate command of English. The level of embarrassment tended to correspond with the type of job the subjects did, with those who rarely used English in their job admitting to more embarrassment than those who used English regularly in their job.

Another significant factor was the type of school attended. Those who had been to a school which was genuinely English-medium were comfortable in their use of English. A group of subjects from one of Hong Kong's best schools claimed that speaking English was "just like speaking Cantonese – no big deal". Those from Chinese-medium schools, or from schools which are English-medium in theory but not in practice, admitted to a degree of embarrassment when speaking English in public, mainly because of their fear of making mistakes and losing face.

Apart from poor language proficiency, there was another reason given for embarrassment, namely the risk of being considered a "show-off". To some extent it has now become socially and culturally unacceptable for two Chinese to speak English together in public, instead of using Cantonese or in some circumstances mixed-code (Li 1994).

To respondents who asked for clarification on whether the question meant embarrassment when speaking English to another Chinese or to a foreigner, the agreed response among the interviewers was "Either or Both". Obviously, the nature and degree of the embarrassment could be different, but such a more exact analysis was beyond the purpose of this general survey.

*Question 2. Do you feel resentment at having to speak English in situations where the majority is Cantonese-speaking?*

Sixty-one percent said they did not feel resentment, 32% said they did, and 7% did not wish to answer.

This was again a rather surprising result. One of the frequently heard objections to the EETS (Expatriate English Teachers Scheme) was that local teachers resented having to use English at staff meetings when an expatriate teacher was present. There were other situations too where resentment was felt at English being imposed as the language of discussion by a small minority of English-speaking monolinguals, when the majority of the company was Chinese.

However, several of the respondents said it was a matter of courtesy to use English when anyone was present who could not understand Cantonese. They said they had been brought up in a society where "favouritism to foreigners prevails", and though

one person diagnosed this "favouritism" as "a by-product of British colonialism", they did not profess to feeling rancour about it.

Others admitted that while there would be no resentment at having to speak English on an occasional basis, if the situation became regular (as in the case of staff-meetings in the Expatriate Teachers Scheme) then they would feel differently about it.

The need for foreigners to learn Cantonese was frequently mentioned: "It is the responsibility of the minority foreigners who do not speak Cantonese to learn the local language and culture, if they want to stay in Hong Kong". Another respondent put it more bluntly: "If a Chinese wants to survive in France, he has to speak French. A similar rule should also apply to foreigners living in Hong Kong". Lord's (1987: 22) prediction, over a decade ago, that "the pressure on the overseas resident to use Chinese will grow" can be said to be proving correct.

*Question 3. Do you feel annoyance at native-speakers of English who criticise the poor standard of English in Hong Kong?*

The response of subjects to this question was fairly evenly divided, with 47% saying No, 44% saying Yes, and with 9% unwilling to answer.

Among those who felt annoyance the following reasons were given:

"Most of those who criticise us cannot speak any Cantonese themselves".

"They do not realise how difficult English is for us, because it is so different from Chinese".

"No matter how good at English Chinese speakers may be, foreigners always find something wrong with it".

"Foreigners tell us to communicate and not bother about mistakes, but when we do, they correct all our mistakes".

Respondents who did not feel any such annoyance were mostly themselves fairly proficient. Several of these commented that, since the standard of English in Hong Kong is getting rapidly worse, not only foreigners, but Chinese too, should be critical of it.

### **Attitudes to Chinese**

*Question 4. When talking of language, when you say "Chinese", do you mean Cantonese or Putonghua or something else?*

Fifty-six said they meant Cantonese, 24% said they meant Putonghua, and 20% said they meant something else, either Cantonese plus Putonghua, or Cantonese plus Putonghua plus other dialects like Chiuchow and Shanghainese.

The answers to this question revealed a striking change in attitude among Hong Kong people from earlier days. Twenty years ago, any Hong Kong person using the expression "Chinese" in the context of language would almost certainly have meant Cantonese. Thus, the 24% who considered Chinese to be Putonghua was unexpectedly high and revealed a significant change in attitude. Two responses, representing a common feeling, can be quoted:

"The concept of Chinese is changing in these few years, and more and more people think that Putonghua is Chinese, rather than Cantonese".

"Chinese will stand for only Putonghua in future. This change is not according to the wish of the Hong Kong people, but only because of political change".

Some called Putonghua and Cantonese "two dialects of the language Chinese", a view very different from that of Mainland Chinese, who consider Putonghua the standard language, and Cantonese as a dialect.

*Question 5. Do you think Putonghua will become more important than Cantonese in Hong Kong after 1997?*

Fifty-two percent thought Cantonese would be more important, 44% Putonghua, and 4% were unwilling to say.

Responses tended to correlate with type of job – the businessmen and upper level professionals favouring Putonghua, with those in lower level jobs opting for Cantonese. Those who chose Cantonese pointed to the neighbouring Guangdong province, where Cantonese is still much more widely used than Putonghua. They believed that Cantonese would continue to be used in business locally. They also thought there were cultural reasons why Cantonese would not give way to Putonghua: "Cantonese is more expressive orally" and "Cantonese songs are more touching than Putonghua songs".

Those who thought Putonghua would become more important than Cantonese said that, even if local business is done in Cantonese, intra-China business in the future will be done in Putonghua. However, they think more Cantonese terms will be mixed in with Putonghua, either because these terms are more convenient, or because the correct term in Putonghua is not known to the Cantonese speaker.

Those who favoured Putonghua also observed that merely having a larger proportion of speakers did not necessarily guarantee the predominance of a language. If

Putonghua were to become the language of the economic and political power elite in Hong Kong, then Putonghua would seriously threaten Cantonese. It was also pointed out that in the top schools in Guangdong, it is Putonghua, not Cantonese, which is the medium of instruction, and that the future leaders of the province were being educated in the language of Beijing, the capital.

Some were even of the opinion that Putonghua might become the regular medium of instruction in all Hong Kong schools, resulting in a bilingualism in education along the lines predicted by Lord and T'sou (1985), i.e. a Putonghua and English bilingualism, rather than a Putonghua and Cantonese bilingualism.

*Question 6. How would you rate your own standard of Putonghua – good, fair or bad – and what are you doing to improve it – a lot, a little, or nothing?*

To the first part of this two-pronged question, 78% of the respondents said their Putonghua was bad, 15% said fair, and only 7% said it was good.

A degree of Chinese modesty has to be allowed for in interpreting these figures and many made a distinction between their productive command of Putonghua and their comprehension of the language. In an earlier survey in 1983, 39% claimed at least to understand Putonghua. In a survey ten years later in 1993, this figure had risen to 63%. In present-day Hong Kong the figure for those who claim to understand Putonghua would almost certainly be much higher, though this is something which has to be researched more accurately. It can also safely be said that the number of Hong Kong people who speak Putonghua reasonably well is rising, though again this needs research.

In response to the second prong of the question – what are they doing to improve their Putonghua – 15% said they were doing “a lot”, 27% said they were doing “a little”, while 58% they were doing nothing to improve it. This last figure was surprising, given the imminent prospect of the return of Hong Kong to Mainland China at the time of the survey. When asked for examples of what they meant by “a lot”, “a little” or “nothing”, those who claimed to be doing “a lot” were mostly working for companies doing business in China, and therefore a practical knowledge of Putonghua was a business necessity. Others claimed to have taken active steps to improve their Putonghua, in response to increasing demands for Putonghua in job advertisements. Some had enrolled in a series of night classes and had also visited Mainland China whenever they could.

Among those who claimed to be doing “a little”, the most common practice cited was watching Putonghua movies. Songs in Putonghua were also mentioned, but the local Cantonese pop songs were still said to be more popular. Some had taken evening lessons in Putonghua, but in the absence of a really strong immediate motive to learn the language, had given up.



Those who said they were doing "nothing" to improve their Putonghua nearly all said that knowledge of the language was not necessary yet, but that when it did become necessary, they would certainly learn it. As one respondent said, in typical Hong Kong pragmatic fashion: "Of course we will learn Putonghua when we have to. And if we have to learn French and German, we will learn them too".

A very few of the respondents said they did not like Putonghua and did not want to learn it: "Hong Kong people do not want to identify themselves with people in Mainland China". However, the majority, even of those who claimed to be doing nothing to learn Putonghua, were fairly positive in their attitude towards the language.

### **Attitudes to English and Putonghua**

*Question 7. If you could be excellent in only one language, English or Putonghua, which would it be and why?*

Seventy-five percent chose English, 15% Putonghua, and 6% had no opinion. The age factor was important in the response to this question: younger people favoured English very strongly, whereas the older subjects tended more towards Putonghua. Among the reasons given for their preference for English were:

"It is the most important international language".

"It is the most useful language when travelling".

"It opens the door to better jobs".

"It makes the learning of other European languages easier".

"It makes watching English films and TV more enjoyable".

Some of the reasons given by those choosing Putonghua were:

"It is the language of a huge number of the world's population".

"It is an official language of the United Nations".

"It is right for a Chinese to know Putonghua".

"It will become more important in Hong Kong in the future".

"It will give better job prospects".

On this question some other particularly trenchant opinions were expressed, which are worth quoting:

**For English:**

"Putonghua is a boon; English is a must".

"When going for a job in Hong Kong, English is still the most important language; Putonghua is just icing on the cake".

**And for Putonghua:**

"Putonghua gives you a sense of racial connection which cannot be found with other foreign languages".

"Putonghua will become more important as China grows stronger in the world".

*Question 8. If you had to choose either English or Putonghua for your children, which one would you choose and why?*

Seventy-nine percent chose English, 7% Putonghua, and 12% were unwilling to choose. Those who chose English did so for the same sort of reasons as in the responses to the previous question. Those who preferred Putonghua said it was because they thought their children would remain in Hong Kong and that Putonghua would then be the most influential language, especially in the civil service and in government.

The 12% who refused to choose one or the other language were unwilling to do so, since they (quite reasonably) said they wanted **both** English and Putonghua for their children. This group appreciated more clearly that while it may have been sufficient for themselves to be, in the words of So (1992: 85), "bilingual brokers mediating between the colonial administration and the governed", their children would need to be "trilingual brokers mediating among Beijing, the local government and the international community".

### **Attitudes to English, Cantonese and Putonghua**

Finally, we look at the responses to the three "prediction" questions, to which the respondents were asked to give only brief answers, and on which commentary here will also be very brief, since the predictions, though interesting, are now really only of historic interest.

*Question 9. Which language do you think will be the most important in administration in the Hong Kong SAR – English, Cantonese or Putonghua?*

Fifteen percent said English, 45% Cantonese, and 40% Putonghua. Apart from the big predicted decline in the use of English, the fact that a majority thought Cantonese would be more important than Putonghua was notable.

*Question 10. Which language will best benefit the economic development of Hong Kong?*

Eighty percent said English, 6% Cantonese, and 14% Putonghua. Despite the answers to Question 9, English was clearly seen as still of enormous importance to Hong Kong's economic future.

*Question 11. Which language will be most useful for your career prospects?*

Seventy-five percent said English, 12% Cantonese, and 13% Putonghua. Again, the importance of English for job prospects was seen as paramount.

One of the most interesting aspects of the answers to the above three questions was that in this survey, conducted immediately prior to 1997, Putonghua was seen by the respondents as unlikely to become the dominant language in Hong Kong, at least in the short to medium-term future. Two years later, this opinion was vindicated by Li (1999) who concluded that Cantonese and English were still considered the most important languages in the Hong Kong SAR. How long this situation will persist is difficult to say and will certainly be a fruitful continuing area of research.

## 5. POST-1997 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN HONG KONG

Listing several questions of importance for Hong Kong's language future, Giles (1998) commented on this tantalisingly unclear future for Putonghua: "How will all these issues be impacted by any moves towards fostering a sense of national identity after 1997, how will Putonghua be promoted and disseminated, and at what rate will it be introduced across the different institutions of Hong Kong?" Certainly, post-1997 there seems to be a fast-growing increase in eagerness to learn Putonghua. Elective courses in Putonghua in the universities are all heavily oversubscribed and extramural evening classes in Putonghua for working adults are also extremely popular.

Lam (1998: 63), discussing the question of Hong Kong's language of education, makes a compelling case for a change from the present confused Cantonese and English policy to a policy which has Putonghua eventually as the main medium of instruction. She does not advocate this happening too rapidly. Rather, she advises a

gradual shift from the present mixed-code Cantonese and English to "a more Putonghua-like Cantonese, with Putonghua's grammatical structure and Cantonese pronunciation and intonations". Allowing five years for Primary school children to master Putonghua, she thinks it should then become the main medium of instruction in all schools.

Is there a danger that the surge of interest in Putonghua in Hong Kong may be to the detriment of English? A survey by Pan (1999) provided evidence for this conclusion. This survey compared the attitudes of 295 Hong Kong adults to English, Cantonese and Putonghua before and after the 1997 handover. According to the figures given in the study, rating the three languages in terms of "Importance": pre-1997, English scored 90%, Cantonese 9% and Putonghua 1%; whereas in 1999, two years after the handover, English scored only 35%, Cantonese 14% and Putonghua scored 44%. Rating the languages in terms of "Popularity": pre-1997, English scored 76%, Cantonese 20% and Putonghua 3%; whereas in 1999, English scored 25%, Cantonese, 20% and Putonghua 54%.

The change in attitudes represented by these figures is astonishing, though it has to be said that lack of information on the educational level and social status of the subjects and the comparatively small size of the sample would very much affect the generalizability of such results.

Another recent study (Man 1999), more carefully limited in scope, investigated the attitudes to English of Sixth form pupils from six Hong Kong secondary schools. This gave results which were more in line with the majority of earlier pre-1997 studies. Again however, the study was relatively small-scale (N. 352, three Chinese-medium, three English-medium schools) and therefore can be taken as no more than indicative. In addition, no information was given on the banding of the schools, which would have been helpful in order to factor in the social variable. However, given these limitations, this study offered a possible alternative corrective to the findings of the study of Pan (1999). Though the Man (1999) study did find signs of diminishing interest in English, there was no evidence of the kind of dramatic drop reported in the Pan study.

Some details of the Man (1999) survey will illustrate this. The pupils were asked to respond, on a scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree), to questions about their attitudes to the English language. The scores on some of the most relevant questions follow (the lower the score, the higher the level of agreement):

- I learn English in order to improve my career prospects. (2.5)
- I like to see English-language films. (2.7)
- It is good to have English as one of the official languages of Hong Kong. (2.7)
- Learning English is a waste of time. (5.8)

From the above responses it is clear that English is still considered, by these students at any rate, as being useful and important, both for instrumental and integrative purposes.

On the other hand, their responses to other statements indicate that their enthusiasm for English and their willingness to work at it are only moderate:

- I really enjoy learning English. (3.8)
- I often do things (e.g. watch TV, read books) to improve my English (4.1)

These results are in agreement with the conclusions of the survey of Littlewood & Liu (1996:80): "The results also point to a gap between students' positive attitudes to English and their motivation to take concrete steps to improve their English". Moreover, the subjects' reaction to statements in the Man (1999) survey that English is a threat to their Chinese identity was largely negative:

- I feel uneasy when I hear a Chinese speaking English. (4.7)
- When using English, I do not feel that I am Chinese any more. (5.9)

In addition, this group of young students gave very positive responses to broader statements on openness to other languages and cultures:

- If I visit a foreign country, I would like to be able to speak the language of the people. (2.3)
- It is important for Chinese to learn foreign languages. (2.6)
- Learning English enables me to see and understand the world in a different way. (2.6)

Their attitude to English as being a colonial language was neutral.

- I think of English as a colonial language in Hong Kong. (4.0)

This is interesting, and seems to indicate that there is still some residual feeling, even among the young people of Hong Kong, that English is the language of colonialism, though there are no strong feelings on the matter. The whole question of whether the English language in Hong Kong's history can rightly be termed "imperialist" has been discussed at length in Boyle (1997b). In present-day Hong Kong, the large weight of evidence is that, though there may indeed be an anti-colonial residue in attitudes towards English, it is the pragmatic outlook which prevails.

This was very clearly the conclusion of Littlewood & Liu (1996: 80): "Furthermore, students think of English more as an important world language (96%) than a colonial one (56%). If students were indeed inhibited at one time by perceptions of English as

a colonial language, our survey and other studies (e.g. Yu & Atkinson 1988, Pennington & Yue 1993, Pennington 1994, Boyle 1996) indicate that these perceptions have now diminished and that students' attitudes to English have been affected by broader social and political changes".

Similar results were found by Hyland (1997:207), who concludes in his carefully constructed, substantial (N. 926) investigation of the attitudes of Hong Kong university students: "These Cantonese speakers were firm in their views that English did not detract from their own sense of ethnic identity ... Overall these results suggest that for this group of Hong Kongers at least, antipathy and antagonism to English as a local language of colonial power is less significant than recognition of its value as an international language".

In a significant study by Lin and Detaramani (1998), employing a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (akin to Gardner's integrative and instrumental motivation), it was found that extrinsic motivation was closely associated with a feeling of being forced to learn English, whereas with intrinsic motivation this was much less evident. Moreover, a negative relationship was found to exist between a feeling of being forced to learn English and English attainment.

The pedagogical implications of this study are evident, in highlighting the need to find ways of increasing intrinsic motivation in English language learning – and it is to this topic that we now turn.

## 6. FOSTERING ATTITUDES TO ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

The English language nowadays faces a basic dilemma. On the one hand, over the past few decades it has come to be accepted as the most important world language of international communication, while on the other hand, there has been a growing recognition of the independence, the maturity and self-assurance of its different national varieties. This is the recurrent theme of such books as *The English Languages*, (McArthur 1998) and of journals like *World Englishes* and *English Today*. There is a growing sense that English is not the exclusive property of the USA, the UK and the like, but that it is an international language which belongs to the world. Encouraging this kind of attitude can often be useful in motivating students to learn English, since the objective becomes not so much the learning of the language of a foreign, perhaps ex-colonial power, but rather the equipping of oneself to join a world-wide body of English language users.

As has been seen in our consideration of various studies on attitudes to language in Hong Kong, Hong Kong people, or at least younger Hong Kong people, are generally

very positive about English, which they see as a most useful language for global communication, rather than as the language of colonialism. Hong Kong is very much a Chinese city, but it is also in very real ways a bicultural society (Li, 1996). Young Hong Kong Chinese have a strong sense of pride in their nation and ethnic identity, but at the same time, with increased travel and communication, they have become more international in their outlook. As educators, we must ask how these positive attitudes can best be reinforced.

One fruitful way of developing these more international attitudes among young Hong Kong people, is the inclusion in the language curriculum, as early as possible, of important issues of global concern. These should be issues which can be seen as somehow relevant to the students' own lives, if not immediately, then in the future. Global problems and challenges can be chosen to which there is no easy answer and for which different solutions can be offered, involving different points of view. In contrast to a pedagogy of dull drills and shallow content, language learning can be made more attractive and effective through the use of materials which have depth and substance: "The message here for the language teacher may be to introduce more radical, controversial and difficult material into the language lesson, so that a deeper level of involvement can be engendered" (Morgan, 1993: 73).

## **7. ON-LINE MATERIALS ON GLOBAL ISSUES**

The final part of this Chapter will suggest sources, both on-line and in-print, of teaching materials which have substance and can stimulate critical thinking and concerned discussion. Some of the material available on the Internet on such Global Issues is excellent and makes admirable teaching material, especially for Hong Kong students, who like to work with computers and enjoy surfing the Web. Once they have been guided into a few relevant Websites, it is relatively easy for them to discover others. Half a dozen good starter addresses are given below:

1. Planet English (<http://www.planetenglish.com>)  
This enables students to become citizens of Planet English and make key-pals.
2. One World School Page (<http://www.oneworld.org>)  
This contains helpful classroom materials under the headings of Literacy, Health, Hunger, Conflict, Environment, Money Matters, Population.
3. TESL Internet Journal (<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>)  
This is the definitive list of links to ESL/EFL sites and chat corners.
4. The Virtual English Language Centre (<http://www.comenius.com>)  
This offers fluency and idiom software, plus e-mail partners and Net-friends.

5. Global Issues Special Interest Group:  
(<http://www.countryschool.com.gisig.htm>)

6. Global Issues: Web Resources (<http://countryschool.com/gisig5.htm>)

A wide range of topics can be found in these and other Websites, all of them challenging and mind-broadening.

To give an example, on the following Website, Global Education, at (<http://www.afs.org/efil/global-edu.htm>), Human Rights and Intercultural Issues are considered. An introduction to Human Rights is given – what they are and why they are important. Ideas follow on how to incorporate the issue of Human Rights into different branches of education, rather than treating it as an isolated, separate topic. The complex and often controversial nature of many Human Rights issues can be a challenge to improve students' critical ability, skills in information gathering, clarity of thought and expression, and growth in tolerance for differences of opinion. Topics under Intercultural Issues give the students a chance to examine and discuss cultural diversity in a positive way and to value the relationships between peoples of different cultures. Examples of intercultural education are outlined, with the goal of producing more appreciative and respectful relations between peoples. Respect for minority groups is another important issue for discussion. Values such as justice and solidarity are explored. The nature of prejudice is examined. Ways of increasing sensitivity to the less immediately visible aspects of other cultures are suggested.

To offer another example: on another Website, Earth Alert, at (<http://www.discovery.com/news/earthalert.html>), excellent thought-provoking material is available on topics like typhoons world-wide, earthquakes, the spread of global diseases, etc. A click on the mouse can produce more detailed material when individual interest has been aroused. For example, on diseases world-wide, there are subsections on Bubonic Plague in Namibia, Flesh-eating Bacteria in Australia, Viral Encephalitis in Malaysia, Meningitis in Sudan, Ebola in the Congo, AIDS world-wide, etc.

## 8. GLOBAL ISSUES PUBLICATIONS

Some Websites are linked to a publication and the printed copy can be obtained. For example, a challenging site which introduces a magazine called *The New Internationalist* can be found at (<http://www2.gol.com/users/bobkeim/contents/html>). This deals in a stimulating manner with a wide range of issues of global concern. For example: Forgiving the international debt of the world's poorest countries; Economic sanctions on "errant" countries; How to deal with waste, especially nuclear waste; Child labour; Family size and abortion; Euthanasia; Organ transplants; Mutilation and injury caused by landmines.



Another very helpful newsletter, especially for Asian students, is *Global Issues in Language Education*.

More comprehensive information about this Website may be obtained at (<http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/nsig/globalissues/gi.html>) and details on subscriptions are obtainable by e-mail ([kcates@fed.tottori-u.ac.jp](mailto:kcates@fed.tottori-u.ac.jp)). This Newsletter has sections on: Abstracts of global education articles from language teaching journals; News from different language teaching organisations world-wide; Reports on Conferences linking language teaching and peace issues; Gender issues; Global education – who's doing what?

Another example of useful in-print material for combining English language learning with mind-broadening and the development of international interests, is a splendid magazine entitled *Understanding Global Issues*. It is published by Understanding Global Issues Ltd, The Runnings, Cheltenham GL51 9PQ, UK. More information is available by e-mail from ([ugi@esb.co.uk](mailto:ugi@esb.co.uk)).

This magazine considers issues of international and global concern and gives excellent coverage, from a variety of different viewpoints, providing up-to-date statistical material, in the way of Tables and Charts. The two centre-pages are always a large coloured map of the world or the region being discussed, with accompanying Charts and Figures. This magazine comes out six times a year, is most attractively produced, short enough not to become boring for students, and can be thoroughly recommended to any teacher wishing to get started in the systematic use of Global Issues in the language classroom.

Each number deals with a specific issue. To give some idea of the range of topics covered in recent numbers: Weapons of War; The Energy Dilemma; Organised Crime; Fairer Global Trade; The Conquest of Disease; Reinventing NATO; The Global Village; The World of Islam. The New China. Sometimes a regional topic is chosen: The Pacific Rim; The United States; Europe 1945-95; South Africa; The Agony of Mexico; North and South Korea; Singapore Miracle; Indonesia in Crisis.

A page-by page description of one recent number, entitled *Asia's Financial Crisis*, may serve to illustrate the potential of *Understanding Global Issues* as a source of first-class teaching material. Each page is A4 size. Page 1, The Miracle Years, describes the way East Asian countries were previously models of economic growth. Pages 2 and 3 counteract the Western tendency to lump Asian states together, ignoring the differences between them. Brief outlines are given of the different economies of China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Pages 4 and 5 describe the early warning signs of economic trouble in the region, including over-borrowing, soaring asset prices and corruption scandals. Page 6 details the collapse in

Thailand when the Thai baht was forced to devalue in 1997. Page 7 is a side-by-side listing of the Strengths and Weaknesses of East Asian Cultures and Economies.

Pages 8 and 9 are the centre pages, with a large colourful map of the region, with the flags of the different nations, charts of the growth and decline in GNP between 1965 and 1997, and of growth in exports.

Pages 10 and 11 are entitled *The Contagion Spreads*, and describe the economic collapse of Indonesia, South Korea and their turning to the IMF. Pages 12 and 13 deal with Indonesia's Nightmare in detail. Pages 14 and 15, *Lessons of the Fall*, considers how the Asian crisis came close to wrecking the global economy. Page 16 is a glossary of economic terms for the non-specialist: ASEAN; chaebol; IMF; current account deficit; unhedged debt; price/earnings ratio, etc. Page 17 gives a Bibliography for further reading. The last page, 18, gives Notes to accompany the map on the Centre pages. This can be conveniently posted on a notice-board beside the Centre-page map.

All the above suggestions, both on-line and in-print, represent only a small part of the huge amount of material available in English on Global Issues, which can be used to broaden and internationalise students' thinking while at the same time improving their language proficiency.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This Chapter has looked at attitudes to English and Putonghua in Hong Kong both before and after the return of Hong Kong to China. It has been seen that attitudes to the learning of language among Hong Kong people remain very pragmatic and job-related. However, significant changes in attitudes, especially among the young, have taken place over the past few decades. In particular, there has been a diminution of the feeling that learning English is a threat to Chinese identity, and English is being seen more as an international language than as a colonial language.

Though the English language is still considered as something which is very important for Hong Kong's future, Putonghua is inevitably seen as exerting more and more influence on the Hong Kong scene, as business with China expands and travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland increases. The future for Cantonese is generally thought to be positive, though the question of medium of instruction in schools will not be easily solved and the future may see more mingling of Putonghua and Cantonese, in the same way as a mixed code of Cantonese and English has emerged.

English is still recognised as the most useful tool for exploring on-line and on foot, for surfing the Web and for traversing the planet. The broadening of outlook which

Internet use and international travel can engender are to be applauded and encouraged. This Chapter has suggested that efforts have to be made by educators in Hong Kong to foster international attitudes among the young through a study of global matters of universal importance. On-line and in-print locations have been indicated where materials on such global issues can readily be found.

Hong Kong has always prided itself on being a bridge between East and West. It is important, as the West struggles to find spiritual values in an increasingly material world, and to find answers to global problems in an increasingly complex world, that the wisdom of the East, and of China in particular, is brought to the discussion table.

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# Orality in Hong Kong Print Media\*

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how the societal and the generic constraints of the media genres have led to the use of orality in the Chinese print media of present-day Hong Kong. The data presented in this study include both commercial and political advertising, and both local and entertainment news texts. Three different forms of orality that are mingled in the different types of written media discourse are identified: 1) question-answer pairs; 2) general emphatics, first person pronouns and second person pronouns; 3) colloquial Cantonese. Besides their interpersonal function of involvement and the social functions of solidarity and in-group identity, these orality features and strategies are found to 1) help the success of an advertisement by enhancing its attention value, readability, memorability, and consequently selling power, 2) enhance the immediacy, credibility, and objectivity of the news reporting by foregrounding the individual's voice, style or comments. Finally, implications and suggestions are provided for a dynamic approach towards language use and cultural expressions in society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that written and oral communication involve very different kinds of linguistic features and strategies: What works orally does not usually work in print, and vice versa. The use of orality-oriented features or strategies in the writing of Hong Kong students or in the Chinese print media of

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Hong Kong has led to worries and fear among educationalists (e.g., 盧斗懷等 1998; 曾志雄 1998) that Chinese is at the risk of being impoverished, literacy is at the risk of dying, and civilization as we know it is doomed in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the different values and advantages associated with the speaking mode versus the writing mode of communication in Chinese; and even less work has been done on systematically investigating and explaining the positive aspect of orality in written discourse in Hong Kong.

The present chapter therefore aims to: 1) identify the different forms of orality used in the Chinese print media of postcolonial Hong Kong; 2) investigate the functions and values of orality in relation to both the macro-context (i.e., the socio-cultural context) and the micro-context (i.e., the context of the genre) in which they are produced; and 3) provide implications and suggestions for a dynamic approach towards language use and cultural expressions in society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, sociolinguists, anthropologists as well as literary scholars have shown great interest and done a great deal of work in relation to the orality/literacy issue. Earlier studies by sociolinguists tended to focus their attention on identifying the specific features that distinguish the two modes. Among the dichotomies between speaking and writing are: one is structurally simple while the other is structurally complex (e.g., Akinnaso 1982); one is implicit while the other is explicit (e.g., DeVito 1966); one is unplanned while the other is planned (e.g., Ochs 1979); one is contextualized while the other is decontextualized (e.g., Olson 1977); one is fragmented while the other is integrated (e.g., Stubbs 1980); one is more personally involved while the other is more personally detached (e.g., Chafe 1982), and so on.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, sociolinguists and literary scholars have also recognized that there are complex relationships between orality and literacy and that simple dichotomous classifications or polarization of speech and writing are not able to explain the multi-faceted and multi-sensory forms of language and cultural expressions in the society. Anthropologists and literary scholars such as Goody (1968, 1977), Goody and Watt (1963) and Ong (1971, 1977, 1982) have written extensively on the orality/literacy question in relation to the development of communication in history. They pointed out that our verbal communication moved from orality to literacy and on to what they termed the "secondary orality" with radio and television, and that orality and literacy mutually enriched each other in the evolution of human consciousness. Sociolinguists such as Lakoff (1982) also found that with social change and the development of electronic media after the printing technology, there was a deliberate mingling of oral strategies by younger writers in written communication. Furthermore, Linn (1995) and Horowitz (1995) indicated that bilingual and bicultural writers tended to use ver-

naacular expressions and other orality features or strategies for expressing affect and their ethnolinguistic identity.

In recent years, scholars studying media discourse have also demonstrated the mixing of different genres or a large amount of stylistic variation in media discourse production. Fairclough (1995) found that the *Midnight Special* program on politics in Britain manifested a mixing of political discourse with the elements of simulated conversation and entertainment performance act. He attributed such a phenomenon of domestication or conversationalization of the mediated political discourse as embedded within the shift in social practice: "Media consumption has evolved as an important element of leisure activity, in which audiences expect relaxation and entertainment, and in which audiences are increasingly constructed as consumers rather than citizens" (Fairclough 1995: 179).

Regarding the mingling of orality in written discourse in Chinese, some studies have also been done. Lo and Wong (1990) found a polyglossic situation of language use in Hong Kong print media: The quality press in Hong Kong tended to adopt the literacy-oriented discourse strategies, conforming to the standard Chinese language, while the popular press tended to adopt the orality-oriented discourse strategies, being more similar to the use of Cantonese as the spoken dialect. Wu and Hui (1997) and 吳東英、許謙文 (2000) also found that, compared with their counterpart in mainland China, print entertainment news discourse in Hong Kong used more orality-oriented discourse strategies. But their explanation of the phenomena was rather brief: Hong Kong press is market-oriented and the use of on-line interaction features and strategies helps to entertain and attract a larger and wider audience. Nevertheless, Snow (1994) pointed out that the emergence of Cantonese literature in Hong Kong after the 1980's was an indicator of a population identifying with their dialect region, that is, a stronger sense among Hong Kong people of Cantonese as a symbol of Hong Kong's culture and their own identity.

We can observe that, while a great deal of attention has been paid to not only documenting but also explaining the phenomena of mingling orality with literacy and of hybridization of genres/discourses in English or in different varieties of English, little has been done in Chinese. Furthermore, even though Fairclough (1995: 167) has pointed out that the generic mixture of the discursive practice is realized textually in heterogeneity – the text is heterogeneous both in its meanings and in the realizations of the meanings in the forms of the text – little further work has been done in systematically studying the heterogeneous forms and meanings involved in the interdiscursive practice of today. In the following section, I will try to systematically investigate (i) the different forms of orality as they are mixed in the Chinese print media of postcolonial Hong Kong, and (ii) the heterogeneous functions/meanings that these forms of orality serve in both the socio-cultural context of Hong Kong (the macro-context) and the specific news or advertising genre contexts (the micro-contexts).

### 3. THE PRESENT STUDY

#### 3.1 Defining orality

Orality/literacy are polysemous terms which can cover two different but related aspects of communication: the "medium" versus the "mode" of communication. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of oral mode of communication in the print/writing medium of Hong Kong media. The definition of orality is based on Raible (1996). According to Raible (1996), the typical oral mode of communication, no matter whether it is in the spoken or the written media, manifests a differential level of cognitive and linguistic simplicity and is represented by use of the linguistic features that are found in small-talk and everyday conversation between two friends (Raible 1996: 20). The possible linguistic features that represent typical speaking/orality<sup>1</sup> can be many; but for the purpose of the present study, I will focus mainly on 1) question-answer pairs, as they represent the typical conversational structure (Sacks et al. 1974, Stenstrom 1994); 2) general emphatics<sup>2</sup>, first person pronouns, and second person pronouns, as they indicate orientation to person and co-involvement which are critical elements of conversation (Biber 1988, Chafe 1982, Fairclough 1995); 3) colloquial Cantonese, as they represent typical linguistic choice or style in informal conversation between friends in Hong Kong.

#### 3.2 The data

The data covers the period from January, 1998 to January, 2000. The types of Hong Kong print media data reported in this study include those of advertising and news. The sample of advertising texts include both commercial and political advertisements, while the sample of news texts include both local and entertainment news in the quality as well as popular press.

#### 3.3 Forms of orality in Hong Kong print media

One important evidence for the use of orality in the print media of Hong Kong is the use of question-answer pairs. "Questions and answers constitute the backbone

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the difference between orality and literacy is not absolute but is more like a continuum between two poles. The linguistic features listed here as representing typical speaking may in fact occur in writing as well; but the distribution of such features in typical writing is statistically much lower and they are thus typically associated with orality/typical speaking. The reader can refer to Biber (1988) for further details on the statistical distribution of the different linguistic features in various genres or registers.

<sup>2</sup> General emphatics refers to the particles expressing enthusiastic involvement in what is being said, e.g., exclamation mark "!" and words like "just" and "really", etc.



of conversation" (Stenstrom 1994: 1). And this structure of questions and answers is often used in print advertisements in Hong Kong. For example:

1. (a) 深圳 邊度 見? 梗係 香格里拉!  
 sam1zan3 bin1dou6 gin3? gang2hai6 hoeng1gaak3lei5laai1  
 Shenzhen where meet of-course Shangrila

香宮又得、咖啡園又得、  
 hoeng1gung1 jau6 dak1, gaa3fe1jyun4 jau6 dak1,  
 Xianggong OK Coffee Garden OK

西村又得..  
 sai1cyun1 jau6dak1...  
 West Village OK

'Where should we meet in Shenzhen? Shangrila of course. We can meet at Xianggong, or Coffee Garden, or West Village...  
 ( 香格里拉酒店 / Shangrila Hotel )

- (b) 咁到底 邊個第一 呢?  
 gam2 dou3dai2 bin1go3 dai6jat1 nei  
 PART on-earth who first PART

知道 SUNDAY 第二 就夠 嘞,  
 zi1dou3 SUNDAY dai6ji6 zau6 gau3 lak3  
 know Sunday second is enough PART

如果 講你 聽 邊個第一,  
 jyu4gwo2 gong2 nei5 teng1 bin1go3 dai6jat1,  
 if tell you hear who first,

我哋 咪 好嫁? !  
 ngo5dei6 mai6 hou2 jyu2  
 we then lose-face

So who is in fact the first? It's enough to know that we are the second. If I tell you who is the first, won't we lose face?  
 ( Sunday )

- (c) 太太, 請問 你會 投 邊個票 呀?  
 taai3taai2, ceng2man6 nei5 wui3 tau2 bin1go3 piu3 aa3  
 Madam, excuse-me you will caste who vote PART

唔知嘅，是佢揀啦！  
 m4 zil wo3, si6 daan6 gaan2 laal.  
 not know PART random choose PART

Madam, who will you vote for? Don't know. Will randomly choose one.

(南昌西區候選人廣告 / Candidate for district board election)

News stories, both local news and entertainment news texts, are also frequently framed by questions and question-answer pairs, as in illustration (2).

2. (a) 她當官數十年，  
 Taa1 dong1gwun1 sou3sap6 nin4  
 she be official several ten year

可有遺憾？  
 ho2 jau6 wai4 ham6,  
 possible have regret

她說：「我覺很多事，  
 taa1 syut3, "ngo5 gok3 han2do1 si6  
 she say I think many thing

已經盡了本分，  
 ji5ging1 zeon6 liu5 bun2fan6  
 already try ASP duty

都應該是問心無愧。」  
 dou1 jing1goi1 si6 man6sam1mou4kwai5.  
 should be no-regret

'After being the government official for many years, has she had any regret? She said: "I think I have tried my best to do many things, so I should not have any regret".' (明報 / Ming Pao Daily News, 18 January, 2000)

- (b) 「如果有一日，劉少君浪子回頭  
 jyu4gwo2 jau5 jat1jat6, lau4 siu3 gwan1 long6zi2wui4tau4  
 if have one day Lau Siu Kwan regret

走到你母女面前求你原諒，  
 zau2 dou3 nei5 mou5nei2 min6cin4 kau4 nei5 jyun4loeng6  
 come you mother daughter face ask-for you forgive

你 會 原 諒 他 嗎?  
nei5 wui3 jyun4loeng6 taal maa1  
you will forgive him PART

在經濟上， 你 會 施 以 援 手 嗎? 」  
zoi6 ging1zai3 soeng6, nei5 wui3 si1yi5 wun4sau2 maa1  
in finance you will give support PART

冷笑 了 一 聲 的 周 秀 蘭 說:  
lang5siu3 liu5 jat1seng1 dik1 zau1 sau3 laan4 syut6  
sneer ASP one DE Chow Sau Lan say

「如果你 係 我， 你 會 唔 會 呀?  
jyu4gwo2 nei5 hai6 ngo5, nei5 wui3 m4 wui3 aa1  
if you be me you will not will PART

唔 使 我 多 講 啦， ..... 」  
m4sai2 ngo5 do1 gong2 laa1  
no-need me more say PART

“If one day Lau Siu Kwan regretted and came back to ask you and your daughter for forgiveness, would you forgive him? Would you give him financial support?” Chow Sau Lan sneered and said, “If you were me, would you? I don’t have to say more about that...” (蘋果日報 / Apple Daily, 9 November, 1998)

- (c) 問 到 黎 明 將 來 如 何 教 導 兒 女 呢?  
man6 dou3 lai4 ming4 zoeng1loi4 jyu4ho4 gaau3dou6 ji4neoi5  
ne1  
ask Lai Ming future how teach children PART

他 則 說: 「可 能 到 時 勇 敢 面 對.....  
taal zak5 syut3, “ho2neng4 dou3si4 jung5gam2 min6deoi3...  
he then say probably arrive time courage face

用 人 腦 輸 入 程 序 記 憶 法!  
jung6 jan4nou5 syu1jap6 cing4zeoi6 gei3jik1 faat3  
use computer input program memory method

唔 好 問 我 個 仔 啦,  
m4 hou2 man6 ngo5 go3 zai2 laa1  
Do-not ask me CL son PART

話唔定幾年後呢!」  
 waa6 m4 ding6 gei2 nin4 hau6 nei  
 say not-sure several year later PART

'When asking Lai Ming about how he would teach his children in the future? Lai Ming then said, "Will probably have to face the problem with courage then. Use computer programming! But please don't ask me about children now. They probably won't happen to me till a few years later!"' (明報 / Ming Pao Daily News, 9 November, 1998)

From illustration (2), we can observe that though the question-answer format in the print news texts may not exactly correspond with the one occurring in actual spoken interaction, the framing of the news story or the description of the event or the person with the question form is a significant linguistic style of the present-day news reporting that is worthy of attention.

Typical spoken interaction/orality is also characterized by orientation to person and co-involvement and is represented by the use of linguistic features such as general emphatics, first person pronouns, and second person pronouns (Biber 1988, Chafe 1982, Fairclough 1995). Such linguistic features – general emphatics, first person pronouns and second person pronouns – are also often exploited in the print advertisements of Hong Kong. For example, in illustration (1), we can already observe many uses of the general emphatics in the print advertisements: the use of exclamation mark "!" in (1a) and (1b); the use of words "梗係" (of course) in (1a) and particles "咁、呢、喇、呀" in (1b) and (1c) for expressing enthusiastic involvement in what is being said.

Some further examples for the use of first and second person pronouns as well as of the general emphatics in the print advertisements can also be observed in the bolded expressions in illustration (3):

3. (a) 總有燃亮您我心中的太陽。  
 zung2 jau5 jin4loeng6 nei5 ngo5 sam1zung1 dik1 taai3joeng4  
 always have light you me heart DE sun

There is always the sun that ignites our hearts.  
 (Sun Life of Canada / 加拿大永明人壽保險公司)

- (b) 咁啱您我嘅口味!  
 ngaam1 saai3 nei5 ngo5 ge3 hau2mei6  
 just you I DE taste

Exactly suits our taste! (Samsung / 三星)

- (c) 您的支持，就是我的堅持！  
 nei5 dik1 zi1ci4, zau6 si6 ngo5 dik1 gin1ci4  
 Your support is my persistence

Your support is the reason for my persistence.

(下城門選區候選人廣告 / candidate for district board election)

Quotations, either in direct or indirect forms, are favored in both hard and soft news texts; and the features of general emphatics, first person pronouns and second person pronouns are often found to be distributed within the quotations in the news reports. From illustrations (2a) to (2c), we can observe the use of first and second person pronouns such as “我” (I/me) and “你” (you); we can also observe the use of general emphatics such as exclamation mark “!” in (2c) and particles “呀、啦、呢” in (2b) and (2c).

Colloquial Cantonese, the preferred language style and choice among friends in conversation in Hong Kong, is also often utilized in the print media of Hong Kong. Instead of using the grammar of standard written Chinese, the media writers deliberately use that of colloquial Cantonese in their writing of advertising scripts and news stories. They use colloquial Cantonese expressions in their lexical selection, such as the bolded expressions in (4a) and (4b); moreover, they also use the syntax of colloquial Cantonese such as the bolded expressions in (4c) and (4d).

4. (a) 再送 150 分鐘  
 zoi3 sung3 jat5baak3ng5sap6 fan1zung1  
 again give 150 minute

打勻 美、加、法、德  
 daa2 wan4 mei5 gaal faat3 dak1  
 call all-around America Canada France Germany

中國仲有新低價  
 zung1gwok3 zung6 jau5 san1 dai1gaa3  
 China still have new low rate

‘(We) give you another 150 minutes to call all around America, Canada, France, and Germany. In addition, there is a new lowest rate for calling China’. (Ad for 香港電訊 / Hong Kong Telecom)

- (b) 中國入世貿 香港有排旺  
 zung1gwok3 jap6 sai3mau6 hoeng1gong2 jau5 paai4 wong6  
 China enter WTO Hong-Kong have prosperity

China entering WTO will bring prosperity to Hong Kong.  
(蘋果日報 / Apple Daily, 16 November, 1999)

- (c) 關注多 D, 回應快 D。  
gwaan1zyu3 do1 di1, wui4jing3 faai3 di1  
care more a bit respond quick a bit

Pay closer attention, and respond more quickly.  
(Ad for 民建聯 / Candidate for district council election)

- (d) ...故 寧願 擺 支 表 出來 拍賣  
gu3 ning4jyun2 bai2 zi1 biu1 ceot1lei4 paak3 maa6  
...therefore prefer place CL watch out auction

都 好 過 賣 泳衣: ...  
dou1 hou2 gwo3 maa6 wing6ji1  
still better than sell swim-suit

'...therefore would prefer to have the watch rather than the swim-suit out for auction;...' (東方日報 / Oriental Daily, 8 January, 2000)

The expressions or words in standard written Chinese for “勻” (wan4) and “仲” (zung6) in (4a) should be “遍” (pin3) and “還” (waan4) respectively; and the expressions or words in standard written Chinese for “排旺” (paai4wong6) in (4b) should be “興旺” (hing1wong6). The word order in (4c) in standard written Chinese should be “多關注” (do1 gwaan1zyu3) instead of “關注多” (gwaan1zyu3 do1); and the comparative construction in (4d) “好過賣泳衣” (hou2 gwo3 maa6 wing6ji1) should be “比賣泳衣好” (bei2 maa6 wing6ji1 hou2) in standard written Chinese. The reader can also refer to the italicized expressions in illustrations (1) – (3) for further exemplification of the prevalent use of colloquial Cantonese in the Chinese print media of Hong Kong.

### 3.4 Functions and values of orality in Hong Kong print media

This section will discuss the functions and values of the different forms of orality that have been identified in section 3.3 in relation to both the macro-context and the micro-contexts in which they take place. The macro-context here refers to the development of media technologies and the general sociolinguistic values or trend in Hong Kong, while the micro-context refers to the contextual constraints by the advertising and news genres.

I would argue that, similar to what has happened in the west, the development and massive use of electronic media – radio and television (termed as “secondary

orality" by Ong 1982) – have led to an increasing public preference for the oral mode of communication in Hong Kong. "The trend is to be casual about things, ... to be unpretentious, flexible and feasible for the tastes of the audience" (Tsang 2000, cited in Tsui 2000). Moreover, with Hong Kong economic and cultural growth and status, there is a general tendency for the people in Hong Kong, especially of the younger and better educated, to identify more closely with Hong Kong than with China. Instead of worrying about the low-class connotations for certain use of orality in written discourse, the writer today is more concerned with using the features and strategies of orality such as colloquial Cantonese in building solidarity with the audience, creating an in-group identity, and consequently reaching across a wider audience.

Furthermore, the use of orality features and strategies serve very well the micro-contexts, specifically the purposes of the advertising and the news genres. An advertisement operates under certain temporal and spatial constraints to inform and to persuade people to use the product or service. To fulfill the aim(s) of the advertisement, its language use has to accomplish "attention value", "readability", "memorability", and "selling power" (Leech 1966: 27-31). We can observe that the use of the orality features and strategies such as the question-answer pairs, the emphatics, the first person pronouns, the second person pronouns, and the colloquial Cantonese in illustrations (1), (3), (4a) and (4c) enhances the attention value and readability of the advertising messages by the masses. In other words, these orality features serve very well in attracting the readers' attention and inviting response from them, in building a closer relationship between the addresser and the addressee, and consequently, enhances the memorability of the advertising messages and the possibility of reader action in response to the advertising message.

News also operates under certain temporal and spatial constraints to inform and involve a massive audience. Therefore, we can find similar features of orality occurring in the news texts as in the advertising texts. For instance, the use of the question-answer pairs, the emphatics, and the colloquial Cantonese in the news stories in illustration (2), (4b) and (4d) has the values of attracting the reader's attention and enhancing the accessibility of the news information.

In addition to attracting the readers' attention and enhancing the audience accessibility of the news information, the use of orality in written news discourse has other important values. As the goal of news is to present an accurate and factual account of a recent event, immediacy, objectivity, accuracy and credibility are emphasized in news story writing<sup>3</sup>. The use of orality features, such as the question-answer pairs, the emphatics, the first and second person pronouns embedded within the quotations, and colloquial Cantonese, thus not only plays a significant role in foregrounding the individual's voice, style, and/or comments and im-

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<sup>3</sup> See Mencher (1996) for further details on the rules and principles of news media writing.

proving the immediacy of the news reporting, but also in enhancing the accuracy, credibility and objectivity of the news reporting.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study has identified and focused on three different forms of orality that are mingled in the advertising and the news texts of present-day Hong Kong: 1) question-answer pairs, for representing the typical conversational structure; 2) general emphatics, first person pronouns, and second person pronouns, for representing orientation to person and co-involvement which are critical elements of conversation; 3) colloquial Cantonese, for representing typical linguistic choice or style in informal conversation between friends in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the study takes a positive approach towards the issue of orality in literacy and discusses the functions and values of orality in relation to both the macro-context and the micro-context in which it takes place. Orality is found to serve the interpersonal function of involvement and the social functions of solidarity and in-group identity. Furthermore, it helps make an advertisement more effective by enhancing its attention value, readability, memorability, and consequently selling power. It also helps to enhance the immediacy, credibility, and objectivity of the news reporting by foregrounding the individual's voice, style, and/or comments.

It is apparent that in Hong Kong society and culture today, there is a shift from being written-oriented to being oral-oriented. As parents and educators, we may complain that this is due to the decline in educational standards or the influence of mass media; and it is tempting to conclude that we should revert the trend. But as sociolinguists, we know that just as language changes nothing before its time, the change in the communicative style/mode will not occur unless there exists in the language the potential for the change. In fact, we are living in a society and a time which no longer value literacy like the time of early imperial China (see Connery 1998). People are becoming much more socially sensitive and audience/consumer-minded than literacy-minded. Therefore, let us stop deploring what is happening but adapt to the changes.

It is also obvious that the structure of the discursive practices today is often realized by mixing or hybridization of the different modes of communication available in the society and culture. As sociolinguists or language professionals, we need to investigate these heterogeneous forms of discursive practices in order to better understand their related meanings, values, advantages and disadvantages. We should try to further describe and explain what and why changes in different modes of communication are taking place, and predict what the gains as well as losses are likely to be in the long run.



**Abbreviations Used in Interlinear Glosses**

- ASP aspect marker  
 CL classifier  
 DE particle *de* in Chinese  
 PART discourse particle

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# Code-switching in Media Texts: Its Implications on Society and Culture in Postcolonial Hong Kong<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This study discusses the uses and functions of code-switching in media texts in Hong Kong. Special attention will be given to how the study of language use in media texts contributes to our understanding of the culture and society in post-1997 Hong Kong. This study consists of two parts. In the first part, language use in fashion discourses found in popular magazines will be analyzed from the perspectives of and using methods from critical discourse analysis. In the second part, code-switching found in Fashion Discourse will be discussed within the sociohistorical context of Hong Kong.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the readers of *Amoeba*<sup>2</sup> wrote the following to the magazine editor to express his views on code-switching<sup>3</sup> in media texts:

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is extracted from my master's thesis "Code-switching in Hong Kong popular magazines: A critical discourse analysis of media texts", which I submitted to the Department of English, City University of Hong Kong. I would like to express my grateful thanks to Dr. Angel Lin for her careful reading of an earlier draft of this paper. All the inadequacies are, however, mine.

<sup>2</sup> *Amoeba* is a popular magazine targeted at youth market in Hong Kong. More information will be given in the part data and methodology.

"language is the product of culture, 避也避不來. 我想說的是, 「不中不英」絕不是問題, 只要寫的人慢慢變為「全中人」或「全英人」便可".<sup>4</sup>

(language is the product of culture. We can't escape from it. What I want to say is that "non-Chinese-non-English" is not a problem. It's alright if the writer can gradually become "all-Chinese" or "all-English".)

This *Amoeba* reader, by using his layman's knowledge, thinks that language is tied up with culture. Back in 1945<sup>5</sup>, the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote the following about language. Wittgenstein's views on language, as interpreted by McGinn (1997) are:

Language is essentially embedded in structured activities that constitute a "form of life". Almost all of the activities that human beings engage in are ones that are intrinsically connected with, so somehow grounded in, our use of language, or coming to participate in our form of life, is essentially connected with acquiring mastery of countless kinds of language-game (p. 58).

From the above quotations, it seems that to a remarkable philosopher or to a popular magazine reader, language, culture and identity intertwine with one another. If social actors use language to engage in social lives which constitute a particular "form of life", what kind of life is Hong Kong life when Hong Kong Chinese practise code-switching?

It seems that code-switching is viewed in an ambivalent way by some of the Hong Kong youths who practise it themselves. In the first quotation, an *Amoeba* reader, Frances, sees language as a product of culture. Yet, code-switching seems

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<sup>3</sup> The term "code-switching" is preferred to "code-mixing" in this study. It is observed that previous studies on language alternation in Hong Kong tends to employ the term code-mixing rather than code-switching. Code-mixing seems to connote a negative value, hence not preferred by this writer. Code-switching, in this study, refers to both intersentential and intrasentential code-switching.

<sup>4</sup> See Frances. (1998, January). Response. *Amoeba*, p. 14. The Cantonese romanization of the quotation is: "language is the product of culture, bei6 jaa5 bei6 bat1 loi4, ngo5 soeng2 syut3 dik1 si6, 「bat1-zung1-bat1-jing1」 zyut3 bat1-si6 man6-tai4, zi2-jiu3 se2 dik1 jan4 maan6- maan6 bin3-wai6 「cyun4-zung1-jan4」 waak6 「cyun4-jing1-jan4」 bin6 ho2."

<sup>5</sup> That was the year when Wittgenstein wrote the preface to his book *Philosophical Investigations*.

to him to be an inferior form of language use even though he code-switches himself. The highest goal, to Frances, is writing in one language only. One of my students in City University of Hong Kong wrote in her assignment that she had never noticed her own code-switching behaviour. She explained this linguistic behaviour by her colonial education and the shame of being Chinese. Now that she is aware of this, she claimed that she will try her best to speak in one language only.

It is no surprise that some of the Hong Kong youths view code-switching as an inferior form of linguistic behaviour when code-switching is often condemned by the government authorities and language purists. Code-switching is officially prohibited inside school classrooms. It seems clear that in the eyes of the authorities, language should be used in an "either-or" mode.

But the government's practice and that of its representatives seem to be more ambivalent than they sound. For example, David Li (1999a) points out that one announcement of public interest in both broadcast and print media includes a code-mixed slogan "生命無 take two" (saang1-ming6 mou4 take two; 'there is no "take two" in life'). More surprisingly, our leader, the Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, employed code-switching in a conversation with graduates from Chinese University of Hong Kong. The reporter pointed out suggestively that Mr. Tung did not seem to conform to the language education goals proclaimed by the government<sup>6</sup>.

The above handful of daily examples show that code-switching seems to be despised by the authorities and the users from time to time; yet it is a common form of language use in Hong Kong in many different domains. The above examples also show that language, culture and identity are related to each other in a complex way. Language, culture and identity are not connected in a direct and linear manner. Hence, the assumption that Chinese language means Chinese culture and identity is not held in this study.

This study aims to examine language use in the social lives of Hong Kong Chinese. The use of language, in the view of this study, is a kind of identity-constructing device. The members belonging to a culture employ elements of different languages to mark their identities and at the same time, mark off others from themselves. This study rejects the somewhat over-simplified view that we do things because of who we are and adopts the postmodern view that we do things because we want to become who we perceive ourselves to be. Language use is then not merely a form of "being", but also "becoming" activity (Hall 1996).

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<sup>6</sup> See 特首大學生真情對話 ['A sincere chat between the Chief Executive and university graduates'], December 11, 1998. *Ming Pao Daily*, p. B17.

In this chapter, previous studies done on code-mixing and code-switching in Hong Kong will be reviewed. Some inadequacies of previous theories of code-switching in printed media texts will be discussed. Then a theoretical framework will be proposed to study texts as sites of social interaction in context. A fashion article found in a local popular magazine will serve as an example to show the different nature and functions of code-switching in media texts. Some practices of language use in Hong Kong's fashion world will be described. The final section will be devoted to sketching out a sociohistorical context in which code-switching can be better understood.

## 2. PREVIOUS STUDIES OF CODE-MIXING / CODE-SWITCHING IN HONG KONG

Previous studies of code-switching behaviours can be roughly classified into four categories according to their approaches and types of data.

The first category consists of studies that examine code choice and code-switching in various groups in the Hong Kong community. Pioneering work done on code-switching by Luke (1984 / 1998) and Gibbons (1979, 1987) belong to this category. Luke describes and accounts for code-mixing in Hong Kong as a territory-wide phenomenon. Gibbons' works focus on the code-mixing behaviours among students in the University of Hong Kong.

Luke (1984 / 1998) suggests that there are six kinds of code choice available to Hong Kong Chinese. They are: English, "High" Cantonese, "Low" Cantonese, expedient mixing, orientational mixing and code-switching. Expedient mixing is employed by Hong Kong Chinese when English words are mixed in order to fill in the lexical gaps in low Cantonese. The speakers can choose to use either the high Cantonese or the English term. The speakers may prefer to insert the English terms if the respective high Cantonese terms are not commonly used. On the other hand, orientational mixing is employed when the speakers choose to mix in order to express a more Westernized identity. As in Luke's example, some Hong Kong Chinese may prefer to use "husband" instead of the high Cantonese term "丈夫" (zoeng6-fu1) or the low Cantonese term "老公" (lou5-gung1). It will be shown in the later section of this chapter that this author is rather skeptical about the concepts of "Westernness" and "Westernized Chinese". We will discuss the ambiguities of these terms in a later section.

The second category consists of work done in the linguistic constraint approach. Work done under this approach includes Chan (1993, 1998) and Leung (1987). Scholars who adopt this approach are interested in seeing whether intrasentential code-switching between English and Cantonese is under any syntactic constraints. These studies test local data by applying theories proposed by overseas scholars, such as the Free Morpheme Constraint and the Equivalence Constraint put for-

ward by Sankoff and Poplack (1981), Poplack (1982) and the Matrix Language-Frame model proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993).

The third category consists of work done using the interactional approach. Studies following this approach are rare, probably the most representative being Lin (1988, 1990). Lin's works adopt Auer's conversation analysis approach in understanding code-switching practices of Hong Kong teachers in English lessons. Lin views that teachers are social actors who keep shifting roles inside the classroom. The choice of language may imply the change of frame of the situation. Lin's studies acknowledge that the interacting participants take up, negotiate, and shift among, different roles. Code-switching is employed to both signal and negotiate different interpretations of the social setting (Lin 1988).

The last category consists of studies done on code-switching in written discourses. There are only a handful of studies devoted to code-switching in printed media texts. Some of the studies include Cheung (1997), David Li (1996, 1998, 1999b), W. Y. Li (1989) and Yau (1993).

David Li's studies concentrate on the semantic motivations of code-switching. By examining 3,000 newspaper clippings collected over two years, Li gives an account of how English is mixed, what kinds of English words are mixed and why they are mixed in written discourse. Not totally contented with previous Hong Kong studies done on code-mixing (such as expedient mixing proposed by Luke 1984 / 1998), Li (1996) comes up with a list of eight motivations to account for the reasons why Hongkongers code-mix. Details of these motivations will not be discussed here but I would like to point out that these eight motivations are not exclusively deduced for code-mixing in written texts. These eight motivations proposed by Li can also be used to account for code-switching in everyday conversations.

### 3. INADEQUACIES OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The inadequacies discussed in this section is a result of the difference between previous studies and this study in terms of emphasis, epistemological and ontological assumptions. Previous studies have provided us with different perspectives in understanding what, how and why Hong Kong Chinese code-switch. This study attempts to contribute to the analysis of code-switching as a form of language use in the social lives of Hong Kong Chinese. Code-switching, along with other forms of language use, manifest in texts. Producing and consuming texts is one of the major activities that people engage in in order to participate in social lives.

In the following, I would like to point out some limitations of previous studies when they are applied to develop a model in which texts are seen as sites of social

interaction. Again, these limitations might not be really limitations but just a result of different analytical positions adopted in different studies. Texts and social actors (including this writer) are foregrounded in this study whereas these are backgrounded in some previous studies. In the words of Scollon (1998):

The purpose [of seeing texts as sites of interaction] is to reconstruct our language about the reading and watching so that we can come to see the role of those texts as tools by which the readers and watchers engage in the ordinary social practices of life in their communities of practice. (Scollon 1998: 4)

The four emphases in this study are:

(1) Sentence vs. text: previous studies tend to single out sentences as samples. This approach may only show how code-switching functions at the sentence level. To social actors, we do not make sense of sentences; we make sense of texts; more precisely, texts in context. In the view of Halliday and Hasan (1989), text is "language that is functional" (p. 10). Text is not only a combination of sentences. Text is seen as a "superstructure", a linguistic unit that is in principle greater in size than a sentence but of the same kind ... discourse has its own structure that is not constituted out of sentences in combination" (Halliday 1978: 109). This study, therefore, looks at the functions of code-switching in texts, not mixed-mode sentences.

(2) Spoken and written texts in social interactions: in previous studies, it seems that work done on code-switching in spoken discourses rarely mentions code-switching in written discourses, and vice versa. However, social actors use both kinds of texts in interactions. An example is that they read magazines and then they talk about them. Magazine producers write articles based on references which include spoken texts, such as interviews. Isolating spoken texts from written ones, in a sense, may obscure the whole picture of social interaction.

(3) Different characteristics of spoken and written texts: in suggesting (2), one does not conflict with the assumption that spoken and written texts are different in nature. Previous studies done on code-switching in written texts, probably because of their emphases, do not usually analyze the functions of code-switching in printed media texts. Halliday (1985) remarks, "writing and speaking are not just alternative ways of doing the same things; rather, they are ways of doing different things" (p. vii). In the category of written text, for instance, it is believed that the functions of code-switching in different genres are different. Different genres have their own sets of communicative purposes and structures (Bhatia 1993). With the argument in (1), text is not merely a combination of sentences. It is believed that we will be able to explore more functions of code-switching in written discourse in a genre-specific manner based on text as the unit of analysis.



(4) Linkage between micro language studies and macro sociocultural context: there does not seem to be any attempt in previous studies to understand code-switching in a broader sociocultural context. Social actors produce speech<sup>7</sup> in social contexts. Social actors do not merely pull a string of words together from their linguistic repertoire. The title of this book also seems to suggest that the change in political environment, and probably economic and social structures, may change the use of language. This study is then interested in seeing how the sociocultural context helps us to understand how members in a specific spatio-temporal frame use different languages to “do things”.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study proposes a theoretical framework that is appropriate in studying texts as sites of social interactions in context. When designing this framework, consideration of the aforementioned limitations has been taken into account. The model proposed in this study is adopted and modified from Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis (1989, 1992). Let us first take a look at the model used in this study before discussing how it might be appropriate to study texts in context:

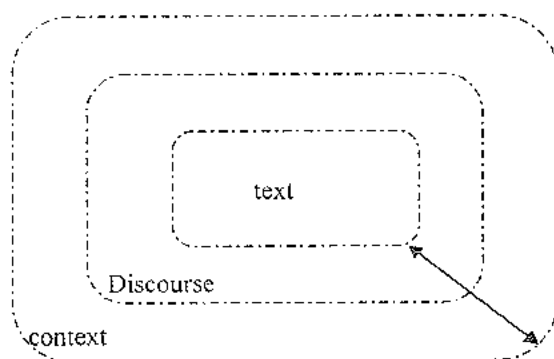


Figure 1. The model used in this study

As shown in the model, the innermost layer is named “text”. “Discourse” is the first layer embedding text. “Context” is the outermost layer.

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<sup>7</sup> The definition of speech in this study is similar to that of parole in Saussure’s terminology. Saussure proposes the concepts of *langue* and *parole*. The difference between these two concepts is that *langue* is potential and social, *parole* is actual and individual (Lyons 1981: 10). *Parole*, or speech as used in this study, is the actual utterances circulated by individuals in a specific community. Speech concerns what is actually spoken more than what can be potentially spoken.

*Text*, in this study, serves as the basic unit of analysis. The texts used for this study will be taken mainly from local popular magazines. It is relatively easy to differentiate one text from another in printed media texts. For example, a news report is a text, an advertisement is a text. It might be rather difficult for us to isolate a text in spoken discourses. In an academic study such as this one, it is, however, inevitable for analysts to set a boundary of text for the sake of convenience. The boundary of texts in social interaction, it has to be emphasized, is not clear-cut.

By using text as the basic unit, one can resolve one of the aforementioned weaknesses when sentences are taken out as samples of study. However, this study does not hold the view that the understanding of a text is an isolated event. Indeed, social actors understand a text with reference to other texts. The round corners of the boundary are intended to show that one text is always related to other texts.

Another benefit of seeing text as the basic unit is that we could see how code-switching functions in different genres. We will then see that not only does code-switching function differently in different forms of texts (written and spoken texts), it also functions differently in different parts in a text.

*Discourse* is the first embedded layer. In Fairclough's model (1992), this layer is named 'discursive practice'. This study substitutes discursive practice with the concept of Discourse (Gee 1996). In Gee's definition, "Discourse" with a capital "D" is:

[A] socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network", or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role" (p. 143).

In this study, Discourse is the site of accumulation of texts which are of the same topic, for example, Fashion Discourse, Technology Discourse, Food Discourse. The concept of domains (Fishman 1972) may *appear* to be similar to the concept of Discourse. If we look at Fishman's definition of domains, it is about: "institutional contexts and their congruent behavioral co-occurrences. They attempt to summate the major clusters of interaction that occur in clusters of multilingual settings and involving clusters of interlocutors" (Fishman 1972: 441). What is found problematic is the term "interlocutors". In an earlier paper (Lee 1998), I have discussed the complex relationships between the conventionally assumed roles of "writers" and "readers" in media discourses in the light of Goffman (1981), Wilson (1981) and Scollon (1998). Gee's concept of Discourse sees social actors as members – these members may or may not interact with one another in face-to-face encounters. "Discourse" is then a more flexible and complex concept than "domain" in describing how social actors interact with one another through different forms of mediated texts in daily lives.

As Discourse is an accumulation of texts, written, spoken and electronically-mediated texts about fashion are all categorized under Fashion Discourse. Texts inside a Discourse are not assumed to be discrete, isolated blocks of objects, they are intertextually chained to each other in various ways (Fairclough 1992). Hence, it may avoid the problem of isolating written discourses from spoken ones, or vice versa. We will further discuss the nature of intertextuality in this chapter. Again, the differentiation of one Discourse and others may not fully represent the rather messy and multi-layered daily interactions. Social actors can understand one Discourse always because of the presence of other Discourses.

*Context* is the outermost layer of the model. The specific context that will be discussed in this study is the history as recorded in government documents. This author is aware that government documents are not equivalent to the concept of sociohistorical context. The reason for analyzing government documents is that they are perhaps the only official and legitimate texts which tell Hong Kong people about our society and ourselves. More discussion on this will be in the section "The sociohistorical context". This official history may inform us on how the government constructs the history of Hong Kong and designs the identity of Hong Kong people. Fairclough (1992) remarks that different interpretations will result from different interpreters and different contexts. This sketched sociohistorical context is not an absolute, or the only context that could provide us with further insights of language use in Hong Kong. The discussion of the identity of Hong Kong people might be interesting when the title of this book frames us in this postcolonial era. It is hoped that this linkage between micro language studies and macro sociohistorical context might open up some possibilities for us to overcome the limitations of previous code-switching studies discussed above.

#### 4.1 From text to context

So far the discussion has focused on the characteristics and nature of each element (text, Discourse and context) of the model. Now we will look at the relationships among them. It has to be emphasized that we understand the text as we understand the Discourse and the context. Text, Discourse and context are concomitant, they may not be three different things which can be examined one by one without referring to the other two.

The relationship among them is dialectical, hence the bi-directional arrow in Figure 1. The understanding of the text informs us about the context and the understanding of the context informs us about the text. The idea of dialectics helps us to focus on "processes, flows, fluxes, and relations over the analysis of elements, things, structures, and organized system" (Harvey 1996: 49). Further, "elements or 'things' ... are constituted out of flows, processes, and *relations* [*italics added*] operating within bounded fields which constitute structured systems or wholes" (Harvey 1996: 50).

This study may have artificially deconstructed how we make meanings in daily lives. One of the benefits of doing this is the space of reflection that we could have in seeing how our so-called common sense knowledge *naturalizes* the way we use language and the way we perceive things. In the view of Fairclough (1989), the naturalized discourse is only one out of many possibilities to perceive things. Yet, this naturalized discourse is often the dominant one as a result of the legitimization by an institution. Gee (1996) suggests that there is a set of "right" languages for members to use if they want to be included in a discourse community. If we try to reason why some languages are "right" in a Discourse in a specific context, we may not be able to spell out the reasons. By freezing our meaning-making process, we may be able to see how our history and cultures are naturalized and manipulated by our government, media workers and literally, some other social actors.

#### 4.2 The position of this writer

Before proceeding to the actual analysis, it is important to spell out the position of this writer. Being a social actor, this writer is one of the elements in this model as a meaning-making agent. She is not an objective agent outside the texts that she is interpreting. Her linguistic and cultural knowledge, local experiences, history and education are all resources that are drawn on to interpret texts.

The ontological assumption of this study is that there is no "reality" or "fact" or "truth" for us to shoot. Realities are mediated through social actors' histories and experiences:

Realities are apprehendable [sic] in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature ... , and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. Constructions are not more or less "true", in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 110).

The epistemological assumption of this study is that the analyst and the knowledge presented in this study is dialectical and transactional: "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are *literally created* as the investigation proceeds" (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 111).

The reason why this writer is able to write a critique of written fashion texts in Hong Kong whilst other members might not be able to is that this writer holds membership in at least two Discourses: Fashion Discourse and Academic Discourse. She is able to draw on resources from one Discourse to inform the other.

To conclude this part, the model may appear to be much more static and neat than human communication actually is. Meaning-making is an ongoing activity in which different elements (such as text, this researcher and her knowledge) are related in a complex, and perhaps rather messy way. The model may be a rather simplified model to represent social interactions but it is the best that I could come up with at the moment.

## 5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this study is drawn from a collection of Hong Kong popular magazines, which were collected as data for my master's thesis. The collection is constituted by three Hong Kong popular magazines: *Easyfinder*, *Eastweek* and *Amoeba*. These magazines were collected over one year, from July 1997 to June 1998. The data was then collected right after the handover in July 1997<sup>8</sup>.

Owing to the constraint of space, I will not be able to analyze more than one text. The sample text that I choose comes from *Amoeba*. Before giving accounts of this magazine, I shall first describe magazine-reading practices in the Hong Kong society.

With the abundant and overwhelming number (around 600, see Scollon 1998) of magazines and periodicals circulated in Hong Kong, it may be rather surprising that there have not been any general survey of magazine reading and consumption in Hong Kong. Magazine consumption as part of Hong Kong life can only be speculated from fragmented accounts.

In Leung's (1999) survey on the use of media among Hong Kong youths between 12 and 24, it is found that the time spent on magazine-reading is considerably less than that on TV, computer and radio. It is reported that the youths only read a few magazines a month. This may not fully represent the importance of magazine-reading in social lives. My argument is that most of the magazines are published weekly or even monthly, the turnover rate is obviously slower than that of TV or newspapers.

In my own telephone interviews, most of my informants (aged between 20 to 25) do read at least two magazines regularly. Some informants told me that they spend at most 15 minutes to finish "reading" one issue of *Easyfinder* (一本便利). In my daily observation, magazine-reading is a common activity in underground trains, especially in the afternoon and evening rides.

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<sup>8</sup> In saying this, the time period is not chosen due to the handover. The time period very much coincides with the beginning of my own research work. It so happened that the data collection period started in July 1997. This study does not attempt to discuss the differences in language use before and after the handover.

*Easyfinder*, being one of the most popular youth magazines in Hong Kong, claims to have the circulation of 123,849<sup>9</sup>. The magazine that the sample text comes from is called *Amoeba*. *Amoeba* is not as commonly read as *Easyfinder*. Its circulation is 35,000<sup>10</sup> and it is a monthly magazine. *Amoeba* is a magazine which focuses more on fashion and trendy products whilst *Easyfinder* may seem to be an assorted guide of everything from fashion to food, from computer to comics. The ex-editor of *Amoeba* told this writer in a face-to-face interview that she assumes the readers of *Amoeba* are "better" than those of *Easyfinder* without further defining it. She, however, rejected the idea of target readers and claimed that target readers only exist in the publisher's dictionary. The executive editor of *Amoeba* is also quite aware that they have to give the readers something different from what they get in other popular magazines such as *Easyfinder*.

Another difference is that *Easyfinder* is mostly written in "Low" Cantonese (Luke 1984 / 1998) which is closer to spoken Cantonese. The executive editor of *Amoeba* asks their contributors not to write in "spoken Cantonese" as this is not considered to be an in-house practice.

From the above fragmented accounts, *Amoeba* may be located as a fashion magazine which seems to be read by young people who are interested in fashion and trendy products. The editorial board may tend to distinguish itself from other popular magazines by being more standard or "literate" in writing. This strategy may give readers a more serious and cultivated impression.

Critical discourse analysis serves as the main method in this study. Since this study focuses on examining fashion articles, the discussion will focus on fashion writings found in *Amoeba*. As the model emphasizes the functions of code-switching in texts belonging to specific genres, the classification of fashion writings is based on genre. In the following section, I will show how language use in media texts can be studied from the perspective of critical discourse analysis.

## 6. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: "LEATHER JACKET"

In the model (Figure 1) proposed in this study, text is the central element as presented graphically. The boundary of text, as discussed above, is not neat and clear-cut. In this study, a magazine article is defined as a text. A magazine article is often produced in a recognizable genre; a text always belongs to one or more genres. Genres have communicative functions (Bhatia 1993). Hence, language is one of the semiotic systems that manifests the functions of text.

<sup>9</sup> The circulation number of the period 1st January 1997 to 30th June, 1997. This number is printed on the content page of *Easyfinder*. The circulation number is claimed to be provided by the ABC consumer press.

<sup>10</sup> Source: *Media: All-Asia print guide*, September 18, 1998, p. 11.

The argument in this section is that: code-switching functions differently in different functional parts (such as title, caption) of a specific genre. We will see how code-switching, as one form of language use, manifests functions in different parts in a text.

The sample text is titled "Leather Jacket". This article is found in Issue no. 46 of *Amoeba*. The original article occupies six pages and the first two pages are shown in the following. This study further deconstructs these two pages and I have marked the photographic images (from Picture 1A to Picture 1E) and texts (from text 1a to text 1h).

In Figure 2, we can find the following functional parts in the article:

1. Title of the article (text 1a)
2. Introductory text (text 1b, 1c)
3. Title of the section / column (text 1d)
4. Caption accompanying picture (text 1e, text 1f, text 1h)
5. Credit line (text 1g)

These five functional parts are obligatory in this specific genre. These five functional parts are included, for most of the time, in this genre in *Amoeba*.

It is not immediately clear how this genre should be named. This might be a recognizable genre with no name. Due to the large amount of graphics and photographic images included, this feature is not unlike those in fashion catalogues. Hence, this genre is named "catalogue genre" in this study.

At first glance, this article seems to be a mixed-mode text. If we look at how languages are used in different functional parts, we will find the following:

- Title of the article (English only)
- Introductory text (one in English, another in mixed-mode)
- Title of the section (English only)
- Caption accompanying picture (mixed-mode)
- Credit line (*appears* to be in English only)

In this sample text, it seems that no functional part is written in Chinese only. Do English and mixed-mode outperform Chinese in some of these functional parts? In the following, we will focus on examining the language use in two functional parts: title and caption accompanying picture.



Figure 2. Sample text used in textual analysis  
Source: Amoeba no. 46 (pp. 162-163)



## 6.1 Title

The title of the sample article is "Leather Jacket" (text 1a). The linguistic meaning of the title "Leather Jacket" suggests to us that it is "a piece of garment which is made of leather". As this phrase serves as a title in the catalogue genre, we might conclude that this phrase "Leather Jacket" is a title to an article, the purpose of which is to introduce clothing which is made of leather.

What is found interesting is that the English term "Leather Jacket" is preferred to its Chinese counterpart "皮褸" (pei4-lau1). What is the discourse function of using "Leather Jacket" instead of "皮褸"? The meaning gained by using "Leather Jacket" or the meaning lost of using "皮褸" may not be that significant. "Leather jacket", in my observation, is also a less popular term used in daily life when compared to "皮褸". At the linguistic level, there does not seem to be a good explanation why "Leather Jacket" outperforms "皮褸". This is not the only example found in *Amoeba*, some other titles of this nature include "Models in Black" and "Sweater".

If we apply the eight motivations proposed by Li (1996), we might reason that "Models in Black" outperforms its Chinese counterpart "穿上黑衣的模特兒" (cyun1 soeng5 hak1-jit1 dik1 mou4-dak6-jit4) for its shorter length, hence "principle of economy" holds (Li 1996: 99). "Sweater" may also be better than its Chinese counterpart "冷衫" (laang5-saam1) for its "specificity" (Li 1996: 83) as "冷衫" can also refer to cardigan. But there does not seem to be any linguistic evidence to suggest why "leather jacket" outperforms "皮褸".

Pennington (1994) suggests that code-mixing is more than mixing at the linguistic level. When English words are mixed in Chinese texts, Pennington argues, it is more than a kind of code-mixing: "the images that attach to such an unassimilated item are borrowed along with its *physical* [italics added] form" (p. 27). The mixing of English words into Chinese text can serve as an eye-catching device which can "stand out and attract attention to themselves, surrounding text" (*ibid.*).

The practice of mixing English and other foreign languages in Asian advertising is quite common. Bhatia (1987, 1992) suggests that English, being an other-worldly language in the eyes of Indians, connotes Westernization, modernization and advanced technology. Haarmann (1984, 1986; also see Bell 1991: 136-137) holds a similar viewpoint with Bhatia when analyzing Japanese advertisements and fashion magazines. Haarmann suggests that foreign languages are appealing to Japanese audiences as most of the stereotyped images that Japanese have of Western cultures are positive.

In an earlier paper (Lee 1998), I suggest that non-Chinese words may bear three kinds of functions: linguistic function, aesthetic function and ideological function. The Chinese-French title "白白度過 L' été Blanc" (baak6-baak6 dou6-gwo3

L'été Blanc; 'idly pass through white summer') discussed in that paper may be more obvious in showing how French acts as a symbol of "Frenchness" or broadly "Westernness" in catalogue genre in Hong Kong. The mixing in of French may be an economical device to create a mood for fashion text.

It has also been argued that the language proficiency of analysts may deflect us to read the linguistic meaning of English, but not the aesthetic and ideological values associated with the printed form of language. It has to be borne in mind that the actual readers of popular magazines may be constituted by people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To some of the readers, the title "Leather Jacket" may imply aesthetic and ideological values to them. English and other foreign words may be seen as graphical elements in fashion writings. An English title might imply the value of "Westernness" to some of the readers. Hence, the discourse function of an English title may include the ideologies associated with it in catalogue genre. "Leather Jacket" may outperform "皮褸" in this way.

The merit of studying code-switching in texts instead of sentences is that it allows us to explore the multiple functions performed by language in texts; especially in graphically-rich ones such as the sample text. If we decontextualize the title, its aesthetic and ideological functions may not be seen.

In saying the above, it is not assumed that English and foreign languages always serve as an eye-catching device in every functional part in every genre in fashion writings. It will be argued that language use in the functional part of the caption may be different from that in title in catalogue genre.

## 6.2 Caption accompanying picture

There are three captions (text 1e, text 1f, text 1h) included in the first two pages of the sample article. At first glance, these three captions are written in mixed-mode between English and Chinese. It will be shown in the following that the caption in this genre is densely packed with different components.

For example, text 1e is "number one a ON ELIZA: REPLAY 毛毛領綠色雙面皮褸反轉底做面著", it may be decomposed as shown in Table 1.

A caption is a dense piece of writing that consists of components that are not linked up by any cohesive device. Yet the readers are required to understand the information included in the caption. A caption may not be a sentence, yet it has its own specific function in catalogue genre. The function of a caption is to describe the accompanying picture by selectively highlighting parts of it.

A caption is composed of different components as shown. There seem to be a few fundamental, obligatory components included in the captions belonging to cata-

Table 1 *The Decomposition of Caption (text 1c)*

Component	Number of the picture	Name of the model
Example	Number one a	ON ELIZA

Description of the clothing item		
Component	Name of the boutique	Style of the clothing item
Example	REPLAY	毛毛領 mou4-mou4-leng5 fur collar

Description of the clothing item		
Component	Colour of the clothing item	Style of the clothing item
Example	綠色 luk6-sik1 green	雙面 soeng1-min2 double-sided

Description of the clothing item		
Component	Name of the clothing item	Style of the clothing item
Example	皮褸 pei4-lau1 leather jacket	反轉底做面著 faan2-zyun3 dai2 zou6 min2 zoek6 in reverse as the front side

logue genre in *Amoeba* and two other popular magazines (*Easyfinder* and *East-week*). These fundamental components are:

1. Description of the clothing item
  - a. colour of the clothing item
  - b. style of the clothing item
  - c. name of the clothing item
2. Name of the boutique / supplier

It is not surprising that terms in one component are always drawn from one word class. For example, the words used in the component colour of clothing item are drawn from the word class of colour. Among the above two components and three sub-components, it is found that non-Chinese terms are included in the component name of the boutique / supplier for most of the time. It might be rather inappropriate to suggest that boutique / shop / brand names are always written in English. One may be able to find English names such as *Division*, *Joe West*, *Alexander McQueen*; Italian names such as *Benetton*, *Sisley*, *Marco Tagliaferri*; French names such as *Modele*, *Guerlain*, *Chevignon*; Japanese names such as *Tokyu*, *Miyuki*; and even some "wavering" ones such as *I. T.*, *D & G*, etc.

It seems that in this particular genre, caption, as a functional part, cannot be characterized as a Chinese-English mixed-mode sentence. What seems to be a better characterization is that the caption is a hybridized text which draws on resources from Chinese and multiple foreign languages. These foreign languages usually come from different linguistic systems (English, French, Italian, Japanese). When these foreign words are mixed into a text which is predominantly written in Chinese, they look quite the same for they are all presented in the Roman orthographical form. To the readers, the understanding of the linguistic meanings of these foreign words may not be as important as the recognition of them as brand names.

The understanding of the functional part of a caption does not merely require the linguistic knowledge of the readers, it also requires their schemata of how fashion writings are composed. Sometimes, readers are not even required to understand the linguistic meanings of the brand / boutique names in English or other foreign languages. One prerequisite for the readers to understand the caption is to possess the adequate cultural knowledge in order to understand what English and other foreign languages in fashion discourse convey to them.

### 6.3 The nature of media text

After looking at how languages manifest the functions of title and caption in catalogue genre, I would like to point out one characteristic of media text: the nature of intertextuality (Fairclough 1992). The concept of intertextuality might shed light on how texts are possibly produced and understood in a discourse community. It also helps us to understand how the present texts (the texts used for the analysis) are possibly linked up with the ones *in absentia* in Fashion Discourse.

In Fairclough's definition, intertextuality is "basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth" (Fairclough 1992: 84). The nature of intertextuality presumes that texts are produced with reference to the already existing texts. Texts are consumed and understood by drawing on knowledge of past experiences, which are in turn formed by the consumption of previous texts. Hence, why the readers understand one text is very often because of other texts, the readers are able to link up the relationships between the texts that they are reading and those that they have read before.

If we examine the composition of caption again with the concept of intertextuality, we might find that the non-Chinese terms in the component boutique name / brand name are used to refer to the respective boutiques or brands. Therefore, it may not be the case that the writers mix non-Chinese terms into captions. What seems to be the case is that the writers quote the names of the

boutiques / brands into the text. I would say it is a process of "voice-quoting": The writers quote the voices of boutiques and brands in the text.

In the interviews with the ex-chief editor, the executive editor and one contributor of *Amoeba*, one of the almost unspoken consensus is that the non-Chinese names of boutiques, brands, film and record titles will be quoted as they are. In doing this, the writers quote the voices of others; at the same time, the writers' voices are included by opting *not* to translate the non-Chinese names. On the surface, the captions are heteroglossic texts hybridized with languages from different linguistic systems. If we trace the sources of these quoted voices, we will find the heteroglossic caption multi-voiced. In the words of Vice (1997), "polyphony is a way of realizing heteroglossia" (p. 161).

What is a "voice" (Bakhtin 1981)? In the paper of Scollon, Tsang, Li, Yung and Jones (1998), Bakhtin's concept of voice is seen in two senses:

[I]n the macro sense as echoes of larger constructs of power / knowledge and social practice, and in the more conventional sense of particular voices from particular texts recognizable by such features as the words and phrases they use and how these are textualized (p. 230).

At one level, one could identify different voices quoted in the captions. The readers are required to recognize that "Replay" in text 1e is the name of a boutique / brand. The voice of the brand / boutique "Replay" is quoted in the text by the author. At another level, this fashion brand, by retaining its English name in the Hong Kong market, may stand in a specific socioeconomic position. At the same time, the writer quotes and opts not to translate this name, we may suppose that the writer also agrees, consciously or unconsciously, with the socioeconomic position that the names stand for. The readers, during the process of text consumption, may also agree with this voice and accept its chosen socioeconomic position.

The question at hand may not be 'Why does the writer code-switch?' so much as the question 'Why do local and international fashion brands / boutiques adopt non-Chinese names in the Hong Kong market?' In what socioeconomic positions do these non-Chinese names stand for? What does the practice of quoting voices reflect about our culture when the producers and consumers, either consciously or unconsciously, accept the names of these fashion establishments? We will discuss these questions in the next part: Fashion Discourse.

## 7. FASHION DISCOURSE

Discourse is the first embedded layer in the proposed model. The definition of Discourse has been discussed in an earlier section in this chapter. Discourse is

viewed as the site of accumulation of different texts in any form about the same topic. More to the idea of an archive, Discourse is an invisible web under which members are interacting with one another through the production and consumption of texts.

Gee (1996) assumes that members in a specific Discourse may hold a set of more or less, similar values. Discourse is governed by rules that are mutually understood by the members. The members are required to observe the rules; any query about them is severely prohibited.

What this part attempts to do is to infer one or two rules governing Fashion Discourse. In the previous part "textual analysis", it is found that most of the fashion brand / boutique names, regardless of their being local or international establishments, are not in Chinese. This chapter aims to find out the underlying pattern in the naming system of Hong Kong fashion establishments. It might be similar to the "documentary method of interpretation" in the discipline of ethnomethodology. Wilson (1970, cited in Coulon [1995]) suggests that:

Documentary interpretation consists of identifying an underlying pattern behind a series of appearances such that each appearance is seen as referring to, an expression of, or a "document of," [*sic*] the underlying pattern. However, the underlying pattern itself is identified through its individual concrete appearances, so that the appearances reflecting the pattern and the pattern itself mutually determine one another in the same way that the "part" and the "whole" mutually determine each other Gestalt phenomena (Coulon 1995: 68).

## 7.1 Types of fashion stores in Hong Kong

Being one of the cosmopolitan cities in Asia, Hong Kong has an extremely high concentration of shopping malls and fashion stores. Overseas brands are brought into the territory by international economic forces; local fashion stores establish themselves in Hong Kong and overseas. It might be naïve to assume that the fashion stores found in Hong Kong are wholly owned by Hong Kong people.

I have roughly identified five different types of fashion stores found in Hong Kong. This categorization is composed by this writer based on her knowledge of the situation and not in a rigorous sense. The five categories listed are:

- (1) "Non-local" stores  
     (*designers' labels*): Chanel, Christian Dior  
     (*department stores*): Hong Kong Seibu (香港西武)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Chinese name of the store, if it exists, will be given in bracket.

- (2) "Local" stores  
"William Tang", "W. by William Tang" by William Tang (鄧達智)
- (3) "Local" apparel chains  
G2000, U2
- (4) "Local" retailers which sell imported goods  
(*upmarket*): Joyce Boutique  
(*department stores*): Lane Crawford (連卡佛)
- (5) "Local" retailers which sell "local" goods  
Ruby Li, Message à Toi (both in Beverly Centre)

The terms "local" and "non-local" are marked with quotation marks as it is doubtful whether we can differentiate the local from the non-local in this era which is characterized as getting more globalized. We cannot easily attach the labels "local" or "non-local" to fashion establishments when the geographical location of the stores, the nationalities of the owners and the language used to name the stores are not clues that we can rely on.

If we examine what constitutes the process of globalization, we will see that language is only a part of the flow which constructs the dynamic picture of localization and globalization. Appadurai (1990) remarks that in the globalizing process, there are five scopes of flows:

1. ethnoscapescapes - the flowing of people
2. technoscapes - the flowing of technology
3. finanscapes - the flowing of capital
4. mediascapes - the flowing of information
5. ideoscapes - the flowing of ideology and knowledge

The subject we have at hand, that is code-switching in Hong Kong popular magazines, may be seen as a piece of jigsaw in the whole dynamic picture puzzle of how the flowing of goods, information, people, capital and ideologies construct the fashion world and the fashion industry. The use of language in Hong Kong popular magazines may not be merely a linguistic issue that can be analyzed without considering the dynamic and ever-changing context where all the elements (goods, information, people, capital and ideologies) circulate at a global level.

## 7.2 Voices of some Hong Kong fashion designers

When Hong Kong fashion designers have the chance to choose a name to represent their labels, they do not always choose Chinese. They seem to adopt the voices of Western designers by naming themselves in English, French or Italian. Below are accounts of three well-known designers in Hong Kong.

Peter Lau's own label is called "XCVIII Ninety Eight". Lau suggested that this name has no special literal meaning except that he is fond of the shapes of Roman numerals. He also regarded that this name is catchy and simple<sup>12</sup>. Lau's choice confirms my earlier claim that non-Chinese titles may bear aesthetic functions. The literal meaning is pushed to the background as the literal meaning of the label is not considered to be important at all.

Another Hong Kong designer Lu Lu Cheung has chosen an Italian name "Terra Rosalis" for her label. One of the clients was paraphrased as saying that the design style of Cheung cannot be described verbally, yet it can be felt from the name Terra Rosalis (Tang and Wong 1997). Tang and Wong also remark that *Terra* means "mud" and *Rosalis* is related to flowers; these two words, when they are put together, represent elegant femininity. It is amazing how two Italian words are believed to fully represent an abstract concept when the literal meanings of which cannot be understood by most of the members in the Hong Kong Chinese community. Some other cases found in Hong Kong are the local chain stores Giordano and Bossini. Both of them were founded in Hong Kong and have branches in mainland China. To the best of my knowledge, they are not yet marketed in western countries. These Italian words bear ideological functions to some of the members. The ideologies associated with these Italian names might not be clearly spelt out.

Barney Cheng's choice of name labels is perhaps the most interesting one. Cheng owns three labels: "Chang Cheng Castaigne Couture [*sic*]", "Chang Cheng Castaigne Couture-a-porter [*sic*]" and "B Bis". When he was asked why he did not choose to use his name "Barney Cheng" to represent his label, Cheng suggested that a fashion label which bears a Chinese name (such as Cheng) can hardly be marketed in the international fashion circle. Cheng opted to use other non-Chinese names to disguise the race of the designer before he successfully enters the international market (Tang and Wong 1997).

The use of non-Chinese names as fashion labels, except for their functions at both the aesthetic and ideological levels, may also be seen as a strategy to help the labels to penetrate into the international market. Conversely, there is a popular perception that it is more difficult for Chinese name labels to enter the international market.

The opinions of the above three designers may not represent those of other designers / fashion boutiques in Hong Kong. But there seems to be a consensus of choosing non-Chinese names to represent fashion labels and boutiques in Hong Kong. These non-Chinese names may not include any language that is likely to

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<sup>12</sup> 程澄. (1995). 比你更能欣賞自己的性感大師 Peter Lau [The sexy master who can appreciate you more than yourself – Peter Lau]. *Hong Kong Fashion*, 5, 76-77.



be considered exotic in Hong Kong. For example, Hindi and Russian are rarely appropriated. It seems to be the case that Hong Kong designers / fashion boutiques prefer to express themselves in a voice which is similar to the voice of the global market force. The voice may only sound right when the represented names are in English, French, Italian or Japanese. A made-up name from an unidentified linguistic system such as "Mook" still outperforms a Chinese name in Fashion Discourse.

One of the deduced covert maxims is that most of the fashion boutiques / brand names choose not to name themselves in Chinese. Most of the international chain shops are brought to Hong Kong without adopting Chinese names, this might be a process of globalizing the local. Local apparel chains such as G2000 or Giordano bring the local to the global by adopting non-Chinese names. What is more interesting is that some fashion stores which are neither visited by tourists nor chained also prefer to adopt non-Chinese names. A visit to the average mini shopping centres in Mong Kok will show that Hong Kong teenagers are strolling in a mall of signs written in languages that might not be totally intelligible to them. It has to be borne in mind that 98 percent of the local population chooses Cantonese as our mother tongue (Bolton 1992). In addition to this, most of the Hong Kong people do not learn Japanese, French or Italian though they might be able to recognize them as Japanese and European languages. Yet we seem to be quite happy and contented with this phenomenon. Hardly do we hear any complaint or resentment towards this kind of language use in Fashion Discourse.

This may be a circular process of voice-quoting. Local chain stores might quote the voice of international chains in order to market themselves overseas. Local stores quote the same voice to the local people. Magazine producers quote the voices of all these stores in media texts. The magazine consumers quote these voices when producing texts based on media texts. We might, consciously or unconsciously, accept this voice and its projected socioeconomic position. The choice of language is *naturalized* in Fashion Discourse. The process of naturalization is that a certain kind of language use seems to be more "correct" than other existing possibilities. Then this kind of language use becomes a form of common sense. We might further examine one of the possible sociohistorical contexts in which this *naturalization of language* is processed.

## 8. THE SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the model proposed in this study, context is the outermost layer. The context that will be sketched in this part is the sociohistorical one. We will see how this context further informs us about the *naturalized* language use in Hong Kong Fashion Discourse. In the words of Raymond Williams (1989), "the analysis of representation is not a subject separate from history, but that the representations are part of the history, contribute to the history, are active elements in the way that history continues" (p. 178).

In this part, we will mainly look at the "History" of Hong Kong and the evolution of Hong Kong identity designed by the colonial government. "History" with a capital H denotes that the narrative presented in government documents is one-sided and single-voiced. Government documents about Hong Kong fashion may not be generally read by the public, but they stand for the legitimate and official voice. These accounts are probably the only documents that our next generation could obtain when all texts belonging to the folk, such as those in popular magazines, have vanished.

The story plot of Hong Kong History can be divided into two planes: the spatial plane and the temporal plane. The temporal plane is the evolution of Hong Kong from the past to the present. In a newsletter produced by the Hong Kong Museum of History, the story of Hong Kong is emphasized, and perhaps simplified into "the development of Hong Kong from a small fishing village to an important metropolis"<sup>13</sup>. The spatial dimension is the plane of objects and goods which constitute and construct Hong Kong as a East-meets-West place. In a secondary school textbook, Hong Kong is described as:

*A cosmopolitan ... city. The way of life is a mixture of East and West. .... Many people work for foreign companies. At night they may watch television programmes from Britain, Japan and the USA. Hong Kong people also take place in Western and traditional Chinese festivals. It is interesting to live in a cosmopolitan community. We can enjoy the best of both East and West (Crisswell, Squire and Leung 1993: 120).*

The Hong Kong fashion History is sketched in a similar silhouette in official discourse. In the official book *Hong Kong fashion history* (Ng 1992), similar scripts could be found: "in less than half a century, Hong Kong has developed from a small town into an international fashion centre" (p. 107) and "Hong Kong has been a melting pot of ideas from East and West – our fashion designers have combined traditional craftsmanship of the Orient with the contemporary styles of the West to forge a unique cosmopolitan image of Hong Kong fashions" (p. 132).

In the following, we will see how these spatial and temporal planes are represented through words and images in government documents. On the temporal plane, the discussion will be on the evolution of the term "fashion" in Hong Kong History. On the spatial plane, the discussion will be on the representation of the "East and West" quality of Hong Kong fashion in the nineties.

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<sup>13</sup> The story of Hong Kong. July–September, 1998. *Museum newsletter*, July to September, 5.

### 8.1 The temporal plane

The sixties marked the birth of fashion in Hong Kong. In the government document, Hong Kong people were described as people with no "fashion", Hong Kong inhabitants were said to wear clothes and fixed dress only (Szeto 1992).

Barnard (1996) attempts to spell out some conventionalized beliefs of modern social beings: "societies outside the influence of Western civilisation do not wear fashion, they wear fixed dress ... Western societies, however, do wear fashion" (Barnard 1996: 12). Fashion, the word itself, implies Western civilization. "Fashion", the word, is *a priori* Western. It might be ironical that the concept of fashion did seem to exist in Tang Dynasty in China. In the book *5000 years of Chinese costumes*, it is written that Tang Dynasty was "a world-famous metropolis, and the centre of cultural exchanges between East and West" (The Chinese Costumes Research Group of the Shanghai School of Traditional Operas [CCRG] 1988: 76). Yet the Chinese writers of this book seem to be reluctant to use the word "fashion" to describe dress and clothing in Tang Dynasty. The word "fashion" appears in this book about Chinese costumes as late as the 1930's. The Chinese scholars write that "women's costume in the 1930's adopted many features from a wide range of Western fashions to present a unique dress style having a combination of Western and national features" (CCRG 1988: 236).

The word "fashion" does seem to imply westernization and modernization. In Hong Kong fashion History, the concept of fashion was imported from the West as well. The first Hong Kong Fashion Week was produced by a British; the showpieces were designed by a French; the showpieces were worn by sixteen models, of which ten were imported from the West (Turner and Ngan 1995).

In a government document, Ng (1992) accounts for the popularity of Western fashion in the sixties as "the Hong Kong people, gradually influenced by Western culture and ideas, started to reflect on the backwardness of Chinese feudalism" (p. 3). Hong Kong people in the sixties are now portrayed as someone who suddenly gained consciousness about Hong Kong identity after the riot. This Hong Kong identity is designed to be different from the Chinese national one. Hong Kong people are said to start absorbing modern ideas and Western cultures.

Fashion, as described in another government document, is brought to Hong Kong Chinese who originally were said to have no fashion (Szeto 1992). What do these two deductions help us to further understand the rule deduced above (i.e. most of the boutiques / brand names are not in Chinese) in Fashion Discourse? We will discuss it further in the final part of this paper.

### 8.2 The spatial plane

The story plot of Hong Kong History sets Hong Kong on a spatial plane where East meets West. In a social sciences textbook for secondary school students

(Crisswell et al.), the evidence of Hong Kong being East-meets-West includes the watching of imported TV programmes and the celebrating of both Chinese and Western festivals. As Ho (1995) puts it, the phrase "East meets West" is "convenient and superficial enough for Hong Kong" (p. xii). In this part, I want to show the representations of East-meets-West in the Hong Kong fashion world prepared by the Hong Kong government. We will see how the government constructs the image of Hong Kong and its people; and how it markets this image to overseas buyers. It will be argued that the quality of being East-meets-West is ambiguous.

The major source of data used in this part is obtained from a publication called *Hong Kong Apparel*<sup>14</sup>. The target readers of *Hong Kong Apparel* are mainly overseas buyers, merchandisers and distributors. It is a periodical published by the government to promote Hong Kong fashion to the rest of the world. Ten issues of *Hong Kong Apparel* published from January 1994 to July 1998 are examined.

A rough statistical finding shows that in the past five years, there have been 46 articles belonging to the catalogue genre included in ten issues of *Hong Kong Apparel*. Among these 46 articles, 101 models were hired; 58 of them have oriental faces and the rest have non-oriental ones. Most of the fashion shots took place in the studio, 10 of them in Hong Kong, 3 in China and 4 in Western countries. By merely counting the number, it seems that the representations do confirm the East-meets-West quality of Hong Kong and its people.

If we carefully examine the cultural representations presented in this government periodical, we may find what East and West is supposed to mean is rather vague and unclear. Being a Hong Kong Chinese, we may be able to differentiate the face of a mainland Chinese from that of a Japanese. It might be difficult, however, for us to tell the difference between western faces. We might only be able to point out that they look *different* from us. Those western faces might consist of faces from different nationalities and races.

In addition to this, how much can one's face reflect one's culture? Sarup (1996) suggests that "even if a passport is supposed to be proof of your nationality, it says nothing about you as a person" (p. xv). One of the features of globalization is the flowing of people (Appadurai 1990). Culture is not a self-contained, closed system which fixes a group of people within a spatial frame. If Westernness is the quality of having Western values, then what do Western values refer to? If Western values refer to the values held by people residing in Western countries, then

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<sup>14</sup> *Hong Kong Apparel* is published and produced by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, which also publishes periodicals about Hong Kong Toys, Hong Kong Optical, etc. to promote Hong Kong products to the world. *Hong Kong Apparel* is a bi-annual periodical that is published in both January and July. It made its debut in 1969, two years after the first Hong Kong Fashion Week held in 1967.

do the Chinese living in London Chinatown share the same set of values with the Blacks in Britain living in East End? Using the argument of Scollon and Scollon (1995): "cultures do not talk to each other: individuals do" (p. 125). When individuals communicate, they do not simply bear the token "East" or "West", they are also members belonging to their own classes, their own sexes, their own professions and so on.

The slogan "East meets West" may be, as what Ho (1995) suggests: superficial and convenient. In the cultural representations found in *Hong Kong Apparel*, the complex web of culture formed by the flow of people, goods, capital and ideas is simplified and reduced to a two-dimensional image in which people with almond-shaped eyes meet people with straight noses.

The slogan "East meets West" is what the government tells the rest of the world what Hong Kong is like. Hong Kong students also learn this designed and projected Hong Kong image from school textbooks. This East-meets-West quality is also one of the popular topics taken up by columnists who write in the Chinese press. It seems that this is a shared narrative among some Hong Kong people. Hong Kong people may not be able to spell out what East-meets-West means exactly but some of us may have agreed that Hong Kong is a "East meets West" place and Hong Kong Chinese are westernized Chinese.

The sociohistorical context sketched in this part draws on resources from government documents. The government, in its accounts, builds up one History for Hong Kong people. Our History may be seen as the story plot that Hong Kong is a East-meets-West cosmopolitan city which evolved from a fishing village. This story plot is so often repeated in school and media that some of us may believe that we are westernized Chinese who have values from both East and West. Our understanding of this story plot may deflect the way we see language use in our social lives. In the following, we will discuss how this sketched sociohistorical context can be linked up with the findings in discourse analysis.

## 9. IMPLICATIONS

The analysis started with looking at the title "Leather Jacket" found in one fashion article belonging to catalogue genre in one Hong Kong popular magazine *Amoeba*. In the previous part, the History designed by the Hong Kong government has been discussed. It may appear that these two discussions are not directly related to each other but I would argue that this title may contribute to our designed History and it may reinforce our main story plot. In this concluding part, it will be suggested how this sociohistorical context provides us with a lens that helps us to see language use from another angle; it will also be discussed how Hong Kong identity can be constructed through the use of language.

In the textual analysis, it is suggested that "Leather Jacket" outperforms its Chinese counterpart "皮褸" as a title in catalogue genre for it may imply "Westernness" to the readers. But why "Westernness", not "Asianness" or "Africanness"? Why do the members in Fashion Discourse prefer "Westernness" to other values? It has also been discussed that English, Japanese and other European languages are appropriated to name fashion brand and boutique names in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong fashion agents may not bother to adopt a Chinese name for Western imports. Again, why do members in Fashion Discourse engage in this practice? Will a Chinese name or an Arabic name click in Fashion Discourse?

Through the lens of the sociohistorical context outlined above, we may deduce the following: First, fashion may not be an exclusive Western concept, but the existing literature and our conventional practice give the illusion that people outside Western societies have no fashion. The concept of Westernization and modernization may be implied by the word "fashion". The association between the word "fashion" and Westernness seems to be taken for granted, and thus naturalized. "Leather Jacket", then seems to be a more "natural" choice than "皮褸" for the conventionalized practice and values in Fashion Discourse. The naming of fashion boutiques seems to follow the same conventionalized rule. A fashion boutique carrying a Chinese name may not be perceived as a fashionable choice.

We could assume that when the fashion writer chooses to name an article or when the fashion owner chooses to name a boutique, they might consider whether they are adopting the right language in Fashion Discourse or not. Fashion Discourse is in this sense rule-governed and these rules are mutually understood by the members, no matter how vague or implicit this understanding is. Both fashion writers and fashion owners might prefer English, Japanese, French or Italian to Chinese if they want to become and be seen as a member of the invisible club: Fashion Discourse. They may not be too concerned about their national identities; they may not always take the language proficiency of other members into their primary consideration. To other members, understanding the implications of the chosen language is also one crucial criterion to be included in the club.

In the Hong Kong context, the choice of English or other foreign languages may seem to be more *natural* given that Hong Kong is promoted as a place where East meets West. The members in Hong Kong Fashion Discourse may not have the linguistic resources to understand boutique names in French, Italian or even English. But they are required to have the cultural resources to understand what these names imply in Hong Kong Fashion Discourse. They may also be contented to stroll in a shopping mall with signs that they do not understand literally. These hybridized texts with Chinese, English and other foreign languages cohere with the main story plot of Hong Kong History. These texts may be evidence of Hong Kong being an East-meets-West cosmopolitan. These texts in turn contribute to this story plot. The text and the context is hence dialectical.

The data collected for this study was obtained after the handover. I did not deliberately choose this particular period. Now when I look at the collected data, I do not see a great difference between language use before and after the handover. It seems that the promise "unchanged for 50 years" is partly kept in the use of code-switching in Hong Kong popular magazines. The slogan "East-meets-West" may be designed by the colonial government, but this slogan is still echoed by some Hong Kong people, especially to those who have studied under the colonial educational system. I do not recall hearing any objection in the media or among acquaintances when Hong Kong people are described as Westernized Chinese. But when Hong Kong people are described as Chinese who love our mother country, objections can be heard in the media and among acquaintances.

It seems that however vague it is, Hong Kong people do have a Hong Kong identity. The quality of being Westernized Chinese may be part of this identity. In some previous studies of code-switching (Luke 1984 / 1998), code-switching (orientational mixing in Luke's term) is seen as a strategy for Hong Kong Chinese to show our Western selves. Is it correct to say that "the western attributes of Hong Kong Chinese exist inside us, so when we code-switch, we express our Western selves", or is it also correct to suggest that "Hong Kong Chinese believe that we are Westernized Chinese, so when we code-switch, we want to tell others our stories; if the interlocutors also learn of the Hong Kong narrative (i.e. an East-meets-West place; Hong Kong Chinese are Westernized), they will agree that the speakers want to negotiate their Western selves"? If the interlocutors do not learn of this Hong Kong narrative, then code-switching employed by Hong Kong Chinese will mean something quite different to them. Code-switching may be a process of identity-negotiation between social actors who mutually understand the same story plot.

Another comment on the belief that Hong Kong Chinese are westernized is that, some Hong Kong Chinese may see this feature as what differentiates Hong Kong Chinese from mainland Chinese. But at the same time, Hong Kong fashion establishments such as G2000 group is eager to develop business in mainland China. Hong Kong Chinese may perceive ourselves to be agents who help mainland Chinese to develop their sense of becoming global citizens by showing them what the West is like.

William Tang, a Hong Kong fashion designer, writes in *Hong Kong Economic Journal* that in Hong Kong Fashion Week 1999, there are too many mainland Chinese models. In the view of Tang, without some blondes with blue eyes, buyers from mainland China will not be convinced that the event is international<sup>15</sup>. Hong Kong Chinese may be more westernized than mainland Chinese in this early decolonized era in terms of the adoption of western goods, but Hong Kong

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<sup>15</sup> See 鄧達智, (1999, January 26). 不快樂的時裝表演, cool 夠未? ['The unhappy fashion show, is cool over?'], *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, p. 28.

Chinese may not be "half-Chinese-half-Westerner" in all cases. Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese, in the eyes of Westerners, are Chinese.

## 10. Conclusion

This study focuses on the relationship between language, culture and identity. I have avoided seeing language or culture or identity as things, they are seen as flows of elements which constitute our social lives in this global world. We use language not because of what we are, we use language to engage in social lives, to perform various kinds of language-games with other social actors. Language use is a way of *becoming*: we perform the selves that we perceive ourselves to be.

I have tried to map out the relationship between language, culture and identity by discussing the phenomenon of code-switching in Hong Kong popular magazines in the early postcolonial era. I have not, as some of the readers may have noticed, deliberately related language use to postcolonialism or colonialism. It is believed that different contexts are contesting with each other. 1997 is undoubtedly significant to a lot of Hong Kong people, but economically, Hong Kong is still competing with other encounters at a global level. More signs indicate that the world is becoming more and more globalized. It is believed that globalization may also have an equally profound impact on Hong Kong society as decolonization.

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## **PART TWO**

### **MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION**

# 建立網站推廣中文作為教學語言 及發展優質教學

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## 摘要

香港在一九九七年以前，各學科都是使用英語作為教學語言。九七年以後，政府指定學校的個學科必須使用母語（粵語／國語）作為教學語言。本文首先介紹「母語教學教師支援中心」（以下簡稱「中心」）去年進行的一項問卷調查，該調查目的主要是了解剛轉用母語作為教學語言的時候，學校所遇到的困難和所需要的支援。另外，本文也會介紹中心網站的設計，主要說明網站如何配合中心整體服務的工作目標和教師的需要，以及網站在中心的角色。除此之外，文中也會詳述網站的內容設計，特別針對前述轉用母語教學後教師的需要；以及報告至今年初，網站運作的成效。最後，我們討論如何推廣母語教學並將它發展成為優質教學。（請瀏覽香港大學課程學系母語教學教師支援中心網站 <http://www.cmi.hku.hk>）

## 一、背景

一九九七年以前，香港仍是英國的殖民地，大部分學校都是使用英語作為課堂教學語言，除了中文、中史科外，其餘的科目都是用英語教授。但是實際上，大部分學校都是採用混合語教學（mixed code），也就是混合粵語及英語教學，結果導致教學效果不良，學生運用語文的能力十分低（教育統籌委員會第六號報告書，1995）。香港很多學生都沒有足夠的英語能力理解教師講授的內容，而有部分教師也沒有足夠的能力運用英語作為課堂語言教導學生，然而在英國殖民政府的統治下，政府的有關部門並沒有一套有效的方法去糾正這個錯誤的政策，因此使到香港的學校教育千瘡百孔。一九九七年，香港回歸中國，香港政府和教育界都認為學校的教學語言應該是母語，所以香港教育署在一九九七年三月頒佈「教學語言強力指引」（香港教育署，1997），要求大部分中學使用母語作為教學語言；言；並且訂出大部分學校應該由一九九八學年度開始，在中學一年級

言；並且訂出大部分學校應該由一九九八學年度開始，在中學一年級使用粵語作為教學語言教授所有學科(除了英語科之外)，並逐年把母語教學的政策，推展到中學各年級。四份之二的中學必須轉用母語教學。這指引頒佈後，學生家長強烈反對，部分家長更上街遊行抗議，認為母語教學會降低學生的英語水平，以及影響他們的子女升學和就業的機會，有些家長為了要報讀英語學校而搬家；有些家長把他們的子女從中文中學轉去英文中學，因而英文幼稚園、小學和英文中學愈來愈受歡迎。母語教學的政策帶來了不少社會問題。在各方的壓力下，教學語言上訴委員會採取比較「彈性」的評核標準，於是有二十所被指定要用母語作為教學語言的學校申請上訴，結果有 14 所學校上訴得直，准許保留用英語作為教學語言，但不少籲論指出這種決定會製造社會分化。有部分學校更收取成績比較佳的學生，或者其它不同的方法爭取日後有機會轉回採用英語授課。總之，授課語言已經成為社會爭論不休的話題 (Tse, S. K. et al., 1994; 明報, 1999)，難題懸而未決。

大部分在英語學校任教的各科教師(83.9%) (徐碧美等, 1999) 習慣使用混合語教學，學校轉用母語授課後，不少教師表示沒有信心使用母語(粵語)作為教學語言(潘玉瓊, 1993)。政府為了安撫家長，在一九九八年新學年開始，推出一連串的措施協助中文中學。這些新措施包括為中文中學優先設立多媒體中心、增加英語教學津貼等。而語文基金也會優先考慮中文中學所提出的撥款計劃申請，以改善學生的英語水平。

香港大學課程學系的教師為了支持母語教學，向香港語文教育及研究常務委員會申請撥款，成立了一所「母語教學教師支援中心」，並建構網絡，為推行母語教學的中學教師在教學和語文方面提供服務。「母語教學教師支援中心」在一九九八年年底成立。

## 二、母語教學政策與教師的困難

為了深入了解香港的學校轉用母語教學後，教師所遇到的困難，中心在一九九八年十二月進行問卷調查(香港大學課程學系母語教學教師支中心, 1998)，調查對象是由九八年九月起，全面轉用母語教學的學校。中心向約 300 所學校發出問卷，問卷分為兩類：一類是行政人員(校長或其代表)問卷，另一類是教師問卷(由中一級任教非語文科的教師填寫)，有 189 所學校寄回問卷，其中行政人員回收的問卷有 152 份(51%)，教師回收的問卷有 1 942 份(63%)。鑑於收回的問卷中有 17 所學校在九八年前已全面使用母語教學，所以減去這些學校的問卷後，有效的行政人員問卷有 135 份，有效的教師問卷有 1 697 份。統計問卷的結果後，我們發現：

- 學校行政人員和教師普遍認為母語教學可以提高學生的學習興趣，並且能夠刺激學生進入高層次思維學習（學校行政人員有 94.7%；教師有 80.2%）。但是目前課程設計、考試內容和形式、教科書的編寫都未能配合母語教學的發展，導致母語教學的優點未能充分發揮，因此也無法獲得家長的信心。
- 而教師採用母語教學感到困難，其中的原因包括缺乏適合的教科書（36.9%）、輔助教材（43.9%），不熟悉學科的中文詞彙（38.6%），不懂得電腦中文文書處理的技巧等（44.0%）。
- 在轉用母語教學後的過渡時期，學校和教師希望有關方面能夠提供具體、實質的支援，協助他們解決教學上的問題，充分發揮母語教學的優點（86.5%）。

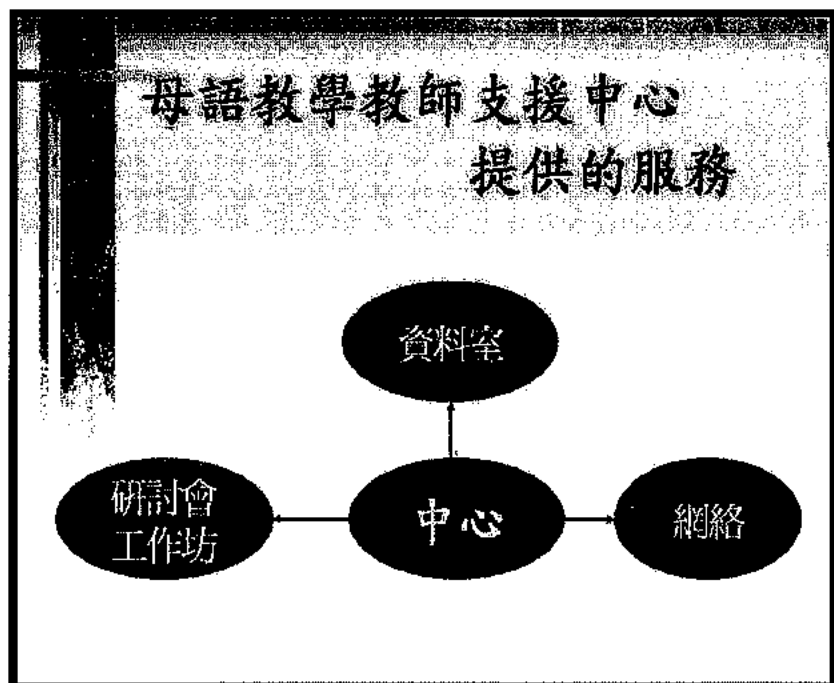
在這次調查中，有 63% 的教師在問卷裡表達了他們需要教學上的支援。他們認為政府在政策上，應該有相應的措施協助教師適應教學語言的轉變。另一方面，他們希望中心能夠提供下列的支援：

- (1) 提供教師交流經驗的園地：教師希望中心成為交流經驗、匯聚教學心得的集散地。
- (2) 提供教師培訓服務：教師希望中心可以提供與教學相關的培訓，例如電腦中文文書處理、電腦中文輸入法、電腦輔助教學的技術、中文電腦教學軟件、擬寫試題及設計工作紙的方法、中文網絡使用和介紹、中文應用及語誤分析、中英翻譯技巧、專題或分科教學的培訓課程等。
- (3) 成為教學語言的研究中心：對教學語言政策實踐的成敗作研究及分析，將結果向當局反映。
- (4) 提供教學材料的資料庫：提供及發展教學軟件、教材、教科書和試題等。
- (5) 設計深層思維的教學法：開發、試用及推廣高層思維教學法，推動母語教學成為優質教學。

上述的調查結果使中心的發展及網絡設計有了更穩固的基礎和發展方向。

### 三、母語教學教師支援中心與網絡

這一節我們會先介紹中心的結構及網絡的關係。中心的服務由以下三部分組成：資料室、研討會和工作坊以及網絡。



中心提供給學校和教師的服務主要包括下列各項：

1. 舉辦研討會、學術講座和工作坊: 舉辦母語教學研討會，邀請校長或專家學者分享母語教學的經驗，並且推介相關的教學資源給教師。舉辦不同題材的學術講座，例如：中文運用、語文轉換和語誤分析等，增加教師的專業知識。除此之外，並定期舉辦工作坊，加強教師的電腦知識和學科知識。例如：舉辦中文電腦工作坊，介紹中文輸入法和中文電腦軟件；舉辦分科工作坊，邀請學者講述不同的科目，包括：歷史，地理，經濟及公共事務，公民教育，綜合科學，數學，資訊科技常識等科目。
2. 設立資料室及諮詢服務: 中心設有一所資料室，收集各類與母語教學相關的教科書、教材、教案、工作紙和試題，供教師參考。中心並且聘用多名教學顧問，為教師提供即時的教學諮詢服務，解答他們的查詢，並參與討論和分析教材及教學設計。



3. 建立電腦網絡: 網絡的內容包括網上資料庫和網上資料區。網上資料庫主要是提供簡便的渠道讓教師收集支援母語教學的資料, 包括一般語文運用的知識, 以及學科的教學資源和語文資料。網上討論區的作用是讓教師透過網上答問環節, 與教學專家聯繫, 取得語文及教學的專業意見; 更可以藉此與其他教師溝通, 彼此交流。

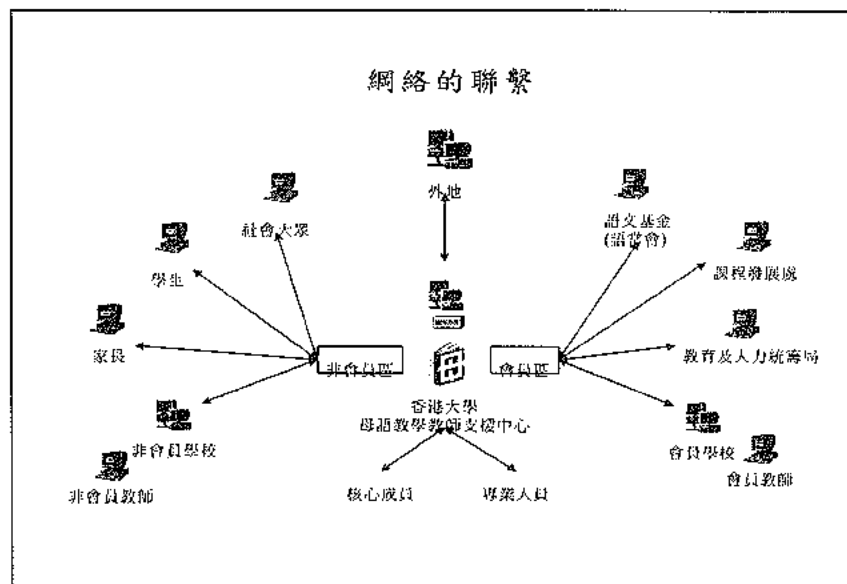
4. 加強同工間的合作: 進行本地及跨地域合作, 探討母語教學面對的問題, 以及分享成功的經驗, 探索發展的路向, 並與團體或個人共同努力, 推動母語教學。

網絡是中心非常重要的一部分。由於香港的中學四處分佈, 無論中心建設在任何一個地點, 有半數學校教師前往中心, 都會感到不便, 而設置網絡便可以解決上述的困難和問題。下文詳細介紹網絡的結構、功能、內容、設計特色和效能。

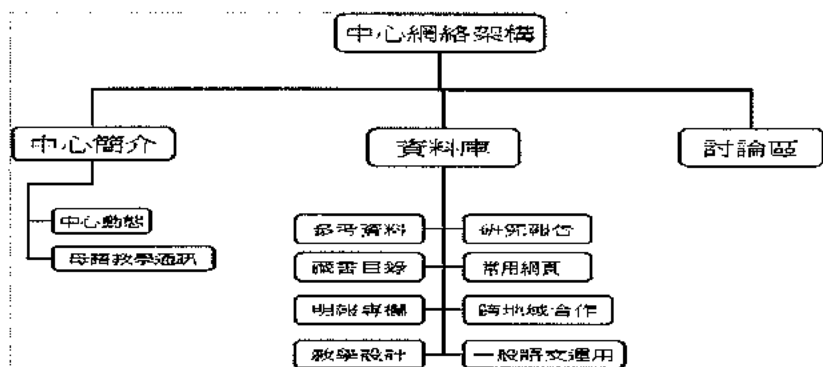
#### 四、網絡的聯繫及整體架構

從下圖可以看到整個網上服務的聯繫網絡及整體架構。母語教學的網絡包括五大骨幹: 緒論、資料庫、討論區、中心活動和母語教學動態。在各個主要的骨幹下設有多項索引, 方便教師使用。緒論部分是闡釋中心的工作和方向。中心活動包括中心的未來活動的通告, 研討會精華輯錄和索

圖一: 網絡的聯繫



圖二：網絡的架構



引指南。母語教學動態報導有關團體的活動及出版界有關母語教學的消息。本網絡最重要的部分是資料庫和討論區。

## 五、網絡內容

網絡的內容包括三個環節：中心動態、資料庫、討論區和中文進修閣。在「中心動態」中，可以找到中心將舉辦的活動，例如工作坊、座談會及講座等的詳細資料和報名方法，還有已經舉辦的活動花絮和中心的每月通訊。下文重點介紹資料庫和討論區。

### 5.1 資料庫

建立網上資料庫的主要作用是提供簡便的渠道讓教師輕易地取得支援母語教學的資料。『資料庫』包括：研究報告、常用網頁、藏書目錄、一般語文運用的知識以及各學科的教學等。

#### 5.1.1 研究報告

爲了更深入了解母語教學政策的推行，對同工和學校的影響，中心也進行了多項研究活動，包括母語教學的困難與支援、語誤分析。部份研究的結果已經在網站上發表，也製作了詳盡的書面報告，包括徐碧美等(1999)編著的《母語教學的實施：困難與支援》以及謝錫金等(2000)的《擬題語誤和語意表達》，各位同工可以參考和加入討論。

### 5.1.2 常用網頁

這裡介紹一些同工常用網址，包括國內、外教育的網站、本地新聞報刊、各科科目資源和其他中文搜尋器等。其中科目資源中，每個詞彙又分別連結到相關的網址，讓同工更容易取得所需要的資訊，例如查詢「政府部門」，就會連結到香港特別行政區政府的網站。

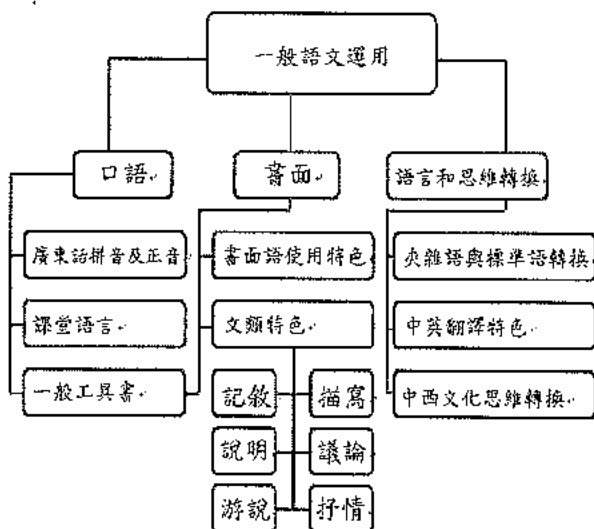
### 5.1.3 藏書目錄

中心開設了一個專為母語教學而設的小型圖書館，藏書包括兩岸三地用中文編寫的教科書、練習、辭典、光碟等，「藏書目錄」將整個圖書館的書目以科目分類，同工可先從索引中查閱合用的課本或教材，再親身到中心借閱。

### 5.1.4 「一般語文運用」

一般語文運用可以再分為口語的應用、書面語的運用以及語言和思維的轉換三大類。詳細的內容分項說明如下：

圖三：一般語文運用



#### 5.1.4.1 口語的應用

口語的應用包括：採用廣州話拼音系統作正音，介紹常見的異讀、誤讀及正讀等資料；一般課堂語言的運用，例如：課堂教學、討論、實驗、角

色扮演、辯論、專題報告等處境中的課堂用語；一般工具書的檢索方法，主要介紹一般中國語文工具書的常用檢索方法，包括：部首檢字法、筆畫檢字法、號碼檢字法以及拼音檢字法，並提供簡易的練習給教師自學。除此之外，也有各種常用工具書的簡介。

#### 5.1.4.2 書面語的運用

這部分包括一般書面語的使用特色和各種文類的功能和特色。一般教學常用的書面語，包括工作紙、筆記、試題的常用詞語和句式，以及對繁體字和簡體字的認識。文類的功能項目包括：記敘、描寫、說明、議論、游說和抒情等類別。

#### 5.1.4.3 語言和思維的轉換

這方面的內容主要有：夾雜語與標準粵語的轉換，主要探討夾雜語與標準語的轉換原則和舉例說明；中英翻譯的特色，主要探討中英翻譯的原則範例；中西文化思維的轉換方面：主要探討中西文化影響下的語言和思維轉換；以及怎樣利用中國的成語、諺語來加強說明的效果。

#### 5.1.5 「各學科的教學」

這裡的各學科是指中一至中三的歷史、地理、經濟及公共事務、公民教育、綜合科學、數學、資訊科技常識等科目，詳情見下圖的說明。

在下圖可以看到各學科之下還有專科用語、教學資源庫、教學模式(或單元設計)以及專科語體四部分，下文再分項說明。

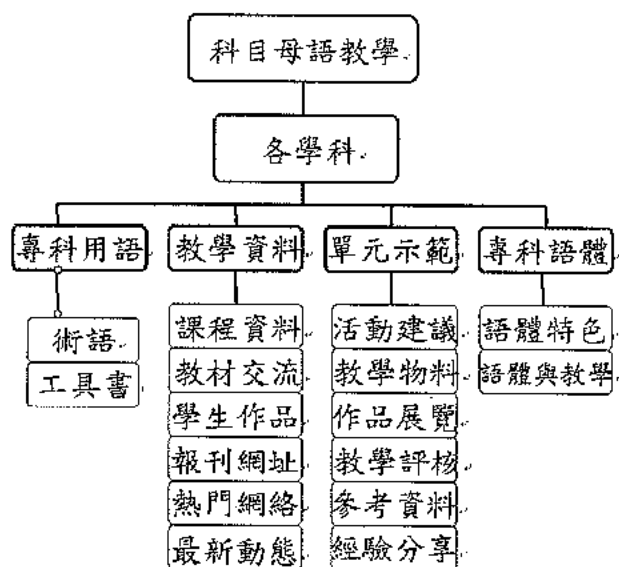
##### 5.1.5.1 專科用語

為了幫助教師認識專科用語，資料庫中設有專科術語詞彙以及專科工具書資料。專科術語詞彙包括各學科的一般術語、詞彙以及不同科目教學活動的有關語言，例如：實驗報告、專題討論、人物評價、歷史表解、圖示教學等有關的術語、詞彙和語言等。專科工具書資料包括介紹各分科的字典和辭典的各自編排、檢索方法和特點等。

##### 5.1.5.2 教學資源庫

教學資源庫包括課程資料、教學資源及教師製作交流、學生作品專題展覽、報章雜誌、科目網上資源和最新動態等。課程資料提供各科初中課程資料並聯結到教署或其他專業團體的網站，如香港數理教育學會的資料庫，香港地理學會、經濟教育學會等的網頁。教學資源及教師製作交流會收集各所學校教師製作的有用的教學物料，加工上網。學生作品專題展覽

圖四: 各學科的教學



收集學生優秀的專題作品，加工上網。報章雜誌提供本地報章、雜誌的網絡聯繫，方便教師查閱資料。科目網上資源把對各個學科有重要參考價值的網址與參考庫聯繫起來，例如：「水」字與水務署的網頁聯結在一起，「貪污」一詞與廉政公署的網頁聯結在一起，「特區政府」與香港政府新聞處的網頁聯結在一起等。最新動態根據最新的社會動態，例如「複製動物」、「物質的新結構」及「考古新發現」等，為教師提供有關的資料及網絡聯繫的方法。

#### 5.1.5.3 教學模式及單元設計

母語教學對推行優質教學非常重要。推行母語教學的時候必須同時改進目前的教學模式，包括在教學過程中充分發揮利用語文作為學習工具的作用，讓學生有更多機會去搜集資料，觀察提問，互相協作，表達思考，使學習更生活化，更深入，更具啟發性和創意，唯有這樣，才能夠發揮母語教學的優勢。

因此，本中心特別配合母語教學設計了一些有效的教學模式，並且將教學模式放在網絡上，作為示範。每個學科將選定不少於三個教學單元作為範例，詳細列出教學過程及評核方法，包括教案示例及有關物料等，主要

說明母語教學怎樣促進教學及評核模式的改進。教學單元的內容包括教學活動建議、教學物料、作品展覽、教學評核、參考資料以及經驗分享等。

教學活動建議包括不同學科的教學活動。不同學科有不同的教學活動，下文以綜合科學科和歷史科作為例子說明教學活動的具體安排。

綜合科學科的教學活動中，教師可以透過不同的課堂活動形式加強學生對學科的興趣，讓學生對學習更加投入，以加強訓練學生的分析和思考能力。例如：教師可以採用「水中的微生物加入氯氣後的反應」作為實例研究；「怎樣提高香港人的環保意識？」作為專題討論；「食水應否氯化？」作為辯論的題目；以「我們應該加建多些核能發電廠嗎？」為題讓學生分別扮演不同的角色；用「城門河水的污染問題」作為專題研究的題目。

在如歷史科的教學活動中，教師可以採取後述的一系列教學活動。例如：採用活動教學的方法，透過遊戲啟導學生怎樣利用不同的資料去詮釋歷史，重整過去，從而掌握歷史科的本質。因應新的香港史課程，教師設計課堂教學可以配合參觀訪問，讓學生親身體會何謂歷史的「轉變」、「發展」、「延續」和理解「口述歷史」作為歷史資料的特色。利用歷史資料設計工作紙，幫助學生分析史事的因果關係、設計歷史資料題作考核學生，避免學生死記硬背史實、評論教科書對史事的敘述和詮釋，這些都可以幫助學生發展高層次思維。除此之外，母語教學更能有效地發展學生的「同感心」(empathy)，讓學生更容易代入歷史人物裡，理解他們在昔日的行為和背後的動機，這對史實的深層理解和分析有極大的幫助。

教學物料在教學活動中可以使用的教學物料，包括用中文寫成的教案、教材，如筆記、閱讀材料、工作紙等。學生學習成果展覽搜集與教學單元有關的學生優秀作品，加工上網。

試題庫與試題籃採用母語教學，我們可以加強對學生學習能力的培養，提升它的認知層次，考核的形式必須同時改變，本部分就教學評核的相應改進模式提出建議，並提供不同類型的評核題庫給教師參考。評核題庫的題型包括：多項選擇題、是非題、配對題、資料理解題、解難式問題、開放及創意型問題、論辯型問題以及專題設計等。

參考資料提供網上聯繫，連接現存和單元有關的參考資料庫或資訊網絡。使用經驗分享收集教師對該單元的使用心得，給其他教師參考。

#### 5.1.5.4 自學中文

自學中文包括「中文進修閣」以及「語文偏誤分析」。「中文進修閣」的設計目的主要是促進教師的自學文化，提升教師的教學語文水平。網頁中羅列了多種寫作表達能力的理論與寫作方法；還有約十個單元，每

頁中羅列了多種寫作表達能力的理論與寫作方法；還有約十個單元，每個單元中都會與讀者討論一些常見的語文問題，並設有一些練習，可以即時評核讀者的語文表現，以及延伸學習的資料。

「語文偏誤分析」的設計目的主要是讓教師從偏誤例子的分析中，明白及掌握漢語的特性，從而提升教師的教學語文水平。

#### 5.1.5.5 專科語體

要認識專科用語的特色，必須要認識專科語體的特色以及語體與教學的特色。

學科內容  $\longleftrightarrow$  知識型態  $\longleftrightarrow$  語言

語言的基本功能是要表達意思。因應內容的不同，便有必要採用不同的語言表達模式。近年來，愈來愈多研究語言和讀寫能力的學者關注到學科獨特語體這一課題 (Frances Christie, 1991)。他們發覺由於各個學科本身的性質不同、內容不同，各自有其獨特的思辨方式、熔鑄科目內容的方式、提出問題的方式、辯論問題的方式和總結問題的方式等。各學科獨特的知識結構模式，在中學的課程特別明顯。這些情況反映在語言上，就是各個學科的獨特語言體式 (subject-specific patterns of discourse)，最明顯的區分，就是人文科學和自然科學兩類學科的分別。

自然科學的一般語言應用，是把經驗世界分類和解釋自然現象，然後歸納成學理。人文科學學科中的歷史科，一般語言應用是記錄過去的事件和解釋這些事件，這是司馬遷所謂的「通古今之變，究天人之際」，語言體式方面，記錄過去的事件是運用敘述的語體，解釋這些事件便要運用說明的語體。

每一科目有各自獨特的語體 (subject-specific genre)。能否掌握各科獨特語體進行學習，是學生學業成敗的關鍵。學生不了解各學科的獨特語體，很大程度上與教師的教學有關。教師有責任教導和訓練學生發展和運用這些語體的能力。因此，這部分主要是加強各科教師對學科的獨特語體的關注，並介紹有關的研究。這部分的主要作用是提供資料給教師，讓教師了解不同科目在運用語言上有不同的風格或模式以及不同的原因，並且能夠透徹了解如何利用適當的語體來表達學科知識。

### 5.1.5.6 網上學習

設立「網上學習」的目的是促進學生的自學文化和提升他們的自學能力。各學校的學生練習設在網上的題目，校內的學生並可以互相比賽，而每校學生的成績只有他們自己才可以看到。

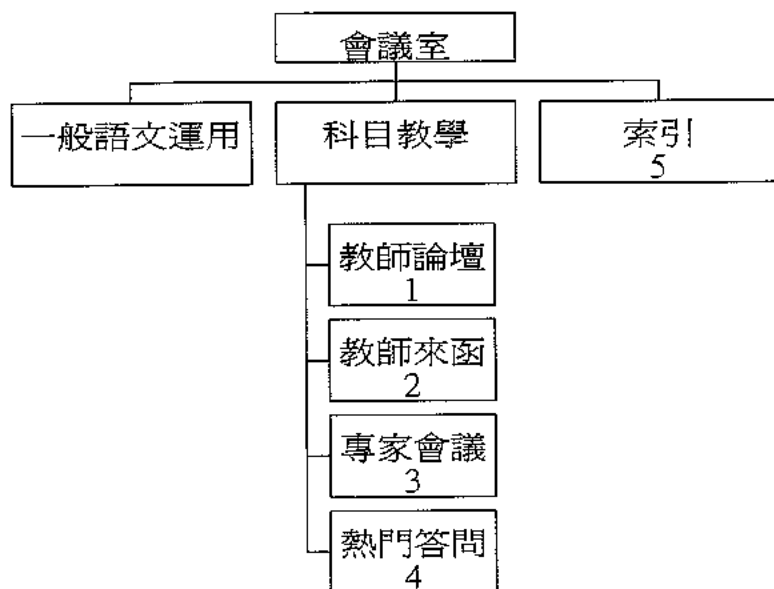
總而言之，這個資料庫對發展優質的母語教學有促進的作用，對發展初中學生的高層次思維和認知能力，遠比第二語言作教學媒介為優，實行母語教學對推動教學改革，具有深遠的意義。

## 六、網上討論區

網上討論區(見下圖)設立的目的，是讓教師就一般語文運用或科目教學交流意見，『討論區』是教師提問、交流和討論的園地。

『討論區』分為一般語文運用和科目教學兩部分，科目教學包括教師論壇、教師來函、專家會議和熱門答問四個範疇。

圖五: 網上討論區



在教師論壇中教師可以寫電子郵件到中心，與工作人員公開交流討論、提問及回應。在教師來函一欄中，教師可以利用電子郵件作私人提問、交流，信中的內容只供來信者及中心人員閱覽。設立這項目之目的是減少部分人士對公開討論的顧慮。



中心人員會鼓勵來信人將有關討論的結果公開，得到來信人的同意後，中心的工作人員會將討論的結果放在教師論壇上，讓更多教師一起分享。在專家會議中，中心會定期設立專題，邀請專家參與，和前線的教師進行交流及討論。在熱門答問中，主要是針對教師普遍關心的問題，選擇有關的討論內容，輯成「熱門答問」給教師查閱。在索引中，中心人員會將討論信件加入關連字標記，讓教師可以就他們關切的問題，靈活地搜索，參閱有關的討論內容。至於不懂得中文輸入法的教師，他們可以利用傳真的方式參與討論，中心的工作人員再將信件輸入電腦。

## 七、網絡功能

### 7.1 專家與前線教師的結合

香港大學課程學系有各學科的課程和教學法專家，一方面不斷研究有效的教學法和教學設計，讓教師應用到實際的教學上，經過實踐後，然後放到網上；另一方面，中心會向學校搜集優質的教學設計和教學理論，經過分析和修改，再放到網上，給教師同工使用。

### 7.2 緊急支援

本網絡為教師提供緊急支援服務，解決教師在轉用母語教學後產生的問題。教師可以進入討論區，提出問題；或者透過傳真或電話，向中心職員提出問題，教師無論用那種方法提問，都有中心專職人員解答。中心職員並會將問題放在網上，給同工參考。

### 7.3 教師培訓

香港教師在教學語言上經常遇到困難。由於香港特殊的教育環境，教師以往是在混合語的環境中學習、成長，因此大多數教師都習慣用中英混合語言授課，推行母語教學後，課堂用語成為一個很嚴重的問題。這些問題包括：能否用純中文講授事實、提供論據，解釋概念及引發討論；運用技術性或半技術性中文術語及概念；如何以豐富的中文課堂用語刺激學生思考。而在教學上也遇到困難：如何準確運用書面語；如何界定「標準書面語」(modern standard Chinese)。國內和台灣的書面語的表達方式，無論在詞彙、句式以至語法均不甚相同，香港教師不一定能完全借用國內和台灣習用的語言體式。香港教師以母語教學，應以何者為標準？是否有全世界華人都可用以溝通的中文體式？要了解各科詞彙，可以查閱相關的字典，若詞彙是從外文翻譯過來，便難以確定詞彙的中文翻譯是否正確；本網絡提供有關資料給教師參考。

## 7.4 教師交流

推行母語教學要取得成果，必須要改變教師對母語教學的態度。爲了協助教師在短時間內改用母語教學，除了提供師資培訓課程之外，加強教師之間的互相鼓勵、互相支持也很重要。要母語教學成功，我們必須要促進學校及教師之間的溝通，使他們彼此分享使用母語教學的經驗。因此，我們設有「網上討論區」，也就是以網上會議室的形式，讓教師討論教學問題，發表意見，中心各科的教學顧問，接到問題後，會立刻跟進，在網上回答。

## 7.5 提高教學效能

本網絡收集了大量優質的教學設計和教材，並且經過前線教師實踐，配合教學理論，放到網上，供同工使用。因此，這些教材結合了理論與實踐，對於提高教師教學效能，十分有幫助。另外，中心不斷探訪學校，把優質的教學過程錄影，並輯錄上網，使教師能夠參考這些優質的教學法，用於實際的教學上。

## 7.6 提供優質的診斷測試工具和試題庫

自中心成立以來，我們不斷得到學校的支持，收集了大量中學各科初中年級的試題，建立了網上試題庫給教師使用。所有試題，未放進試題庫前，會先由語文專家進行語誤分析，再由各科的教學顧問進行題型分析，然後按其級別、內容、類型、程度，放進試題庫內。教師選取試題時，可以針對各學科不同的範疇及概念，在試題庫選取材料，編製成試題，測試和診斷學生對該科的認知程度，這樣，教師更能掌握學生的學習進度，因此更能發展有效的教學法，設計合適的教材，提高學生的思考能力。爲了方便教師使用試題庫，教師可以利用「試題籃」，選取所需要的試題，暫存檔案裡，選取完畢便可以將完整的試卷列印，省卻教師輸入或抄寫試題的時間，可以大大減輕教師繁重的工作壓力。

## 7.7 研究教學理念

爲了解決轉用母語教學後所產生的困難，中心各核心成員不斷訪問學校，觀察上課情況，並與其他教師合作，共同設計改善設計的計劃。

## 八、網絡設計特色

本網站的服務對象是中學教師。因此，網站的內容和形式是經過技術人員特別的設計，適合中學教師的需要。本網站有下列的特色：

## 8.1 品質保證

我們設計本網站的時候，特別注重實效，避免毫無意義地讓過剩的資訊充塞在網站內，網站內每一個環節都發揮著不同的功能，環環相扣。為了使網內資訊的素質，保持優良，我們特別設立了把關制度，所有網上的資料都會經過中心的語言專家、教學顧問、技術人員研究後，才放在網上，給教師瀏覽下載。例如：我們收到試題後，首先會分析試題的語誤以及有關該學科的內容，如果發現有錯誤會先更正，然後再根據科目分析題型，決定題目的性質，再由技術人員解決上網的技術問題，才放在網絡上。

## 8.2 以客為本

我們理解我們的服務對象，大多數都是對操作電腦感到陌生的中學教師，為了避免增加他們的負擔，我們除了向教師提供電腦技術培訓外，也不斷嘗試簡化網站設施的操作過程，配合使用者的習慣，讓他們可以輕鬆簡便地搜尋適合的資料。

## 8.3 各取所需

由於我們服務的對象來自不同學科的教師，為了配合他們的需要，我們特別設計了搜尋試題的工具，即「試題籃」。使用者可以根據題型或試題的主旨，配合要考核學生的方向，搜尋試題，並把選取的試題放在試題籃內，最後一併把試題列印，免去教師打字或抄寫的工夫，大大減輕教師工作的負擔，教師因此可以有更多的時間研究及擬寫更優質的試題或教案。我們希望本網站，能夠真正為教師的教學質素及自我發展帶來益處。

## 8.4 網絡群體

本網絡是一個與香港中學教師結合的網絡，而與本港同類型的網絡比較，本網絡擁有最多的會員學校，也是香港教育界最大的網絡群體之一。在網絡世界裡，存在四個群體：網絡操縱者（web master）、網絡貢獻者（web contributor）、網絡使用者（web user）、網絡瀏覽者（navigator）。我們設計本網站的目的，是希望推動被動的網絡瀏覽者，主動使用網絡資源，最後積極參與，建設網絡。隨著網絡群體不斷發展，網絡愈變得有生命力，社會上會有更多人受惠。

## 8.5 資料增值

我們積極地將網站的功能由資料分發推展成為一個資料發展及收集的地方。網站不單是為教師提供教材、試題的地方，更可以透過網絡收集教師的反應。例如在試題庫上，我們會統計教師對每條題目的使用率，從而

進一步挑選出最優質的題目。然而由於中心的資源有限，因此要評估每一個細節是不可能的，然而使用網絡的教師數量很多，結合他們的力量，集思廣益，便可以達到提升網站上資料的質素之目標。

### 8.6 知識脈絡化

透過超連結，與各個有關的網絡連繫，不同資訊便能夠互補不足，不再孤立，教師可以有機地運用網絡資料。例如：在詞庫中，Hong Kong Special Administration Region 可以聯繫到香港特別行政區政府。

### 8.7 有機網絡

網絡在設計之初，有基本的架構，然而，隨著用戶需求的轉變，我們不斷更新、改動網絡的架構，配合用戶的真正需要，使網絡有生命力地不斷成長。不過，這樣便需要投入更多的資源去配合。

## 九、母語教學網絡的發展方向

中心網絡自成立以來，只有短短五個月。大部分的教師都不習慣使用中文電腦，而根據一項調查結果顯示：有超過七成的中學生家長從沒有上網，也不會注意子女上網的事（明報，1999），這現象對網絡發展的環境是非常不利的；加上中心的資源不足，未來的工作更是艱巨。不過，網絡的使用率不斷增長，每月約有 19.2% 的增幅，實在令人鼓舞。

語言是學習的重要手段，學生用自己熟悉的語言學習，不但更容易掌握知識，而且由於沒有了語言的障礙，他們可以更深入地思考問題，發展高思維。然而在轉換語言的過程中，教師難免要面對很大的困難和挑戰；因此，本網絡的發展方向，首重支援採用母語教學的中學教師，協助他們解決教學上的困難，讓教師同工重拾對教學的信心。在長遠的發展方向上，我們致力推動母語教學成為優質教學。透過收集和設計教材和教學設計，通過網絡，向全香港的學校推廣，讓他們試用，使家長明白母語教學才是優質教學，讓他們樂意把子女送到母語教學的學校，消除家長對母語教學學校的偏見與歧視。

另一方面，香港大學課程學系在資訊科技教育網絡已有一定的發展（Tsui, 1998）。例如英語教學支援網絡 <http://www.telenex.hku.hk>，現龍中文教學軟件系列 <http://www.hku.hk/curric/chincal> 以及中文教育網 <http://www.chinesedu.hku.hk> 等，將來可以考慮將這些網絡結合在一起，發展成為全方位的教學網絡，發揮更大的力量。

本文作者特別鳴謝譚佩儀小姐協助編輯及校對本文，林海山先生協助製作圖表。

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# Implementing the Medium of Instruction Policy in Hong Kong Schools

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## ABSTRACT

A well-planned educational policy does not mean that the policy will necessarily be carried out in practice. The medium of instruction policy, a species of educational language policies, has been one of the thorny issues facing the educational sector of Hong Kong for decades. This study investigates whether the medium of instruction policy stipulated in the Education Commission Report No. 4 in 1990 – the streaming policy – was being implemented in four Hong Kong schools in the first year of its implementation between September 1994 and November 1995. It also attempts to explore the factors affecting its implementation.

This study used qualitative research methods of interviews and observations to assess whether the medium of instruction policy was being implemented.

Research indicates that the policy was being implemented to a small extent only in the four schools. The following five factors impeded implementation of the policy: English proficiency, the school's own language policy, the 'principal' factor, the 'teacher factor' and social values.

Despite the fact that the streaming policy was suddenly brought to a halt in September 1998 following the Education Department's release of the 'Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools' in September 1997, the issues pertaining to actual implementation of a medium of instruction policy in schools that emerged from this study throw light on implementation of the current Chinese medium instruction policy.

## 1. BACKGROUND

This paper reports a field study on implementation of a medium of instruction policy – the streaming policy – stipulated in the Education Commission Report No. 4 in 1990.

The field study forms part of a larger project that investigates Hong Kong's medium of instruction policy at both the policy and implementation levels.<sup>1</sup>

The field study was conducted in November 1995, one year after the official commencement of the streaming policy in September 1994. According to the schedule of the policy, a document providing 'Firm Guidance' (hereafter referred to as the 'Firm Guidance') would be issued by the Education Department to schools and full implementation of the streaming policy would take place in 1998-99 (Education Commission, 1990:112). Nevertheless, the 'Firm Guidance' – the document entitled 'Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools' – issued in September 1997 (by the Education Department, not by the Education Commission), and which was meant to facilitate implementation of the streaming policy, actually abolished the policy and replaced it with a new medium of instruction policy – the Chinese medium instruction policy. The unexpected sudden change in policy was a political decision due to the changeover of sovereignty in 1997 (for further analyses of the Chinese medium instruction policy and the streaming policy, see Poon, 1998).

Although the streaming policy has been abandoned, issues pertaining to actual implementation of a medium of instruction policy in schools that emerged from this study shed light on implementation of the current Chinese medium instruction policy in post-1997 Hong Kong.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Chinese has been used as a medium of instruction in Hong Kong primary schools, and prior to September 1998, the majority of students were supposed to learn through the medium of English after primary.

The sudden shift in the medium of instruction in secondary generates confusion in the language situation at school. Prior to 1978, there was a clear distinction between two types of secondary schools: namely, Anglo-Chinese schools using English as the medium of instruction, and Chinese middle schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction. The problem of using English as a medium of instruction in secondary schools was not so serious then, in that the education system was basically elitist, and those who were offered government subsidized places in secondary schools could overcome the hurdle of language in one way or another (Poon, 1993). However, with the rapid expansion of education, the problem of medium of instruction became acute, and reached alarming proportions by the 1980s. After the introduction of 9-year free and compulsory education in 1978, the distinction between Anglo-Chinese schools and Chinese middle schools was blurred (Johnson, 1994). Using English only or Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> My book entitled *Medium of Instruction in Hong Kong: Policy and Practice* is an outcome of this larger project. It will be published by the University Press of America.

only as the medium of instruction is rare. The majority of teachers resort to the use of mixed code, i.e. mixing both English and Chinese in a discourse. The extent to which how the two languages are used varies, ranging from using English most of the time and mixed with some Chinese explanation, to using Chinese most of the time and mixed with some English terminology.

The confusing language situation in schools is reinforced by people's perceptions of the Chinese and English languages. English has always assumed a supreme status in the minds of Hong Kong people. Despite a recent shift in the role of English in Hong Kong from a colonial language to an international language (Johnson, 1994; Lord, 1987), and a boost in the status of Chinese as a result of legalization of the Chinese language in 1974 and the changeover of Hong Kong in 1997, English is still more highly regarded than its counterpart Chinese. This largely accounts for the overriding preference for adopting English as the medium of instruction in schools, notwithstanding the fact that multiple problems have arisen, such as the use of mixed code in teaching.

The language issue of lowering English proficiency and the subsequent increased use of mixed code as the medium of instruction has been seen as one of the most important education issues in Education Commission Reports since 1984. Both the Education Department and the Education Commission even set up working groups to investigate this language issue in 1988 and 1993 respectively, and four full reports exclusively on the language issue have been published (Education Department, 1989; Education Commission, 1994, 1995, 1996). The significance of this language issue to the Hong Kong educational sector, as well as Hong Kong society, as a whole is beyond doubt.

### **3. THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION POLICY – THE STREAMING POLICY**

In its No. 4 report, the Education Commission (1990) put forward a framework for language reform, which claimed to be a coherent and comprehensive framework lacking in the previous Education Commission Reports.

The Education Commission (1990) recognised that it is more effective to use either Chinese or English rather than a mixed code as a medium of teaching and learning. In view of the fact that students would be disadvantaged if they studied in a medium in which they are not proficient, the Education Commission (1990) proposed that students be grouped according to a medium of instruction most appropriate for them.

While catering to the needs of the Hong Kong economy, the proposed framework has also had to ensure that the needs of the individuals are met. Research indicates that 'only around 30% of students may be able to learn effectively through English' (Education Commission, 1990:102). However, many parents still believe that English-medium instruction provides better tertiary education and employment opportunities for their children.



The overriding belief of the Education Commission (1990) is that school authorities should be given free and responsible choice to make decisions for their own schools. However, parental preference for English-medium education exerts great pressure on schools. Therefore, schools still adhere to the label of English-medium teaching (whereas in practice they offer mixed-code teaching), fearing that if they switch to Chinese-medium on their own, they will receive lower band students (Education Commission, 1990). To resolve this dilemma, the Education Commission proposed to set a timetable for all schools to adopt a clear policy regarding medium of instruction.

Despite interruptions and changes, the medium of instruction policy – the streaming policy – was in force in September 1994. The Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) would be administered to all Primary 6 students by the Education Department. The schools' internal assessments of students (at the end of Primary 5 and during the mid-year of Primary 6) which would be scaled by the AAT were finally adopted as the instrument of Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) to determine which students should use which medium. MIGA is still being used in the current compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy.

On the basis of the assessment results, students are streamed into three groups according to their language ability. Group I students are the top students able to learn effectively in either English or Chinese. Group II students are the students with lower language ability. They should be able to learn more effectively through the Chinese medium. Group III students are the average students able to learn better through the Chinese medium but probably also able to learn effectively in English.

In the framework of streaming policy, schools were grouped into three types: Chinese-medium, English-medium and two-medium. Schools were free to choose their medium of instruction and the proportion of classes in each medium.

The results of student grouping assessments are issued to both parents and schools every year. Parents were free to choose any of the three types of school for their children.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. RESEARCH QUESTION

Policy setting and policy implementation are different processes of policy-making (Pal, 1992). A well-planned policy does not mean it will necessarily be carried out in practice. A review of Hong Kong's educational papers indicates that many policies, such as the communicative English syllabus introduced in 1983, look 'good' on paper but in practice, are not really implemented in schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Parents are no longer given any choice in the framework of the present compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy.

One should not doubt the good will of the Education Commission (1990) when it claimed that the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment would help schools to reduce the use of mixed code and thus increase the language proficiency of students. However, the purpose of this paper was to establish whether the streaming policy would be implemented. The paper also attempted to examine to what extent and in what manner the medium of instruction would be implemented. In addition to these two research questions, I have attempted to explore the factors contributing to or impeding implementation of the policy in four schools during its initial phase of implementation.

## 5. METHODS

This study drew upon qualitative research. I conducted field research in four Hong Kong secondary schools during 6-10 November 1995. The school sites of my study were selected using purposive sampling. The rationale for purposive sampling is to understand or gain insight, so the researcher selects a sample from which s/he can learn the most, based on his/her knowledge and informed judgment of the population and the nature of the research aims (Babbie, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990).

### *A. School sites*

The four schools were selected from a total population of 386 secondary schools in Hong Kong (1995-96 figure). The schools that were selected needed to, on the one hand, illustrate the differences between schools, and to cover the major types of schools with regard the use of medium of instruction. On the other hand, the size of the sample needed to be manageable within the period of time allotted to a field study that was conducted by a lone researcher. In view of both methodological and pragmatic considerations, I selected four schools as my field sites, recognising that further investigation will be important in the future but, necessarily, must be beyond the scope of the present study.

The following are the criteria for choosing the school sites based on my knowledge and informed judgment of the attributes of the universe:

- (1) The sample schools should be mainstream schools, not the 'elite schools',<sup>3</sup> since 'elite schools' are not representative in terms of the whole school population.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Elite schools' refer to those schools established towards the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. They include several government schools and 22 grant schools. They are the top Band 1 schools in Hong Kong.

- (2) The sample schools should reflect the range of banding. Hong Kong schools are categorized into five bands according to the academic attainment of students. Band 1 schools are at the top with Band 5 schools at the bottom.
- (3) The medium of instruction options of the sample schools should be representative. There were five school choices prior to September 1998: 'Chinese (C)', 'English (E)', 'Chinese/English by class (C/E by class)', 'Chinese/English by subject (C/E by subject)' and 'Chinese/English by class and by subject (C/E by class and by subject)' (see Figure 1 below).
- (4) The Education Department's advice to the sample schools regarding the medium of instruction options should be representative. The Education Department streamed schools into three types: Type 1 (Chinese or English) – the so-called English-medium schools; Type 2 (Chinese) – the so-called Chinese-medium schools; Type 3 (Chinese/English by class) – the so-called two-medium schools (see Figure 1 below).<sup>4</sup>
- (5) The modes of language use in the sample schools should be representative. The following modes of language use were practised by schools in Hong Kong prior to September 1998: the English mode, the Chinese mode, the bilingual mode of streaming by subject, the bilingual mode of streaming by level, the bilingual mode of streaming by subject and by level, the bilingual mode of streaming by class, the bilingual mode of streaming by class and by subject.

The above descriptors – mainstream schools versus 'elite schools'; banding and academic attainment; medium of instruction options; bilingual mode of language use – are conceptual rather than logistical. They establish the boundaries of the population and distinguish between schools that satisfied requirements for the study and those that were excluded from consideration (LeCompte et al., 1993). They are, therefore, good criteria. Figure 1 indicates the spread of schools in terms of the medium of instruction option.

Based on the above five criteria, four schools were chosen as my sample schools. Figure 2 highlights the selection in terms of the criteria.

The following four kinds of schools were deliberately excluded from my sample since they are not typical. Moreover, only a small number of schools fell into these categories compared with the total population of some 386 secondary schools in Hong Kong as at 1995-96:

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<sup>4</sup> According to the Education Department's statistics, in 1995-96 there ought to be 14-16% English-medium schools, 38% Chinese-medium schools and 46% two-medium schools.

School's choice	Chinese		English		Chinese/English class	Chinese/English Subject		Chinese/English by Class and Subject	
ED's advice	94/95	95/96	94/95	95/96	94/95	94/95	95/96	94/95	95/96
Type1 (Chinese English)	0	0	55	60	0	1	1	0	0
Type2 (Chinese)	38	5	36	42	9	56	46	1	4
Type3 (Chinese/English by Class)	7	1	128	129	6	40	29	2	3
New Schools	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	45	6	223	231	15	99	76	3	7

\* **Underlined bold-faced** figures refer to schools using medium of instruction not in accordance with the Education Department's advice

**Figure 1: A comparison of the Education Department's advice and schools' choice of medium of instruction in 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years**  
(Source: Board of Education Information Paper No. 8/95)

	School A	School B	School C	School D
Banding	1	2	3	5
School's Choice	E	C/E by subject	E(1994-95) C/E by subject (1995-97)	C/E by subject
ED's Advice	Type 1(English medium school)	Type 3(Two-medium school)	Type 3 (1994-96) Type 2 (1996-97)	Type 2(Chinese medium school)
Mode of Language	E	Bilingual mode of streaming by subject and by level (about half of curriculum C and half in E)	E(1994-95) Bilingual mode of streaming by subject and by level(1995-96)	Bilingual mode of streaming by subject and by level(only 1 subject in E and the rest in C)

\*Unless otherwise indicated, this is a description of the schools since September 1994 to August 1998.

**Figure 2: Selection of school sites**

- (1) Both the school's choice and the Education Department's advice are 'Chinese'.<sup>5</sup>
- (2) Both the school's choice and the Education Department's advice are 'Chinese/English by class'.
- (3) The school option is 'Chinese/English by class and by subject' and the Education Department's advice is 'Chinese/English by class'.
- (4) The schools using the Chinese mode, or the bilingual mode of streaming by class and its variant.

Above all, the four schools that I chose for my field study are tolerably typical, especially given the small population size and the adoption of a purposive sampling method.

### *B. Interviews and lesson observations*

Data of the present study was collected from interviews and lesson observations. The type of interview undertaken in my research was the face-to-face semi-structured interview, employing tape-recording and supported with fieldnotes. The advantage of this format is to allow the researcher 'to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic' (Merriam, 1988:74).

Non-participant observation is the mode of observation that best served the purpose of my study. Observing lessons in four schools added new dimensions for understanding the context and the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 1994). The insights obtained from observations enabled me to judge from my own perspective rather than from other people's the validity of the data gathered from other sources.

For each school, I interviewed the principal, the vice-principal(s) (if any), the teachers of the content subjects assessed in the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (i.e. Science, Mathematics and Social subjects), and the students. Altogether I interviewed 4 principals, 3 vice-principals, 21 teachers and 24 students. The principals' interviews each lasted 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours, the vice-principals' 45 minutes to 1 hour, the teachers' 35 to 40 minutes, and the students' 15 to 20 minutes.

For each school, I observed four Secondary 2 classes of the three content subjects assessed. Each lesson lasted 40 minutes. Altogether I observed 16 lessons.

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<sup>5</sup> As indicated in Figure 1, the figure was 51 in 1995-96. Out of these schools, more than half are traditionally Chinese-medium schools. That means they are by no means influenced by the streaming policy started in September 1994.

## 6. DATA

### *A. School A*

School A was a Band 1 school. Its medium of instruction option was 'English' in the Education Department's record both before and after September 1994. School A's choice coincided with the Education Department's advice that School A being classified as a Type 1 school could use English as the medium of instruction.

According to the first vice-principal (VPa1), School A's choice of medium of instruction in the Education Department's record had always been 'English', but mixed code was predominantly used prior to September 1994. In response to the Education Department's medium of instruction policy, the former principal who resigned in August 1995 due to personal reason decided to change the actual medium of instruction in class from mixed code to English. The vice-principals (VPa1, VPa2) and four teachers interviewed (Ta2, Ta3, Ta4, Ta5) confirmed the fact that the former principal made the decision without prior consultation with the staff. He then proposed it at the Executive Board Meeting in 1993. The views of those teachers attending the Executive Board Meeting were divided. Finally, the former principal announced the decision at the Staff Meeting. Little opposition was expressed at the meeting because the teachers of School A were rather submissive, according to VPa1.

The former principal was very firm on implementing the English medium policy. VPa1 speculated that the former principal's conviction in English-medium education was partly due to his own background – he graduated from an 'elite school' and so was very fluent in English. The rationale offered by the former principal was three-fold. Firstly, School A had to become a *real* English-medium school in order to attract the top students in its competition with another Band 1 school and several new schools in the district. Secondly, the Education Department's Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment then indicated that about 99.9% of School A's Secondary 1 students were able to learn through English. Thirdly, the former Principal anticipated that English would continue to play an important role in Hong Kong even after 1997 because Hong Kong is an international city.

Both vice-principals admitted that initial implementation of the English medium policy in 1994-95 seemed rather smooth, albeit some opposition from teachers of Cultural subjects when the policy was first piloted in 1993-94. Those teachers who were strongly opposed to the policy resigned later, according to the second vice-principal (VPa2).

Since the former principal was very firm about creating an English environment in school in order to promote English-medium education, English was extensively used during 1994-95, even in Physical Education lessons, on Sports Days, during assemblies and other school functions.

There was not any formal evaluation of the policy, except some informal evaluation conducted by individual subject panels. It was reported that the English medium policy was smoothly implemented in School A, and no problem was identified.

With respect to the students, VPa2 said their English standards were high enough to receive English-medium education. The students took an English test conducted by an external body in 1994-95, and the results were better than some students in 'elite schools'. The results of internal tests and examinations did not indicate any problem either. Surveys on Secondary 1 students' responses to English medium instruction were conducted by VPa1 in the previous two academic years (1994-96). According to the results of 1994-95, about 80% of students experienced little or only a little difficulty in adjusting to English medium instruction. About 1/5 of students said they could start using English as a medium of learning, and 3/5 said they needed a longer time to get used to learning through English.

The new principal of School A (Pa), who had been in office for about two months at the time of the interview in November 1995, also found that the English medium policy was being smoothly implemented in School A. The only problem he saw was the English proficiency of the teachers. From what he observed in classes, about more than half of his teachers were able to teach in English only. The rest used English mixed with Chinese. Some even used up to more than 90% Chinese. 'I have reminded the teachers of using more English in class, but some of them really can't use English as a medium of instruction. What can the principal do? Fire them? It's impossible!' said Pa.

Pa's view was echoed by the two vice-principals, who both thought the greatest hindrance to implementation of this policy was the English competence of the teachers. VPa1 observed the classes of all the teachers teaching Secondary 1 and Secondary 2 in 1994-95. They were all conducted in English. Nevertheless, VPa1 did not rule out the possibility that some teachers might use Chinese behind her back. Some teachers disclosed to her that it was not easy to explain some difficult concepts in English. Her suggestion was to try to explain in English first, and then in Chinese. VPa1 was of the view that some teachers did not use English medium, not because they were not making any effort, but because they were not competent in using English as a medium of instruction. Likewise, VPa2 admitted that for the same reason some teachers switched the medium back to Chinese after the first year of implementation.

According to five teachers interviewed (Ta1, Ta2, Ta3, Ta4, Ta6), the new policy definitely exerted some pressure on the teachers. All six teachers interviewed reported using more English in class after September 1994, yet to various degrees. Both Ta3 and Ta5 claimed to use English only in class, and their claim was confirmed by my lesson observations. Ta4 admitted his English not good, and yet he had to use 90% English during 1994-96, a reverse of what he did before implementation of the English medium policy. Ta1 said that he used more English with his Integrated Science class, but more Chinese with his Economics class. He

usually explained in Chinese but drew his conclusion in English to ensure that his students knew some English terms. He had sought the permission of the former principal to use mixed code.

Contrary to their colleagues, both Ta2 and Ta6 did not think they abided by the school policy, although they increased the percentage of English used in their classes. Ta2 admitted that he was handicapped by his limited English ability. He said that he would still use mixed code even though the school forced him to use English. He would put up a show during the inspection of the Department of Education. According to Ta6, his Panel Chairperson was aware of the non-compliance of some teachers, but there was some understanding between them. As long as the results of students were good and the teacher did not create problems, the Panel Chairperson would keep quiet. But formally the Panel Chairperson would not give permission to use Chinese medium or mixed code. If the Panel Chairperson observed classes, the teachers would know what to do – make good preparation and use English medium in that lesson. Were he forced to use English medium in all lessons, Ta6 said that he would have no choice but to quit the school, or even leave the profession.

The students reported that English was mostly used in class and Chinese was sometimes used in Mathematics, Integrated Science, History and Geography under the following circumstances: (1) translation of some terms in Chinese; (2) some difficult concepts; (3) some key points that required special attention; (4) certain things that some classmates did not understand. In general, more English was reported to have been used in 1995-96 than in 1994-95.

After the arrival of the new principal, some changes pertaining to language use took place. For example, there was a shift of medium from English to Chinese in Cultural subjects (viz. non-academic subjects such as Music, Art, Physical Education) in School A, as the Education Department changed its policy and Cultural subjects would no longer be included when assessing language use in schools. Hence, all those schools using English as the medium of instruction in Academic subjects only would be categorized as English-medium schools regardless of whether Cultural subjects are taught in Chinese.

In addition, the Principal made it optional to use English in morning assemblies, and most students and teachers opted for Chinese. Pa said it had been decided that Chinese only would be used in morning assemblies in the following academic year 1996-97.

The principal and the vice-principals of School A admitted that the principal's decision was vital and it definitely impacted on implementation of a school policy.

### ***B. School B***

School B was a Band 2 school. Its medium of instruction was 'English' prior to 1986, and 'Chinese/English' after 1986 in the Education Department's record. Apparently



School B's choice matched with the Education Department's advice for Type 3 schools to use either English or Chinese as the medium of instruction. However, in practice School B did not follow the Education Department's advice to stream students by class, whereby the whole class should learn through the medium of either English or Chinese. Instead, School B streamed students by subjects, whereby the Science subjects were taught in English and the Arts subjects were taught in Chinese.

The principal of School B (Pb) admitted that School B basically ignored the Education Department's medium of instruction policy, but followed the school's own policy. School B had quite a long history of using both Chinese medium and English medium for different subjects. The 'streaming by subject' policy was initiated and promoted by Pb. The teachers interviewed confirmed that the policy was initiated by the Principal. It was a collective decision made at a staff meeting by votes.

All the teachers interviewed were in support of the school's streaming-by-subject medium of instruction policy. However, during the process of implementation, there were problems. The 'old' teachers interviewed admitted that initially there was some opposition among the staff, especially from the Science teachers. Their main concern was the reputation of the school, which would directly affect the intake of students. Some teachers (Tb2, Tb3) interpreted the lowered banding of School B a few years ago as an effect of switching to Chinese medium. Tb3 believed that had School B continued to keep the label of English medium, they would have attracted more Band 1 students. Tb3 said that the feelings of uncertainty were high among some teachers during the two years when the streaming-by-subject policy was suspended at Secondary 3. Some teachers claimed that they would not support the use of Chinese medium if the factor of 1997<sup>6</sup> did not exist.

In addition to the doubts and hesitations of some teachers, the policy was not well received by parents in the first few years of implementation. Each year about 10 parents of Band 1 students withdrew their children's enrolments from School B. According to Tb3, even at the time of the interview some primary school teachers advised their students not to choose School B because it had changed the medium of instruction of half of its curriculum to Chinese. That was why Pb had to explain to some primary schools and parents the benefits of using Chinese medium. Tb3 remarked: 'It's useless because their values are deep-rooted.' Nonetheless, Tb3 admitted that the situation had improved in the recent few years. The intake of students was better because of the following two factors: (1) good results in the external examinations due to the streaming-by-subject medium of instruction policy; (2) the imminence of 1997.

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<sup>6</sup> The Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984. Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997.

Pb was asked to evaluate the 'by subject' medium of instruction policy. He said it had been well implemented in School B. Their students achieved very good results in both the Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination,<sup>7</sup> much better than any other Band 2 schools using English medium instruction. As for the teachers, Pb did not think that they would have problems with switching to Chinese medium. The teachers interviewed confirmed that they found it more convenient to use Chinese medium although they had to spend some time preparing lessons at the beginning. However, the Mathematics and Science teachers were admittedly under more pressure because of the use of English medium in these subjects. Pb, on the other hand, claimed that he did not exert any pressure on those teachers to use English medium.

Commenting on the language use in Mathematics and Science subjects, Pb admitted that the actual language use in class was mixed code, not English only. It was at the discretion of the teachers how much English was used. According to the observation of Pb, one or two Science teachers taught mostly in English, but in other Mathematics and Science teachers' classes, English was not often used. Tb5, a Science teacher, admitted that he used mostly Chinese mixed with some English terms in upper forms. He anticipated that there would be problems on the part of both teachers and students if English only were enforced. Were he forced to use English medium in class, he would simplify his teaching, which meant that lessons would be less fun and involve less student participation. He would also put up a show during the inspection.

All the students interviewed reported that Chinese only was used in Economic and Public Affairs, Geography and History. Chinese was mainly used in Integrated Science, but the teachers also introduced some terms in English. Mathematics, the only subject presumably taught in English medium at Secondary 2 level, was reported to be taught in mixed code, and the amount of English used varied from teacher to teacher (from 30% to 80%). The ways that both languages were used in class also differed. Some teachers used mainly Chinese but mixed with some English terms; some teachers explained in English first, then in Chinese; some teachers used mainly English but explained some difficult concepts in Chinese. The students found it difficult to understand the lesson if it was taught in English only.

My observation of a Mathematics lesson confirmed that the teacher taught mainly in Chinese with some code-mixing and code-switching. The teacher's English was very poor. I had a short conversation with the teacher after the Mathematics lesson. She said that she used to teach in Chinese but mixed this with some English terms. However, starting in 1994, the Principal required the Mathematics teachers to use more English in class, so afterwards she tried to explain in more English. She

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<sup>7</sup> The Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination are public examinations for all Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 students respectively.

thought that if English only were used in her Mathematics class, the students would not be able to understand the lesson.

### *C. School C*

School C was a Band 3 school. Its medium of instruction option in the Education Department's record was 'English' prior to 1994-1995, but changed to 'Chinese/English' in 1995-96. Apparently School C's choice in 1995-96 (the year in which the research was conducted) matched with the Education Department's advice for Type 3 schools to use either English or Chinese as the medium of instruction. However, in practice School C did not follow the Education Department's advice to stream students by class, whereby the whole class should learn through the medium of either English or Chinese. Instead, School C streamed students by subjects, whereby only Economic and Public Affairs was taught in Chinese and all other subjects were taught in English.

When asked why School C made a change in its medium of instruction option from 'English' to 'Chinese/English' in 1995, the Principal (Pc) said that the former principal had held some staff meetings and Panel Chairs Meetings during the school years 1993-95 to discuss the issue of medium of instruction option. Many teachers expressed their preference for Chinese medium instruction, but no one dared to take the first step, including the former principal. The conclusion was to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, and observe what other schools would do. It was decided to maintain the English-medium option in the Education Department's record for 1994-95. During 1994-95, the former principal sought advice from all panels regarding the medium of instruction option for 1995-96. The majority of Economic and Public Affairs teachers agreed to change the medium of instruction to Chinese in Secondary 1 in 1995-96, based on the significantly better results of some students who opted for answering the Economic and Public Affairs paper of the Hong Kong Certificate Education Examination in Chinese in the previous two years. No other subjects followed. The decision of changing the medium of instruction option from 'English' to 'Chinese/English' was thus made.

Commenting on the decision-making of the school's option to use English medium for 1994-95, the Vice Principal (VPc) said it was a personal decision of the former principal, who simply informed the Panel Chairpersons at the Panel Chairs Meeting, without prior consultation and discussion.

Referring to the impact of change of medium of instruction from 'English' to 'Chinese/English' in 1995-96 on the school, Pc said that the banding of the intake of Secondary 1 students for 1996-97 was further lowered. She was not sure whether it was the impact of the change of medium of instruction, or whether there were other contributing factors.

A teacher interviewed (Tc3) talked about the impact of the subject panel Economic and Public Affairs' decision to change its medium of instruction on the morale of

teachers during 1994-95. The teachers were not optimistic because the former principal was going to leave. The effect of the Bridging Program, which was meant to help schools to implement English medium instruction, was not good. They worried about the intake of the school. They all knew that the school would change its medium to Chinese one day. Meanwhile, they adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Being the Panel Chairperson of Integrated Science, Tc3 also talked about the response of her Panel. The Integrated Science teachers were afraid that if once their subject changed to Chinese medium in Secondary 1, it would also affect Secondary 4 and above. Since the school did not give any clear instruction on future language policy, they preferred maintaining the status quo. According to Tc3, the Chemistry Panel strongly opposed to the change.

As School C opted for 'English' medium in 1994-95, the former principal, according to Tc3, requested the teachers to use English medium instead of mixed code; otherwise, the Education Department would intervene. Some subjects used the Bridging Program in 1994-95, but the effect was not good, so they switched back to mixed code. For example, a teacher interviewed (Tc2) admitted that he used 90% English in 1994-95 mainly because of the Bridging Program. He switched back to more Chinese in 1995-96 (only 20%) because the direction of the school was not clear, and English medium instruction would definitely hinder students' understanding in School C.

Commenting on the language use in class, Pc regretted that they could no longer use English only as before. Different kinds of mixed code were used, depending on the level of the class, and the language demand of the subject. Pc's view was echoed by the teachers interviewed. They all admitted using mixed code to different degrees. Most teachers taught mainly in Chinese but mixed with English terms (Tc1, Tc2, Tc3, Tc4). Tc3 recalled using English only in the first few years in this school (i.e. in the mid-1970s), but gradually she had to employ mixed code because of the declining English standards of students. Then she taught mainly in Chinese but mixed with some English terms. Even the Vice-Principal admitted that he used mixed code all the time.

The students interviewed reported different percentages of English used in class, from 10% to 80% English, depending on the subject and the teacher. They all preferred mixed code because if English only were used, they would not be able to understand the lesson. However, they did not want to be taught in Chinese only either because they did not want to study in a Chinese-medium school.

My observations confirmed that lessons were mainly conducted in Chinese mixed with English terms. Some teachers' English was rather proficient but others' was very poor.

School C received a letter in November 1995 from the Education Department advising the school to change its medium of instruction from 'Chinese/English' to

'Chinese' in 1996-97. Pc said the matter was discussed at a Panel Chairs Meeting. One Cultural subject (i.e. Home Economics) would follow the footsteps of Economic and Public Affairs and switch to Chinese medium in 1996-97. Some other subjects also had the intention of changing their medium of instruction, but the decision was pending. Economic and Public Affairs proposed to take a further step and change the medium of Secondary 4 and Secondary 5 to Chinese. This proposal was turned down by the Principal and Vice-Principals after consulting the Panel Chairpersons, because when these two cohorts of students were first admitted to the school several years before, they were supposed to learn through the medium of English. Both the Principal and Vice-Principals thought that they had to be accountable to the parents. Their option for 1996-97 would still be 'English/Chinese'. In other words, they would not take the advice of the Education Department to change its option to Chinese medium. The Vice-Principal was worried about the future intake because the school was labelled as a lower band school. The morale of both teachers and students would be affected.

#### *D. School D*

School D was a Band 5 school. Its medium of instruction was 'English' before 1985. Its medium of instruction option in the Education Department's record was changed to 'Chinese/English' after September 1994. Apparently School D's choice did not match with the Education Department's advice for Type 2 schools to use Chinese as the medium of instruction. However, in practice School D used Chinese as the medium of instruction in all subjects except Mathematics.

According to the Principal (Pd), School D used to be run by western priests. Traditionally this school adopted a *laissez-faire* policy. The school had no system. There was no Academic Board, so there was no decision-making process. The school did not have any medium of instruction policy, and there had never been any discussion pertaining to medium of instruction at staff meetings.

Prior to 1985 the intake of School D was good and English was used as the medium of instruction. In 1985, Pd (the then Panel Chairperson of Economic and Public Affairs) detected that English was no longer a suitable medium of instruction for their students, so he proposed changing the medium of instruction of Economic and Public Affairs at Secondary 4-5 levels to Chinese. The then Principal (a priest) did not have any objection. All other Panels of Arts subjects changed their medium of instruction to Chinese in Secondary 4-5. Two years later, Integrated Science, Economic and Public Affairs and Geography also changed their medium to Chinese in lower forms (Secondary 1-3). The medium of Mathematics (Secondary 1-7) and Science (Secondary 4-7) remained English until 1995. Since September 1995, Mathematics has been the only subject left using English medium in Secondary 4 and above.

An Academic Board comprising the Principal and Panel Chairpersons was formed since Pd was in office in 1993. The issue of medium of instruction used in

Secondary 4 Science was first discussed at the Academic Board during 1994-95, and then at the staff meeting. It was decided to change the medium of Science to Chinese with effect from September 1995.

The 'old' teachers interviewed (Td3, Td4, Td6) confirmed that it was a collective decision to change the medium of instruction from English to Chinese. The issue has been debated over the previous few years. The teachers pointed out that there were voices of opposition especially regarding the medium of instruction in senior form Science subjects because some teachers still had hopes to attract more able students with the label of English medium. Then in 1994 these teachers gave in because the level of English of that year's Secondary 4 students was so low that the teachers felt that it was impossible to use English medium.

Pd said that they had not encountered any problems in the implementation of the Chinese medium policy. The teachers did not have any complaints although some of them were not familiar with the Chinese terms at the beginning. They resorted to a glossary for lower form Science prepared by the Education Department. Their Panel Chairpersons were responsible teachers, who spent much time making adaptations in the curriculum, looking for suitable Chinese textbooks and preparing materials.

Concerning the actual language use in class, both the teachers and students interviewed reported that Chinese only was used in all subjects including Mathematics – the only subject claimed to use English medium in the Education Department's record. My lesson observations confirmed what the teachers and students said. Pd admitted that they used a ruse when they claimed the medium of instruction of Mathematics was English. The students used English Mathematics textbooks, but the actual medium of instruction in class was Chinese only. The purpose behind, according to Pd, was to maintain the label of 'Chinese/English' in the Education Department's record in order to attract better students.

As for the effect of switching to the Chinese medium in class, the 'old' teachers all agreed it really made a big difference. The students understood lessons better and had more participation in class. Td6 said that formerly all the students in the weak classes failed in his subject with very low scores (i.e. less than 20 marks), but after the change to Chinese medium their marks were much higher and a few of them even scored 70 marks. On the part of the teachers, some experienced a little problem – translating English terms to Chinese terms. However, Td6 admitted that with some classes (e.g. the weakest classes in Secondary 3) students were not motivated to learn and they refused to listen even though Chinese was the medium of instruction. My lesson observations confirmed that some lower ability classes had serious disciplinary problems, which had nothing to do with the medium of instruction.

## 7. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this section is to investigate whether the Hong Kong government's medium of instruction policy was being implemented in the four schools based on the primary source of data reported above.

### *A. Defining 'implementation' of the medium of instruction policy in the four schools*

There are at least three conceptions of 'implementation' operating in the schools investigated. These are: the Education Department asking schools to choose an appropriate medium of instruction and the schools act accordingly; matching schools' choices with the Education Department's advice; and ensuring schools to act according to the Education Department's advice. I refer to the third level of meaning of 'implementation' in my interpretation of the *real* implementation of the streaming policy.

### *B. Extent and aspects of implementing the medium of instruction policy in the four schools*

#### *i. School A*

School A's choice of medium of instruction was English, which matched with the Education Department's advice. Thus, the government's medium of instruction policy was being implemented in School A on paper (i.e. the second level of meaning of 'implementation'). A closer look at the data indicates that the level to which the government's streaming policy was being implemented in practice (i.e. the third level of meaning of 'implementation').

If we compare the views of the principal and the two vice-principals pertaining to implementation of the English medium policy in School A, we get a similar picture – i.e. the policy was being well implemented in School A. However, as the principal and vice-principals continued to qualify their statements, a clearer scene of policy implementation gradually unfolded. Pa admitted that in his lesson observations about half of the teachers were able to teach in English only. The other half used English mixed with Chinese to different degrees. Some even used up to more than 90% Chinese. VPa1 got a different picture in her lesson observations. All the lessons were conducted in English, although she admitted that some teachers might use Chinese behind her back. VPa2 said when the policy was first introduced in 1994-95, the school had more monitoring. He knew some teachers had already switched back to Chinese after the first year.

The above data suggests implementing the English medium policy is a complicated matter. Evaluating the extent to which the policy is implemented is even more difficult. Unless the picture is absolutely clear-cut (i.e. all the teachers and students use English only in all lessons except in the Chinese language, Chinese Literature

and Chinese History lessons), it is not easy to measure the degree to which English medium is used. Different teachers use the medium of instruction in different ways with different groups of students, depending on their proficiency in the language and their personal belief in medium of instruction. Comparing the views of the teachers interviewed in regard to their language use in class yields a range of degrees of using English in class: from English only to mixed code, and Chinese only most of the time. Ta3 said he had no problem in using English only in all lessons. His words were corroborated by my lesson observations. Ta4 said he used 90% English in junior forms, but Chinese only in senior forms. For Ta4, it was more convenient to use Chinese, and the English medium policy was implemented in junior secondary only at this stage according to the Education Department's guideline. My lesson observation of one of Ta4's lessons in junior form affirmed Ta4's claim of language use. Ta1 said he used more English than before, but the language he used was basically mixed code. Likewise, Ta6 and Ta2 also admitted that they used Chinese most of the time. The words of these teachers were corroborated by my lesson observations.

As VPa1 said, the teachers of School A were submissive and generally abided by the school policy. I got the same impression in the interviews with these teachers. However, some of these teachers' practice in class (i.e. non-compliance with the school's English medium policy) seems to contravene the words of VPa1 and my impression. What accounts for the discrepancy evident among the data? VPa1 said the teachers did feel the pressure of implementing the English medium policy. Furthermore, the principal and the two vice-principals admitted that the English proficiency of teachers was the greatest hindrance to implementing the English medium policy effectively in their school. The issue of teachers' English proficiency will be discussed below.

To conclude, as VPa1 mentioned, School A was an exemplar school in implementing the English medium policy according to the Education Department, in the sense that School A was making a great effort in putting this policy into practice, and reportedly examination results and student feedback indicated no major problems during the implementation process. The aspect of implementation is a further clue that suggests School A was really implementing the policy. The English medium policy was implemented not merely inside the classroom, but also outside the classroom, covering both curricular and extra-curricular activities, for example, use of English on sports days, assemblies and so on. Therefore, the government's medium of instruction policy (i.e. the streaming policy then) can be said to be implemented to a large extent in School A according to the Education Department's interpretation. However, it can only be said to be implemented to some extent according to my interpretation of the data collected in the field. Moreover, some data suggests there were signs that the policy implementation scene in School A might be gradually changing after the arrival of the new principal (Pa) in September 1995: for example, lifting compulsory use of English in morning assemblies and the school's opening ceremony. I argue that this possible change owes much to the arrival of the new principal because data indicates that it was he who initiated the changes.



*ii. School B*

School B's choice of medium of instruction was 'Chinese/English', which apparently matched with the Education Department's advice on paper. A detailed look at the break-down of the choice 'Chinese/English' reveals non-conformity. The mode of 'Chinese/English' practised by School B was 'Chinese/English' by subject, and the mode of 'Chinese/English' promoted by the Education Department was 'Chinese/English' by class. According to the Education Department's interpretation of 'Chinese/English', the medium of instruction policy was not being implemented in School B, neither on paper (i.e. the second level of meaning of 'implementation'), nor in practice (i.e. the third level of meaning of 'implementation').

Even within 'Chinese/English' by subject, my study reveals different modes of 'Chinese/English' by subject in practice. For example, School B, School C and School D opted for 'Chinese/English' by subject, but had different practices. School B had half of the curriculum taught in Chinese medium and the other half in English medium. School C was supposed to employ English medium in most of the subjects and Chinese medium in only one of the subjects. School D's practice was just the reverse of School C's: i.e. most of the subjects taught in Chinese medium and only one subject in English.

I now examine the data to see to what extent School B's 'Chinese/English' by subject policy was being implemented. According to the principal, the Chinese medium policy was being implemented in Arts and Social subjects. On the contrary, language use in Mathematics and Science subjects was mixed code to different degrees. This is a clue that suggests the English medium policy was not being implemented in Mathematics and Science subjects. Tb5, a Science teacher, confirmed what the principal said. Tb5 used Chinese all the time mixed with English terms. My lesson observations also corroborate the words of both the principal and Tb5.

Therefore, School B's 'Chinese/English' by subject policy was being implemented in the Chinese-medium subjects, but not in the English-medium subjects. While partly implementing its own medium of instruction policy, School B was implementing the government's medium of instruction policy to the least extent.

*iii. School C*

School C's choice of medium of instruction shifted from 'English' in 1994-95 to 'Chinese/English' in 1995-96. The Education Department's advice for School C was 'Chinese/English' in both 1994-95 and 1995-96. School C's choice did not match with the Education Department's advice in 1994-95, but apparently did so in 1995-96. Like the case of School B, a detailed look at the break-down of 'Chinese/English' reveals non-conformity. The mode of 'Chinese/English' practised by School C was 'Chinese/English' by subject, and the mode of 'Chinese/English' promoted by the Education Department was 'Chinese/English' by class. Hence,

according to the Education Department's interpretation of 'Chinese/English', the medium of instruction policy was not being implemented in School C, neither on paper (i.e. the second level of meaning of 'implementation'), nor in practice (i.e. the third level of meaning of 'implementation').

I turn now to consider the extent to which School C's 'Chinese/English' by subject policy was being implemented. The mode of 'Chinese/English' by subject practised by School C was different from that of School B's. In 1995-96, only Economic and Public Affairs shifted to Chinese medium, and all other subjects were supposed to use English medium. According to Pc, in School C English only was no longer used in class, and different kinds of mixed code were used, depending on the level of the class, and the language demand of the subject. The vice-principal and the teachers interviewed affirmed what Pc said. VPc said he used Chinese medium mixed with some English terms. Tc4 used more English with better classes, about 50%-60% English. Tc2 said he used only 20% English. All these figures indicate that English medium was not being used extensively in School C. In fact, according to Tc2, the school did attempt to implement the English medium policy in 1994-95 in an attempt to produce a breakthrough, so the teachers were required to use more English. In response to the school policy, Ta2 used 90% English in 1994-95, but shifted back to only 20% in 1995-96. This is a further clue suggesting that School C's 'Chinese/English' by subject policy was not being implemented in the English-medium subjects, which included all but one subject. On the contrary, the 'Chinese/English' by subject policy was being implemented in the only Chinese-medium subject – Economic and Public Affairs – in School C according to Pc and Tc1. The data pertaining to language use in class provided by the principal and the teachers interviewed was corroborated by my lesson observations.

Hence, while implementing its 'Chinese/English' by subject policy to a small extent, School C was implementing the government's medium of instruction policy to the least extent.

#### *iv. School D*

School D's choice of medium of instruction was 'Chinese/English', which did not match with the Education Department's advice 'Chinese' on paper. An examination of the data, however, reveals a policy implementation scene different from what it was supposed to be. The 'Chinese/English' claimed to be practised by School D was the reverse of School C's, i.e. 'Chinese/English' by subject in the mode of using 'Chinese' in all but one subject – Mathematics, which was supposed to use English medium. Even with Mathematics, Pd said Chinese medium was actually used in class although the textbook was written in English. Pd admitted it was a 'trick', but they had to consider the effect of the label of Chinese medium on student intake. Interviews with the teachers and students corroborated the words of Pd. Td6, a Mathematics teacher teaching junior secondary Mathematics, said he felt much happier then because the medium of instruction had also been changed into Chinese medium in his subject in Secondary 1 to 3. All the students interviewed perceived

School D as a Chinese-medium school rather than a 'Chinese/English' or 'English medium' school. Some even considered 'Chinese medium' as a contributing factor when they chose to enter School D. My lesson observations confirmed that Chinese medium was used in all four lessons observed, including Ld4 – a Mathematics lesson of Secondary 2 conducted by Td6.

Therefore, although School D was not implementing the government's medium of instruction policy on paper (the second level of meaning of 'implementation'), it complied with the Education Department's advice of using Chinese medium in practice, thus actually implementing the government's medium of instruction policy to a large extent.

In brief, from the above analysis and interpretation of the data pertaining to implementation of the medium of instruction policy in four schools, we can conclude that the Chinese medium policy is much easier to implement in practice than the English medium policy provided the school is willing to implement it. English proficiency of the teachers has been identified as one of the problems in implementing the policy. This will be further elaborated below. Moreover, the extent to which the government's medium of instruction policy was being implemented in these four schools varies. On paper, School A was implementing it to a large extent while School B, School C and School D were implementing it to the least extent. In real practice, School A was implementing it to some extent, School B and School C were implementing it to the least extent, and School D was implementing it to a large extent.

## 8. DISCUSSION

The above findings indicate that there is a great discrepancy between policy setting and policy implementation. After a policy is set, there is no guarantee that the policy will be implemented. Even after the implementation process starts, there is no guarantee that the policy will *really* be implemented and to the fullest extent. The manner and degree to which the medium of instruction policy is being implemented in the four schools reveal the complexity of the educational policy scene in Hong Kong. It is, therefore, worth exploring the factors contributing to or impeding implementation of the policy in these four schools. From analyzing the above data, there emerge the following five factors: English proficiency, the school's language policy, the 'principal' factor, the 'teacher' factor and social values.

### *A. English proficiency*

The English proficiency of teachers is a crucial factor that affects implementation of the government's medium of instruction policy in the classroom. The converging views of the principals and vice-principals pertaining to the inadequate English proficiency of the teachers as discussed above are revealing. VPa2 and the teachers of School A admitted that they were under pressure to use English medium. Pa said

some teachers consistently used Chinese medium, not because they did not want to use English medium, but because their English was really poor. My lesson observations confirmed the fact that some teachers whose English was not very good still tried hard to conduct the whole lesson in English, like Ta4, Ta5. Other teachers, like Ta6, Tb6, who taught most of the time in Chinese medium mixed with some English words and sentences had a low standard in English, judging from their pronunciation and fluency in using English. One teacher (Ta3), who strongly believed in Chinese-medium education but had to abide by the school's English medium policy, however, demonstrated a high level of English proficiency.

Apart from the teachers' English proficiency, the students' English proficiency also impacted on implementation of the English medium instruction policy. Except students of School A whose English was praised by VPa2 as 'good', the other students' English was criticized by the teachers and principals as 'poor'. Even the students themselves admitted that they did not have confidence in using the language.

### ***B. The school's language policy***

Implementation of the Education Department's medium of instruction policy depends to some extent on whether the schools have their own medium of instruction policies and whether these policies match with the Education Department's. School A had its own medium of instruction policy – the English medium policy initiated by its former principal – which incidentally matched with the Education Department's recommendation. It was, therefore, highly likely that the Education Department's medium of instruction policy would be implemented in School A.

Like School A, School B had its own medium of instruction policy – the 'Chinese/English' by subject policy initiated by Pb. Yet unlike School A, School B's medium of instruction policy did not coincide with the Education Department's policy. Pb openly admitted that he ignored the Education Department's advice, and that the Education Department's medium of instruction policy had had little impact on School B. Accordingly, the Education Department's policy was not likely to be implemented in School B.

Unlike School A and School B, School C did not have its own medium of instruction policy. Neither did it abide by the Education Department's advice to change its medium of instruction to mother tongue. Pc admitted that she would simply wait and see. So it was unlikely that the Education Department's medium of instruction policy would be carried out in School C.

School D had its own medium of instruction policy – 'to go mother tongue' – which coincided with the Education Department's recommendation. But on paper School D still clinged to 'Chinese/English' by subject – an option not recommended by the Education Department. So in principle School D was not following the Education

Department's advice. Thus the Education Department's policy would not be implemented in School D on paper, although it would in spirit and in practice.

### *C. The principal factor*

A further factor affecting implementation of the government's medium of instruction policy is the principal whose attitude largely influences the school's policy. Pb and Pc pointed out that the non-compliant and wait-and-see attitude of principals would be a hindrance to implementing the medium of instruction policy. Far from being a slim evidential base, the converging views of the participants are revealing -- notwithstanding the small number of people interviewed. Pb and Pc, themselves being principals, maintain contact with other principals in Hong Kong, especially Pb who has been an Executive Committee member of two local educational bodies. Hence their views are data-based, not based solely on their own immediate impressions. In addition, according to the Education Department's surveys conducted in May-June 1994, 247 of 386 schools did not abide by the Education Department's advice. The figures affirmed that the Education Department's medium of instruction policy failed to get at least on paper the support of the majority of principals in Hong Kong. A closer look at the issue discloses that the values and beliefs of the principals are, in fact, more crucial and, thus, require further investigation.

The former principal of School A saw values in English-medium education, so he personally decided to adopt the English medium policy. According to the vice-principals and the teachers of School A, the atmosphere of School A was totally changed from 'Chinese' to 'English' in the first year of implementation in 1994-95. Data, however, suggests that the change of principal in 1995-96 gradually changed the 'English' atmosphere of School A.

Pa, the new principal, has a keen interest in Chinese literature and Chinese culture. He values the Chinese language more. For him, English medium instruction implies that students are deprived of their chances to learn Chinese. To promote Chinese-medium education is his ideal.

Like Pa, Pb values Chinese-medium education. Pb took Chinese as his major subject in university. Formerly an Executive Member of two local educational bodies, Pb actively promotes Chinese-medium education. Being a far-sighted educator, Pb firmly believes that the status of Chinese will be raised and thus 'to go mother tongue' will be the trend. He foresaw this trend as long ago as in 1984, the year in which the Sino-British Agreement on Hong Kong's future was signed.

Compared with Pa and Pb, Pc is less committed to Chinese-medium education. Even so, she also supports the stand of the Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council to make Chinese-medium education compulsory, with exemptions granted to certain schools eligible for English-medium education. To maintain the status quo and follow the mass line is a belief of Pc.

Like Pa and Pb, Pd strongly believes in Chinese-medium education. Like Pb, he puts his belief into practice, and, reportedly, was doing so long before he became the principal of School D. He successfully changed the medium of instruction of Economic and Public Affairs into Chinese when he was the Panel Chairperson. This, in fact, had a great impact on the school, and eventually all subjects changed the medium of instruction to Chinese.

In brief, the principal is a deciding factor in implementing the medium of instruction policy within the school.

The following are some possible implications of the 'principal factor' on the school policies pertaining to the medium of instruction in the four schools.

As School A is a Band 1 school that attracts the best students in the district, no principal would dare to take the risk of changing the English medium policy to Chinese medium policy, no matter how committed his belief in Chinese-medium education is, because they are enjoying the privileges of a Band 1 school. Such was the position of Pa when he admitted that the school could not bear the risk of going against the social trend. In my view, the 'principal factor' is not important in the case of School A. The English medium policy is good for School A, but the teachers' English proficiency should be strengthened, and there ought to be more implementation initiatives.

School B's banding is quite high (Band 2). Since English medium is a preferable option, many principals of Band 2 schools would maintain English medium to attract better students in order to upgrade their schools to Band 1 schools. In fact, Tb3 surmised that if School B had maintained English medium, it would by the time of the interview have changed into a Band 1 school. But against all odds, Pb, an advocate of Chinese-medium education, took the initiative to change the medium of half of the curriculum to Chinese in 1985. I argue that the 'principal factor' is important in the case of School B. It is a successful case in the sense that the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination results are not affected by the change of medium of instruction. The results are, in fact, better compared with other Band 2 schools that use English medium.<sup>8</sup> However, in my view, School B should strive to improve the English proficiency of both the teachers and students to guarantee that the Science subjects are taught via genuine English medium, not mixed code. The students would thus benefit and the public examination results would be further boosted.

The banding of School C is on the decline (at the time of the interview a Band 3 school). The Education Department's advice for 1996-97 was to change the medium to Chinese. Some principals of Band 3 schools may still want to maintain English

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Education Department, banding provides reason for believing that the students across the band are of roughly equal ability.

medium while others may shift to Chinese medium. In my view, School C had reached a critical stage. It was an appropriate context for School C to make a change and set up its own medium of instruction policy. Thus, on the basis of this argument, the 'principal factor' is significant in this case.

School D is a Band 5 school. Some principals of Band 5 schools may still want to maintain English medium while others may make a change to Chinese medium. Being an old school, School D is not likely to attract higher band students, unlike new schools, which, as Pb pointed out, may stand a chance of upgrading to higher band schools. Pd took the initiative and gradually changed its medium from English to Chinese. In my view, the Chinese medium policy practised by School D is good. The 'principal factor' is also important in this case.

#### *D. The teacher factor*

Aside from the values and beliefs of principals, those of the teachers also have a bearing on implementation of the government's medium of instruction policy. Most important of all are their medium of instruction preferences. If the teacher's preference matches with the school preference – for example, those teachers (Tb3, Tb4, Tb5, Td2, Td3, Td4, Td5, Td6) who support Chinese-medium education in School B and School D – the medium of instruction policy stands a better chance of being implemented in the classroom. Otherwise, teachers might use a medium that is not promoted by the school. For example, both Ta2 and Ta6 used Chinese medium most of the time in class despite School A's English medium policy because they believed students would understand better. Nonetheless, the medium of instruction preference might not be the sole factor that explains why a teacher does not abide by the school's English medium policy. Other factors, such as the teachers' English proficiency, may be involved.

Therefore, the teacher factor, which is a deciding factor in implementing the medium of instruction policy in the classroom, is not a simple factor. Whether the teacher chooses to implement the government or the school's medium of instruction policy depends on the teacher's medium of instruction preference, his/her perception and value of English, his/her proficiency in the language. It might also depend on their general attitude to school policy or government policy. Some teachers believe teachers should follow the school's policy (e.g. Ta3, VPa2, Ta4, Ta5) while some claim that they do not (e.g. Ta2, Ta6).

#### *E. The social value factor*

While the principal factor and the teacher factor are the two deciding factors that affect implementation of the medium of instruction policy in schools, it can be logically inferred that the school's medium of instruction choice would be largely dominated by the medium of instruction preference of the principal, and modified to some extent by the teacher in practice. Since data indicates that all four principals are strong supporters of Chinese medium instruction, 'Chinese medium' should be

the logical option for these schools. However, in real practice this was not the case. None of these schools opted for 'Chinese medium' in the Education Department's record. School A chose 'English medium' while the other three schools chose 'Chinese/English' by subject (i.e. Chinese or English medium in some subjects within the same class). What accounts for the disparity between belief and practice identified in the data by means of the content analysis technique of comparing content data with behavioural indices (Holsti, 1968)?

Pa admitted that he dared not change the medium of instruction of School A from 'English' to 'Chinese' because the stake would be too high to reverse the social trend. Pb successfully changed half of the curriculum to 'Chinese'. Yet he still hesitated to turn School B into a real Chinese-medium school. He had to take the views of the teachers and the wishes of the parents into consideration. The bilingual mode - 'Chinese/English' by subject - seemed clearly to be the best option. On the other hand, School C was forced to change its medium of instruction option from 'English' in 1994-95 to 'Chinese/English' in 1995-96 in light of the declining standards of students. The new principal Pc also dared not take the move 'to go mother tongue', despite the advice of the Education Department and her belief in Chinese-medium education. To maintain the bilingual mode - 'Chinese/English' by subject - would again be the best alternative. Like Pb, Pd successfully changed the medium of instruction of School D from 'English' to 'Chinese' in all but one subject - Mathematics - in practice. Yet he still hesitated to make the final move and change the medium of instruction option in the Education Department's record from 'Chinese/English' by subject to 'Chinese', albeit School D being a *de facto* Chinese-medium school. He admitted that student intake and parental pressure were his greatest concerns. The bilingual mode 'Chinese/English' by subject was the best safeguard. Hence, the belief of these principals was not fully put into practice, again due to social pressure.

Likewise, the content analysis technique of comparing content data with behavioural indices also suggests that some teachers, like the principals, cannot live up to their ideals. They choose to stay in a high band English-medium school despite their belief in Chinese-medium education because the quality of students in high band English-medium schools is better (e.g. Ta2, Ta3, Ta5, Ta6). On the other hand, rather surprisingly, some teachers of a lower band school strongly object to changing the medium of instruction from English to Chinese (e.g. the Chemistry teachers of School C). Opposition once also remained strong in the cases of those schools which had proved Chinese-medium education was beneficial to their students (e.g. some teachers of School B and School D). On the whole, the data indicates that theoretically the teachers may not have too much objection to Chinese-medium education, but when it comes to the practical level they may have doubts and hesitations.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that social values sometimes outweigh personal belief, and impact on practices, as in the cases of the principals and teachers discussed above.



The significance of the social value factor can be further corroborated by the words of the students. Two thirds of the students interviewed at School A – a Band 1 English medium school – preferred studying in an English-medium school (Sa2, Sa4, Sa5, Sa6). School C was a two-medium school, but was perceived by both students and parents as an English-medium school. The students interviewed said their parents would make them transfer to another school if School C changed to a Chinese-medium school. Both School A and School C students interviewed reported that they knew some fellow students had a sense of inferiority because they had entered Chinese-medium schools. Both School B and School D were two-medium schools, but were perceived by both students and parents as Chinese-medium schools. The students interviewed admitted that they felt inferior to their fellow students studying in English-medium schools. Some students even detected some discrimination against them.

The above data suggests that the social value of putting more weight on English than on Chinese is deep-rooted in the minds of those students and their parents. I speculate that were those students interviewed in School B, School C and School D Band 1 students, they would choose English-medium schools. Accordingly, the principals had to take into consideration the parental preference for English-medium schools when they selected the medium of instruction for the schools in the Education Department's record.

## 9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study is qualitative research investigating implementation of the medium of instruction policy stipulated in the Education Commission's Report No. 4 – the streaming policy – in four schools selected.

Research indicates that implementation of the medium of instruction policy is far more complicated than one can imagine. Apparently School A, School B and School C's choices of medium of instruction match with the advice of the Education Department whereas School D's does not. School A is commended as an exemplar school carrying out the Education Department's medium of instruction policy well. A detailed analysis of the data reveals a somewhat different picture. School A's English-medium policy is being implemented to a certain extent only in that about half of the teachers are not able to teach in English only according to the Principal. School B and School C interpret the Education Department's two-medium policy in a way that is not acceptable to the Education Department. They stream students 'by subject' rather than 'by class' as suggested by the Education Department. That means some subjects are taught in English while others are taught in Chinese within the same class. Within the same option of 'streaming by subject', School B and School C even have different practices. In School B half of the subjects are taught in English and half are taught in Chinese. In School C all but one subject are taught in English.

School D's case is just the reverse of School A, School B and School C. On paper School D does not follow the Education Department's advice. In reality School D practises what the Education Department suggests, i.e. to teach in Chinese medium.

Analysis of the data also indicates that there are five factors impeding implementation of the Government's medium of instruction policy in the four schools. They are: English proficiency of both the teachers and students, the school's own language policy, the principal factor, the teacher factor and social values.

In addition to the above factors, some macro factors such as language planning, economic, political and cultural ramifications may also have a bearing on implementation of the government's medium of instruction policy as a whole. These factors are, nonetheless, beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

## **10. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CURRENT COMPULSORY CHINESE MEDIUM INSTRUCTION POLICY**

Far from being outdated, the present study lends itself to two big issues that have implications for the currently implemented compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy. They are the issues of implementability of a medium of instruction policy, and declining English standards of both teachers and students.

One finding of this study is that the extent of implementation of the government's streaming policy ranges from 'to some extent' in School A to 'the least extent' in Schools B, C and D. One may easily query the implementability of a medium of instruction policy in the Hong Kong context, which, to date, is still constrained by the prevalent social value that English is a key to success.

In the current practice of the compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy, 114 schools were granted exemptions from using Chinese as the medium of instruction while 279 schools were obliged to switch their medium of instruction to Chinese as the medium of instruction (1998-99 figures). Of these 114 English medium schools, how many are really able to practise English medium teaching? School A of my study was commended as an exemplar school by the Education Department in implementing the streaming policy. Nonetheless, more in-depth probing into the data reveals a different implementation scene – i.e. mixed code rather than English only was used in some classes.

As for the 279 Chinese-medium schools, how many are really willing to stick to the Chinese medium? The compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy is meant to be implemented initially for three years. The policy will be reviewed and results will be announced after the initial stage of implementation. Since English-medium schools are popular among students and parents, and apparently they are higher band schools among others, it is highly likely that some Chinese-medium schools are preparing to make the switch back to English medium in two years. It is, therefore,

not surprising that some Chinese-medium schools are not genuine Chinese-medium schools, just like School D, which is a *de facto* Chinese-medium school but uses a ruse to maintain its two-medium school status.

A further issue that emerges from the present study is English standard. It is the high value accorded to English that made Schools A, B, C and D unwilling to change into Chinese-medium schools albeit the personal belief of the principals. It is because of poor English proficiency of both the teachers and students that the English medium policy was not well implemented in these schools. It is for the same reason of poor English standards which result in use of mixed code that the Education Department implements the compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy. Ironically, though, implementation of this compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy will further aggravate the English standards of Hong Kong students. Experience in some post-colonial societies such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Burma has affirmed the fact that once English is relegated to be a subject for study rather than as the medium of instruction in schools, the standards of English will decline (Gonzalez, 1993, 1998). We have now come to a critical stage where Hong Kong's status of international city may be jeopardized if the downward trend of English standards cannot be reversed.

How to boost the English standards of the students, therefore, is a great challenge for the post-1997 Hong Kong educators. To my mind, a structural reform of English language teaching in Hong Kong is imminent. We ought to adopt a holistic and bottom-up approach. English learning should start in pre-school years, but employ an entirely different approach and methodology. Children should be taught by well-trained native speakers of English. Stories, games, pictures, songs, etc. should be used to give children a feel for the language. Formal writing and grammar of the language should not be taught until Primary 4. The rationale behind these suggested changes is to make language learning an enjoyment rather than a torture. Children will never learn English well through memorizing the spellings and meanings of words, and the structure and usage of the language – methods that Hong Kong students use since kindergarten days.

Once students have developed an interest in English and laid a solid foundation of it in primary, they will be able to learn the language in a more formal and systematic way in secondary. By the time when they finish school education, they will be able to use English effectively either at work or in further studies.

I, therefore, propose that the government should put more resources in pre-school and primary education pertaining to English language learning. The cost effectiveness of the vast amount of money put in language enhancement in tertiary education needs to be looked into.

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# DECONSTRUCTING "MIXED CODE"

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## ABSTRACT

In this chapter the author proposes that the often taken-for-granted, commonsensical notion of "mixed code" as a stably recurring, monolithic, debased language variety is in fact a rhetorical construct. By examining a diverse range of complex language use phenomena that can all be named "mixed code", the author argues that the notion of "mixed code" as asserted in the public and official discourses plays an important role in naturalizing and normalizing a certain language ideology, which, in turn, is appealed to as a rationale for a socially inequitable language education policy. The chapter concludes with the proposal that language and education issues in Hong Kong can be seen in a clearer light only when the official and popular media notion of "mixed code" is problematized and deconstructed, and the diverse range of social interactive actions mediated by multiple language resources seen and understood in their situated contexts, and not through the hidden ideological lens of the reifying rhetorical construct of "mixed code".

*"What we don't want is for young people to be taught in Chinglish rather than either English or Chinese and that's what we are trying to avoid at the moment," said [former] Governor Chris Patten. (South China Morning Post, May 13, 1994)*

*"What we must ban in the classroom is mixed-code, commonly known as 'Chinglish'--that's not language at all," Director of Education Helen Yu Lai Ching-ping said. (South China Morning Post, March 14, 1998)*

*Efforts will be stepped up to ensure schools teaching in English do not use a mixture of Chinese and English to boost standards, the education chief said yesterday. ...*

*... "If they are found to be teaching in a mixture of languages, we will ask them to switch to teach in the mother tongue," Secretary for Education and Manpower Joseph Wong Wing-ping said. (South China Morning Post, March 15, 1998)*

*How do language ideologies come about? What makes the difference between a successful language ideology—one that becomes dominant—and other, less successful ones? What is the connection between language ideologies and broader political and ideological developments in a society? How did we arrive at our contemporary views and perspectives on language and our assessments of current linguistic situations? (Blommaert, 1999, p. 9).*

*[Without a legitimate name, without authority to the words] (Confucius, circ. 500 B.C.)*

## 1. WHAT IS "MIXED CODE"?

"Mixed code", as constructed in the Hong Kong government official discourses, is portrayed almost as an ugly, insidious, monstrous animal, wildly trampling on and destroying everything, especially young minds, if it is not severely controlled and banned from certain important domains, for instance, the classroom. Government officials *sounded* as if they had already seen and documented the nature of mixed code and all its harmful effects. The interesting phenomenon is that seldom does anybody in the public media pause and ask such important questions as: What is mixed code; what does it look like; when is it used; why and how does it have harmful effects on young people's language and cognitive development? It seems that people just appear to recognize what it is once the name, "mixed code", is mentioned, and there does not seem to be any need to find out in the first place what one means by "mixed code" or whether "mixed code" actually means vastly different things in different contexts.

## 2. THE OFFICIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MIXED CODE AS THE PRIME CAUSE OF EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

If mixed code refers to the practice of using both Cantonese (L1) and English (L2) in the Hong Kong secondary school classroom, then it might be surprising to the younger reader that such classroom practices did enjoy a much better name in the 1980s. For instance, the famous Llewelyn Report in 1982 suggested that the government could acknowledge the reality of widespread bilingual oral practices in the content classrooms of nominally English medium schools and make serious attempts to improve the effectiveness of this reality by developing genuinely bilingual curriculum strategies. Reporting on the findings of a series of research studies that seemed to be responding to the Llewelyn Report's recommendation, Johnson referred to the practices of using both L1 and L2 in the Anglo-Chinese secondary school content classroom as "bilingual switching strategies" (Johnson, 1983) and as "various language modes of presentation" (Johnson, Chan, Lee, & Ho, 1985).

Mixed code was officially used as a name to disparagingly label bilingual classroom practices and constructed as the prime cause of educational and language problems in 1990 in the tone-setting Education Commission Report No. 4 (ECR4), whose comments on mixed code would then be repeatedly quoted in subsequent government educational policy documents (e.g., Report of the Working Group on Language Proficiency, 1994; Education Commission Report No. 6, 1995) and the mass media reporting on language educational issues (e.g., see news report excerpts presented at the beginning of this chapter). To get a sense of how the official discourses do this, let us examine the following excerpt from ECR4:

### Mixed-code and medium of instruction

We recognise that teaching and learning are generally more effective if the medium of instruction is either the mother tongue or English (for those who are able to learn effectively through this medium). *Unfortunately, however, the use of mixed-code is quite common in many of our classrooms. ....*

*It follows that the use of mixed-code should be reduced as far as possible.* The corollary to this is that it is necessary for students to be grouped according to which medium of instruction is most appropriate for them. Students will need to be placed in Chinese-medium classes or English-medium classes on the basis of their ability to learn effectively in that medium.

(Education Commission Report No. 4, 1990, pp. 100-101; italics added)

The above excerpt from ECR4 has become the earliest major rationalizing discourses for the subsequent implementation of the government policy of MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment) in 1994 and the controversial linguistic streaming policy of tracking schools into monolingual streams in 1998 (for details of the policies, see Poon, this volume and So, this volume). It becomes important to show how the construction of the notion of "mixed code" plays a central role in distracting the public's attention from the more complex but important social-equity issue of how the government should and can help the majority of school children attain the English proficiency to benefit from an English medium education, an important symbolic capital in the socioeconomic context of Hong Kong (Lin, 1996)<sup>1</sup>. However, by constructing "mixed code" as the major, if not sole, *cause* of the learning difficulties faced by limited-English-proficiency (LEP) students in English medium (EMI) schools, an easy policy solution was formulated—to track students into monolingual streams, with the majority of students (over 70%) placed in the mother tongue stream, and deprived of access to any form of socially prestigious English medium education.

The rationale for this kind of monolingual reductionism (see So, this volume) and socially inequitable education policy is constituted mainly by the reification and construction of mixed code as the prime cause and culprit of current educational problems (Luke, 1992). This is done through using a name (mixed code) that

implicitly draws on and asserts the deep-rooted, often taken-for-granted, language ideology of linguistic purism (Li, 1998) to condemn bilingual classroom practices as the cause of learning problems rather than as strategies to cope with these very problems. Eliminating mixed code from the classroom then becomes the logical solution and the socially inequitable educational policy thus formulated is rationalized by implicitly appealing to the language ideology of condemning mixing, through the construction of the derogative notion of mixed code. If, instead, the name "bilingual switching strategies" (Johnson, 1983) is used, the scenario will become one in which the cause of the learning difficulties lies elsewhere and the practices of using both L1 and L2 in the classroom are seen as the local, pragmatic, coping strategies used by teachers and students to solve their problems which have arisen from the socioeconomic domination of English and the uneven distribution of English linguistic capital among different social groups in the society (for a detailed analysis, see Lin, 1996). To see how an alternative picture of bilingual classroom practices can be conceived beyond the totalizing, negative picture implied by the official notion of mixed code, we shall examine the role of bilingual classroom strategies in the next section.

### 3. CROSSING BOUNDARIES: BILINGUAL CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

The potential role of the L1 as a bridging tool to help the learner to gradually adapt to using L2 as the medium of instruction (i.e., L2 immersion) is worth more discussion. In early French immersion in Canada, for instance, immersion teachers, although in general upholding the speak-French-only principle, are in fact more flexible than we thought regarding the use of some L1 for sociocultural purposes:

They lessened the children's frustration by allowing them to speak their native language; and by sometimes speaking to them in English, the teachers showed that they appreciated the children's accomplishments at their particular ability level. (Salomone, 1992, p. 39)

The constructive role of some L1 use should, therefore, not be simply dismissed out of hand. L1 does seem to have certain important sociocultural and educational roles to play in the classroom; for instance, in establishing a closer relationship with students and in motivating students by relating the unfamiliar academic topic to their familiar L1 daily life experiences, by switching to L1 judiciously and selectively (for detailed analyses of classroom examples, see Lin, 1996). More systematic research in this area has also recently been called for by key researchers in immersion education. Swain (1997), for instance, has outlined a range of important research questions to which we still need to find empirical answers in further research:

What use should be made of the students' first language? Should the teacher ever use it? Are there ways in which he or she can use the first



language to support second language learning rather than undermine it? And what about the students? For what purposes do they use their first language? Is the use of the first language possibly cognitively essential to their learning of both content and the second language? (Swain, 1997, p. 267)

Cummins (1999) also points out the need for breaking away from the either-or simple prescription (i.e., simply prescribing that no L1 is allowed or simply saying that L1 can be used without giving clear, systematic, guidelines). He calls for a more considered and systematic approach to L1 use:

[In the successful example of International High School in New York City], the [language] planning process involved changing the curriculum and assessment procedures to enable students to use their prior knowledge (much of it in their L1) to facilitate their learning and demonstrate what they had learned. Use of students' L1 was encouraged, as was a cooperative and supportive inquiry process. Language itself became a major focus of study within the program.

Within the Hong Kong context, a similar language planning process might explore issues such as:

- (1) To what extent might the use of Chinese be encouraged within English-medium schools as a temporary means of enabling higher-order thinking process to be brought to bear on learning? Students, for example, might be permitted to discuss an issue or task in Cantonese, write outline notes and an initial draft in that language, and then a final draft in English.
- (2) The scenario sketched above implies a second question: To what extent might classroom organization and instruction be modified to permit a wider range of inquiry into topics (rather than just textbook learning) and more opportunities for use of oral and written language (both L1 and English) to investigate these topics? (Cummins, 1999: 12)

More research along the above questions is obviously needed to develop clearer guidelines on how the L1 can be constructively used in support of the development of L2 and not as a substitute for it (Johnson & Swain, 1994). Nevertheless, given what we have established in research so far, some tentative guidelines regarding L1 use in L2 classrooms can, perhaps, be made. For instance, Bob Meszaros, an experienced secondary school teacher in Hong Kong, has drafted, in consultation with the author, a set of guidelines for the use of Cantonese in EMI content subject lessons in his school (listed below). The classroom excerpts used to illustrate the guidelines are taken from Lin (1996):

### Suggestions on How to Use L1 in the L2 Classroom

1. *A teacher can strategically use L1 when she/he wants to appeal to a shared cultural value, or to address students as a member of the same cultural community, and to invoke some Chinese cultural norm or value.*

#### *Exemplifying Classroom Excerpt 1:*

This is Johnson's Example 4 (1985, p. 48), reanalyzed in Lin (1996). The data presentation format is as in Johnson's: tape-recorder counter numbers precede utterances; English translations are put in brackets below the Yale transcriptions of the Cantonese utterances.

A Math teacher is moving round the class checking work and he finds that two pupils have not done their homework:

- 024 How about you?  
 025 Oh, neih meih-jouh-hou hah? Chahn Gwai-hou. Laahndi-wo. Neih ne?  
 Neih leuhng go jouh mat-yeh? Hah? Mh-gei-dak-jo dou yauh ge me!  
 Hah? Gung-fo dou yauh mh-gei-dak jouh ge me? Hah? Neih leuhng  
 go jouh mat-yeh?  
 (Oh? You haven't done it eh Chahn Gwai-hou. So lazy. And you?  
 You two why? What? Forgotten? How can that be? Eh? Is there  
 such a thing as forgetting to do homework? What? You two, what  
 do you think you're doing?)

To understand the interaction in the above excerpt, it requires of the analyst an intimate knowledge of the implicit meanings that can be signalled by the use of the different codes among the Cantonese people in Hong Kong. For instance, a Hong Kong Cantonese does not normally speak to another Hong Kong Cantonese in English; if she/he does, she/he will be interpreted as signalling social distance, power and in short "baahn yeh" (meaning: "acting", "putting on airs"). These interpretations may be waived only in special institutional situations where institutional constraints apply; e.g., in the legal court or in the EMI classroom, where Cantonese social actors typically suspend their ordinary roles and (or) take on (additional) institutionally defined English-speaking roles.

When we examine Excerpt 1, we notice that the teacher has been speaking English to the first student ("How about you?") when he is about to check his work. He then gives out an exclamation ("Oh")<sup>2</sup>, apparently upon noticing that the student, Chahn Gwai-Hou, has not done his homework. This is followed by a "tongue-lashing" done entirely in Cantonese. So, it is the discovery of a student's not having done his homework that triggers the teacher's switch from English to Cantonese.

It seems that when the teacher switches from English to Cantonese, he is contextualizing a shift in frame (Goffman, 1974): he is signalling a suspension of

both the definition of the situation as an English Math lesson and his institutional role as an English-speaking Math-cum-English teacher whose implicit concerns include the teaching and learning of not only mathematical knowledge and skills, but also academic English for Math and ordinary conversational English. That explains why English is used even when the topic is not related to academic Math, e.g., when he is about to check the student's homework, he speaks to him in conversational English, "How about you?". However, by switching from English to Cantonese, he is highlighting to his students a different set of concerns that he now demands them to pay attention to: the extremely unacceptable behaviour of the two students, who have not fulfilled their responsibilities and obligations as students.

It seems that the teacher is appealing to implicit native cultural norms and values to admonish the students for not having done their homework. What is being both appealed to and reaffirmed is the cultural logic that when students have not done their homework, it is culturally appropriate for the teacher to call them lazy and in our culture students cannot absolve themselves of their responsibility by saying that they have forgotten to do their homework. The force of the teacher's admonition lies in its appeal to the cultural logic of what a teacher is entitled to say in a certain type of situations in the culture shared by the teacher and students (c.f. Heap, 1986). It is both typical of and culturally acceptable for Cantonese teachers to say harshly and ironically things like "Gung-fo dou yauh mih-gei-dak jouh ge me?!" (meaning: "Is there such a thing as forgetting to do homework?!") in such situations. It is likely that the admonition would not have the same force if it were done in English rather than Cantonese, the native language of both the teacher and students. By switching to their shared native tongue, the teacher in Excerpt 1 is doing a number of things: he is suspending the English pedagogic frame, highlighting a shift of concerns, and starting to talk to the students as "cultural member to cultural member", invoking and reaffirming native cultural norms and values. What is happening here is therefore both a forceful admonition of unacceptable student behaviour and attitudes and the reaffirmation and reproduction of the native cultural norms and values regarding the responsibilities and obligations inherent in the role of a student. These cannot have been accomplished without the switch to Cantonese.

2. *A teacher can intentionally use L1 to highlight to students that what she/he is saying is of such grave or urgent importance (e.g., for disciplining) that the usual rule to use L2 has been suspended.*

#### *Exemplifying Classroom Excerpt 2:*

Switches to Cantonese do not necessarily always involve an appeal to or reaffirmation of native cultural values. Sometimes, they are used mainly for their effect in highlighting frame-shifts and changes in the teacher's concerns. The lesson excerpt below is an example. The teacher begins his lesson in English and then breaks off and switches to Cantonese to deal with late-comers. Once they are

settled, he switches back to English to continue with the lesson work ("Example 1" in Johnson, 1985, p. 47):

- 008 Close all your text book and class work book.  
 012 Yauh di tuhng-bohk meih-faan-laih. Faai-di!  
 (There are some classmates not back yet. Be quick!)  
 017 Now, any problem about the classwork?

Johnson analyses the Cantonese utterance as an example of an informal aside done in Cantonese. While agreeing partially with this analysis, we however note that if it is to mark out a mere topical digression, the teacher can well have done this by means other than code-switches, e.g., intonational changes, hand-claps or pauses to bracket the aside (see examples of these in Lin, 1990, pp. 32-36). The use of these contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1984) does not involve a violation of the institutional "use-English-only" constraint which teachers in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools are well aware of. We therefore argue that what is being signalled here is not only a topical aside, but also a radical break in the English pedagogic frame and an urgent change in the teacher's concerns. By the switch from English to Cantonese the teacher seems to be relaying to his students this implicit message, "Now I'm so annoyed by these late-comers that I have to put aside *all* kinds of teaching, including that of English teaching, and concentrate on one single task: that of getting you to settle down quickly! And you'd better take my command seriously as I'm single-minded in enforcing it!". This break in the English pedagogic frame to highlight a different, urgent set of concerns cannot have been achieved without the teacher's switch from English to Cantonese.

3. *A teacher can deliberately use L1 if she/he wishes to arouse student interest, establish a warmer and friendlier atmosphere, or build rapport with her/his students.*

The key to understanding the implicit meanings signalled by code-switches lies in a recognition of the sociolinguistic fact that whenever Hong Kong Cantonese have something urgent and earnest to relay to one another, they do so in their shared native language; whenever Hong Kong Cantonese speak to one another in English despite their having a common native language, it is usually because of some institutionally given reasons; e.g., to teach and learn the English language. When teachers want to establish a less distanced and non-institutionally defined relationship with their students, they will also find it necessary to switch to their shared native language, Cantonese, as in the excerpt below. This time the teacher is commending the students' work. Johnson mentions that throughout the first part of this lesson the teacher is returning and commenting favourably in Cantonese upon the students' Science projects and the following excerpt begins with a transcription of the last part of this section ("Example 5" in Johnson, 1985, pp. 48-49):

*Exemplifying Classroom Excerpt 3:*

- 094 Jauh chin-keih mh-hou jeung keuih yat tek jouh tek jouh lohk go jih-ji-lo dough, saai-jo di sam-gei.  
(but don't kick it into the waste paper basket, a waste of your effort.)
- 095 waahk-je neih ho-yih jeung tiuh sin cheun-hei keuih diu-hai neih go fong dough; hou leng ge. Mh-hou saai-jo keuih; ho-yih jih-gei lo faan laak.  
(or you can put a thread through it and hang it up in your room; very beautiful. Don't waste it; you can get it back yourself.)
- 096 Now you take out your note book, we come back to Mathematics. Turn to Exercise Eleven C. We look at the problems.

Johnson points out that the transition to the main business of the lesson is marked by the switch to English, which then predominates throughout the remainder of the lesson. He describes this lesson as "an extended example of the informal/formal continuum between Cantonese and English". We however find that the terms "formal" and "informal" do not provide the best description of what is happening. English is a language of power and social distance in the wider society and any Cantonese person, no matter how fluent in English, has to switch to Cantonese if she/he is serious about establishing a genuine and friendly relationship with another Cantonese person in Hong Kong. The teacher could have done his praising of the students' work in English, but the effect would have been different. He would still be seen by the students as distancing himself from them even when praising them if the praise was done in English; the students would still be seeing him as a Cantonese hiding behind the mask of an English-speaking teacher who remained socially distanced from them. A Cantonese teacher therefore has to switch to Cantonese to talk to her/his students if she/he wants to establish a warm and friendly atmosphere. On the other hand, she/he can always switch back to English to resume a more distanced stance, for instance, to facilitate a pedagogic task at hand. In other words, code-switching adds to the teacher's repertoire of communicative resources in the classroom. With the creative use of these communicative resources, the teacher can effectively negotiate for different role-relationships with the students; e.g., a teacher, a friend, a discipline-enforcer, a cultural advisor, etc., whenever the need arises (for further examples of these, see Lin, 1990).

4. *Teachers can give a quick L1 translation for L2 vocabulary or terms. Providing an L1 translation can promote bilingual academic knowledge and help students understand the subjects in both L1 as well as L2. Giving the Chinese meaning can also help students form richer multiple conceptual connections as the Chinese counterparts of English terms are often made up of common Chinese words that can sometimes enable students to infer, recognize and understand the meaning of the term better.*

*Exemplifying Classroom Excerpt 4:*

In the excerpt below, a geography teacher uses an "English Key Term-Chinese Key Term" discourse format to establish bilingual knowledge of a geographic term:

- 045 So that means breaking up the land and then carrying away the small  
pieces of sand into the sea; then we call it erosion  
047 cham-sihk jok-yuhng.  
(erosion)  
047 O.K. Now besides a cliff.....

The apposition of the English and Chinese academic terms has the effect of establishing academic bilingualism. Moreover, there are cognitive advantages in introducing the Chinese equivalents of English terms as well. For instance, the Chinese term, "cham-sihk jok-yuhng", is rather transparent in its meaning; it is made up of words that mean "invade-erode-effect". As Johnson remarks (1985, p. 56), the term is not in common Cantonese usage; however, he fails to recognize that the components that make up the term are common Cantonese words and a Cantonese speaker can easily infer from them the meaning of the specialized term. In fact, this is a characteristic of many Chinese counterparts of English specialized terms. By knowing both the English and Chinese terms, students can not only understand scientific texts in both languages, but also form richer multiple conceptual connections (Gagni, 1993) which facilitate their understanding and learning of the underlying scientific concepts.

5. *Teachers can deliberately use L1 to provide annotations or examples that help relate an unfamiliar L2 academic topic to the students' familiar L1 daily lives. This can help make school less alienating and more meaningful and relevant.*

*Exemplifying Classroom Excerpt 5 ("Example 46" in Johnson, 1985, p. 71):*

In the excerpt below, the history teacher has been teaching about Napoleon and his final campaign at Waterloo and he switches from English to Cantonese to make a pun:

- 451 Waterloo. Ngho-deih wan-dou Wo-Da-Louh Douh... da louh-dauh.  
(We find Waterloo Road... hit father)

The teacher capitalizes on the similarity of the historical place name, "Waterloo", and a road's name in Hong Kong as well as the similar sounds of the road's name and a Cantonese phrase meaning "hit father". In Johnson's analysis, this is an example of a teacher who enjoys making puns. However, it seems to me that the effect created may be more than that of just an enjoyable pun; it may also have the psychological effect of making things that belong to the distant L2 academic world appear as close as those that exist in the students' immediate L1 lifeworld.

6. *Teachers can purposefully use L1 to encourage class participation and discussion and to help elicit the knowledge and experiences that students bring into the classroom and help them transform that contribution into L2. For example, students can be permitted to discuss or work on a group task in Chinese initially and with the teacher's help produce an English version at the end.*
7. *If a student asks a question in L1, the teacher should help her/him rephrase it into L2.*
8. *Teachers should avoid pre-teaching the subject content extensively in L1 and subsequently repeating the teaching in L2, as that kind of practice will implicitly train students to pay attention to only the L1 teaching.*

Government officials and school administrators who are impatient with the task of grasping the subtleties of the strategies of L1 use would prescribe a simple, straightforward "either-or" policy (i.e., monolingual reductionism, see So, this volume). However, if the educational benefits of the students are to be given the first priority, we should not throw away the baby with the bath water and dismiss L1 use altogether. Teachers should be encouraged to engage in critical reflection on their classroom language use as part of their continuous professional development (e.g., by peer observation, or recording samples of one's own lessons to critically analyse the various ways L1 has been used to see if they serve sound educational purposes). In the traditional ethos of Hong Kong schools, teachers are often not treated and trained as professionals capable of making highly complex judicious moment-to-moment pedagogical decisions in the classroom, and school administrators seem eager to legislate on teachers' classroom practices, albeit often quite futilely. To significantly improve the quality of teaching in Hong Kong schools, it seems that there is no magical short-cut (e.g., monolingual reductionism) but the long-term professional training and development of teachers who can engage in continuous self-critical reflection and improvement of their own classroom practices including their bilingual switching strategies (see also So, this volume, for his proposal of a teacher-based MOI selection in schools).

There is, however, another set of bilingual coping strategies (see classroom examples in Excerpts 6-9 in Lin, 1996), which teachers and students use as their local, pragmatic solutions to the learning problems created by the system-induced self-imposition<sup>3</sup> of an unfamiliar language as the medium of instruction despite their having a common native language (Luke, 1992). Some of these bilingual strategies are used mainly to alleviate the painful dilemmas brought about by the symbolic domination of English in the society (see analysis in Lin, 1996). For instance, they help students to comprehend the English terms and concepts of their English textbooks by the use of Cantonese annotations. The bilingual strategies alone, however, cannot solve all the problems created by that domination when the gap between the students' English proficiency and the English linguistic demands of the content subject is too big to bridge. For instance, these students still have to cope with all the written work and assessment in English. Due to their limited

English proficiency, they have to resort to rote-memorization strategies. The bilingual oral teaching strategies observed cannot shorten the wide gap between the students' expressive competence in English and the expressive competence required by their English assignments and examinations. The problem, however, is not caused by the use of "mixed code", as is often asserted by government officials. Rather, these bilingual strategies serve as local, pragmatic, short-term solutions to the long-term problems created by a system in which English is the medium of instruction of most higher and professional education while at the same time the majority of students are not provided with adequate English resources in their basic education to prepare them to cope with an EMI secondary education (e.g., the lack of professional development opportunities and curriculum resources to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in many primary schools; for detailed analyses of the medium of instruction problems and alternative policy options, see Lin, 1997a; Lin & Man, 1999).

This section has focused on the inadequacy of the notion of mixed code to capture the diversity of bilingual classroom strategies as well as the wide range of roles played by different kinds of bilingual strategies. Although we have only discussed the potential roles of L1 use in L2 classrooms, it is equally important to explore and conduct research on the potential roles of L2 use in L1 classrooms; for instance, to develop in students some academic bilingual competency by including the teaching of the English terms of scientific and technical concepts even in mother tongue content classrooms so as to facilitate the students' future transition from a mother tongue secondary education to a largely EMI university education in Hong Kong. Subscribing to a language ideology of purism, as embodied in the officials' use of the term "mixed code", will considerably limit the range of classroom communicative resources available for the facilitation of learning and teaching.

In the next section, we shall continue to deconstruct the official notion of mixed code by further discussing the diverse range of bi-/multilingual social interactive actions witnessed in the society that cannot be simply reified, homogenized and denigrated as debased language.

#### **4. DECONSTRUCTING "MIXED CODE": A DIVERSE RANGE OF SOCIAL ACTIONS MEDIATED BY MULTIPLE LINGUISTIC RESOURCES**

In an anti-drug-abuse short video clip aired on television in Hong Kong some time ago, a catchy slogan was used to ask young people to take life seriously because life offers no second chances: "Sahng-mihng mouh take 2!" (literally meaning: life has no "take two"). This slogan was, however, soon publicly criticized by Education Commission Chairman Anthony Leung as an example of poor language use – "mixed code". This high-profile educational policy-maker's public condemnation illustrates how "mixed code" is used as an umbrella term for "debased language" through both asserting and appealing to the language



ideology of linguistic purism. However, anybody familiar with popular youth culture in Hong Kong knows that to effectively reach these young people, one has to speak their language, and Hong Kong youths live in a lifeworld where "mouh take 2" (meaning: offers no second chances) is a vivid, familiar saying that can immediately strike a chord in their hearts. Using such a slogan is then not an example of "poor language use" but a powerful social, communicative action mediated by the bilingual resources available to the community, and such a social action cannot be captured by the official's disparaging use of the term "mixed code".

Instead of subscribing to the simplifying, homogenizing, monolithic notion of mixed code, various researchers have contributed to our understanding of bi/multilingual practices by documenting the diverse range of social interactive actions mediated by multiple linguistic and semiotic resources. For instance, Lee (this volume) analyses the exciting bi/multilingual texts and images in popular magazines in Hong Kong, not in terms of mixed code, but in terms of "voice-quoting", or ventriloquating (i.e., speaking through others' voices; see Bakhtin, 1935/1981), as ways of negotiating and signaling one's membership in different discourse communities and thus her/his multiple, hybrid identities. Kwan (this volume), describing the interplay of L1 and L2 use in the English language classroom, analyses the impish but artful verbal play of some Hong Kong secondary school boys (see also Lin, 2000a). Li (2000), on the other hand, documents the many interesting instances of bilingual language use in the media which seem to serve a variety of well-defined communicative purposes (e.g., euphemism, specificity, bilingual punning). Li (forthcoming) also shows the linguistic and semantic motivations for the widespread bilingual practices witnessed in the community. These studies all seem to point to the various cultural and linguistic hybridizing practices which are increasingly constituting ways of life, ways of speaking, and senses of identity unique to the Hong Kong society. In an international city where the younger generations are increasingly having a much more global outlook than their previous counterparts (see Boyle, this volume), it seems to be a stark anachronism for the Hong Kong government officials and policy-makers to continue to subscribe to the ideology of linguistic purism implicitly asserted and normalized in the officially constructed monolithic notion of mixed code. As both students and teachers belong to the bilingual discourse communities outside the classroom, forcing both parties to become "linguistically pure" once they enter the classroom is both unrealistic and educationally ineffective. Rather, the bilingual indigenous resources of both students and teachers should be capitalized on for the development of culturally compatible curriculums for Hong Kong students (see Lin, 1997b, 1999, 2000b). Unless the term "mixed code" is problematized and deconstructed, and the wide range of bilingual communicative and social actions understood in their diverse contexts, government officials and educational policy-makers will be (although, perhaps, unintentionally) leading the public in circles and circles, missing the really important issues in education.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Although the policy makers might not have actually planned to use mixed code as an attention-distractor and might themselves genuinely believe in mixed code as the main cause of language and educational problems, their discourses do have the effect of constructing mixed code as the main cause of the problems and distracting the public's attention from other important issues.
- <sup>2</sup> It is unclear from the transcription provided by Johnson whether the "Oh" is an English "Oh" or Cantonese "Oh", which sound different but happen to have the same alphabetic representations; so, the onset of the switch may coincide with the exclamation or may be immediately after it.
- <sup>3</sup> It appears to be a "self-imposition" because many parents yearn for an EMI education for their children and this self-imposition is in fact "system-induced" because tertiary and professional education is largely EMI and graduates with an EMI secondary education will have an advantage.

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## **PART THREE**

### **CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

# Hong Kong Written Chinese and Language Teaching

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## ABSTRACT

The written Chinese being used in Hong Kong forms a continuum, with Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) at one end and written Cantonese at the other. The form being taught in the Hong Kong school system should be MSC, which is accepted by all Chinese speakers and is crucial to students' future career. In teaching MSC, language teachers should distinguish grammatical errors from Cantonese features, which are not mistakes but should not appear in MSC. In order to help students detect Cantonese features, the best way is to start from the obvious and then take care of the subtle cases one by one. The strategy is to tackle structural issues first and lexical items second; to identify Cantonese functional words in written Chinese first and content words second. Teachers should also help students learn certain special features prevailing in MSC but rarely used in Cantonese.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese language is playing a more and more important role in the Hong Kong society, not only because of its recently acquired official language status but also because of its increasingly practical use in the business sector and other walks of life. The change of language situation in the society inevitably affects language teaching in schools and the implementation of mother tongue education in the Hong Kong primary and secondary education adds one more factor to the language equation. An issue of immediate concern is the relationship between Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) and Cantonese. There are two aspects in this issue. One is the relationship between dialect and the national standard form and the other is the relationship between spoken and written forms of Chinese.

With regard to the teaching of written Chinese in Hong Kong, there are several issues to be addressed. The first is whether the written form used in Hong Kong should be MSC or something based on Cantonese. If the written form should be MSC, the next issue is whether the Cantonese elements in students' written work should be tolerated. If Cantonese elements are not allowed in students' written work, what follows is how to deal with these elements.

## 2. WRITTEN CANTONESE AND MODERN STANDARD CHINESE

Modern Standard Chinese is a term commonly used by scholars of Chinese studies outside China (e.g., Hucker 1975, Norman 1988). In its broad sense, the term refers to both the standard spoken form and the standard written form of modern Chinese. In its narrow sense, MSC refers to the written form only. In other words, MSC is the equivalent of *xiandai Hanyu gongtongyu* "the shared form of modern Chinese" (Huang and Liao 1997) under its broad interpretation, and is the same as *Baihuawen* "vernacular writing" (Xing 1991) or modern written Chinese (Chen 1999) under the narrow interpretation. The term is being used in its narrow sense in this paper.

MSC or modern written Chinese is a natural product of the evolution process of Chinese language. Unlike the spoken form of standard Chinese, namely, *Putonghua*, MSC does not have an official definition and its status of being the standard form comes from the fact that it has been the accepted means of communication for educated speakers of all Chinese dialects for almost a century.

The written form of human languages does not simply record what are in the spoken form but is a much refined and sophisticated form based on the spoken form. The written form is not acquired via contact but is learned via education. MSC is no exception in this respect. It is not simply the written form of *Putonghua*, but is based on the common core of all contemporary Chinese dialects, together with a significant number of elements from Classic Chinese and certain elements from foreign languages (e.g., Norman 1988, Hu 1987, Xing 1991).

Lexical items, morpho-syntactic structures and discourse features of MSC are those shared by most, if not all, dialects of Chinese, namely, they are the common core of the dialects. Elements not found in the majority of dialects are usually not incorporated into MSC, but when a dialect gains some prestige under certain social or cultural circumstances, some features unique to that dialect might find their way into most dialects and eventually into MSC. The Cantonese expression *chao-youyu* "stir-fry-squid, fire (someone) from his work" and the Beijing dialect term *dawan* "big-wrist, influential people" are typical examples in this category that are taken into MSC recently.

MSC has been used in the Hong Kong society for quite a long time and people with some education background can understand it without too many difficulties.

The only problem is that Cantonese shares fewer features with other dialects and therefore has more features outside the common core than others do. If MSC is employed to describe daily activities of the Hong Kong society, much of the local flavor will be lost and some local readers might not have enough interest to read it.

On the other hand, literature with some Cantonese expressions or written in pure Cantonese vocabulary and syntax has been in existence for a long time as well. As the spoken form evolves, the written form also takes in many characteristics unique to the Hong Kong society. Elements from local street language, loan words, foreign language expressions in their original form, mainly from English, and some phrase and clause structures borrowed from English have been accepted as part of certain written genres and registers. It is the format of choice for many sectors in the Hong Kong mass media, especially those catering to the blue-collar workers, and has a very large number of loyal readers. Any attempt to replace it with MSC literature will drive these readers away and will be a bad business decision.

The written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese has apparently become part of life in Hong Kong and is very likely to maintain its social and economical status in the foreseeable future. It is therefore quite natural for some educators to advocate teaching a written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese to our students (Dong 1996, cf. Yu 1996, Yao 1998). The main argument for adopting a local dialect as the basis for written form is that writing in one's mother tongue should be easier than doing it in another linguistic form, no matter how close to mother tongue the other form is. A written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese should thus have significant pedagogical value in our society. Another argument is that such a written form will be a great asset in students' future career, given its role in the Hong Kong society. An issue related to this is the fear that the Hong Kong culture as we know it might be lost if there is no written form of the local dialect to support it.

Those who are against using Hong Kong Cantonese as the basis for written form often argue that the language being taught in school should be the standard form and there should be only one standard form for Chinese. MSC is the standard written form used all over China and therefore has a much larger readership. If students can learn MSC at school, they would have a much brighter career future.

A fundamental issue in this regard is the function of language, including its written form, in a society. Language is the tool of communication and communication is usually a two-way activity that requires the participation of a sender and a receiver. The sender codes the information in some format and sends it out. The receiver takes in the encrypted form and decodes it to retrieve the information. If one communicates with oneself, it does not matter what code and format he uses; but if one communicates with another person, the code and format must be shared by the two parties. Otherwise the channel of communication cannot be estab-



lished. When the communication is conducted via a linguistic form, the form should be understandable to the two parties as well.

The issue of successful communication is thus more sociologic in nature than is linguistic. When we choose a written form for communication, the first question to ask is who the other party is, namely, what the readership of our written form is. If we are writing for self-entertainment, it does not matter in what form we write. We may write with symbols created by ourselves and use syntactic rules understood only by ourselves. If, on the other hand, our readers are people who do not share exact the same linguistic form with us, then we have to choose a form accessible to both sides.

The reality after the sovereignty hand-over is that we are having more and more contact with people in other parts of China, not only in business but also in other areas such as politics, education, science, technology, environment protection, public safety and the rule of law. Written Chinese has become an essential part of the contact and the readership of our writing is no longer limited to people in Hong Kong. When we write for speakers of other Chinese dialects, we cannot impose our rules on them but have to find a common ground. There is no other choice than writing in MSC.

It is therefore dictated by reality that MSC be the written form in the communication with speakers of other Chinese dialects. Given its close political and economic ties with China after the hand-over, Hong Kong actually will benefit tremendously by adopting MSC as one of the written forms. There is no need, of course, to abandon the written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese, which serves a large portion of the local population. The two forms are likely to co-exist in Hong Kong for a long time, each having its own function and serving its own readers, and there is no evidence yet that the situation will change.

It is a common expectation that education caters to the needs of the society. Given the current language situation in Hong Kong, graduates well versed in the two written forms will be in great demand and it is the customer order that our school system should strive to fill. The first process in the production of preferred graduates is to make it clear to our students that the written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese and MSC are distinctive formats that serve different purposes. Cantonese shares most of its morphological, semantic, syntactic and discourse features with other dialects and these features are incorporated into MSC. There are also certain features unique to Cantonese that are not found in MSC. An important job for language teachers in Hong Kong is to help students recognize these features and learn their MSC equivalents so that students can produce written works that are understandable to speakers of other Chinese dialects.

### 3. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

A crucial issue in teaching written standard Chinese is to make a distinction between lexical items and morpho-syntactic features that are unique to the local dialect and those that are not found in any dialect of Chinese. The former are not grammatical errors but the latter are, and they should be treated accordingly. Expressions and structures found only in Hong Kong Cantonese are not grammatical errors but they should be excluded from MSC because most of them are not comprehensible to speakers of other dialects and will hinder effective communication. These features are out of place in MSC but are appropriate in a written form based on local Cantonese.

Expressions and structural features not found in any variety of Chinese are grammatical errors since they do not belong to the language we use. They could be words created randomly without any consideration of Chinese morphological rules. They could also be collocation of words and phrases that is not found in any dialect or syntactic structures that belong to no Chinese dialect. These errors must be corrected without exception. A very tough problem for Hong Kong Chinese teachers to solve in this regard is that certain errors have been repeated so many times in the mass media that people have got used to them. Tremendous effort is needed to correct this type of errors and careful linguistic analysis is required before the correction process can start.

A typical example is the syntactic position of Chinese phrases *zhiduo* 'at most', *zhishao* 'at least' and so on. A very common usage in the news reports of Hong Kong mass media is for these phrases to occur in front of a numeral phrase. If the numeral phrase happens to be the object, these phrases will appear after the verb, as in the case of examples (1), (2) and (3), which are all quoted from Hong Kong newspapers.

- (1) *You zhishao shiyige ren zai Shatian*  
 there be at least eleven Cl. person in Shatin  
*de chehuo zhong shoushang.*  
 DE car accident inside injure  
 'There were at least eleven injured in the car accident in Shatin.'
- (2) *Yilake shengcheng Meiguo feiji zha-si-le*  
 Iraq claim America plane bomb-kill-Asp.  
*Zhishao liuge pingmin.*  
 at least six Cl. civilian  
 'Iraq claimed that the US planes killed at least six civilians.'
- (3) *Guoji Huobi Jijin Zuzhi jiang jie gei*  
 International-Monetary-Fund-Organization will lend to  
*Baxi zui-duo ershisan yi meiyuan.*  
 Brazil at most twenty-three hundred-million US dollar

'The International Monetary Fund will lend at most 2.3 billion US dollars to Brazil.'

Sentences (2) and (3) are excerpts of translated news from Reuters and UPI respectively and bear clear influence of English constituent order. Sentence (1), on the other hand, is from a news report on an accident in Hong Kong that is written by a local reporter. The English constituent order in this case has apparently been adopted by the Hong Kong mass media and has become a usable pattern. This pattern has already invaded schools in Hong Kong and often appears in students' writing.

There is, of course, no *a priori* reason to exclude a syntactic pattern simply because it is also found in another language. The problem here is that the pattern is adopted without consideration of its function in English and the syntactic constraints in Chinese, including Cantonese. The English phrase 'at most' is actually a shortened form of 'at the most' (Quirk et al. 1985) and is therefore a typical prepositional phrase in the form of P+DP. When an English PP modifies an NP or a DP, it usually occurs after the nominal, as in the case of *the book on the shelf*. In the case of a PP modifying a predicate, the PP usually appears after the verb or, in the case of sentential adverbial, appears before the subject or at the end of the sentence (Quirk et al. 1985). In the original English version for (2) and (3), the phrases *at least* and *at most* are thus not attributive modifying a nominal phrase but are adverbial modifying the verb phrase.

The Chinese phrase *zhiduo* 'at most' and *zhishao* 'at least' are adverbs but not PPs, at least not in contemporary Chinese (Lü et al. 1980). They cannot modify nominal elements such as NPs, NumPs and DPs. The Cantonese complex nominal phrase in (4)<sup>1</sup> is thus not acceptable<sup>2</sup> while the one in (5) is, with a different modifier for the NumP. The *zhishao* 'at least' in sentences (1) and (2) can therefore only function as an adverbial but not an attributive modifying the numeral phrase after it.

- |     |                 |              |                 |              |               |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| (4) | <i>*keoi-ge</i> | <i>zisiu</i> | <i>saambaak</i> | <i>maan</i>  | <i>sangaa</i> |
|     | his             | at least     | three-hundred   | ten-thousand | estate        |

<sup>1</sup> The Cantonese examples are given in Jyuping (Cantonese Romanization System) designed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong.

<sup>2</sup> The intended meaning of (4) can be expressed by the phrase in (i), in which *zisiu* 'at least' modifies the verb *jau* 'have'.

- |     |   |              |            |                 |              |           |
|-----|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|
| (i) | <i>keoi-ge</i>  | <i>zisiu</i> | <i>jau</i> | <i>saambaak</i> | <i>maan</i>  | <i>ge</i> |
|     | his   | at least     | have       | three-hundred   | ten-thousand | COMP      |
|     | <i>sangaa</i>   |              |            |                 |              |           |
|     | estate  |              |            |                 |              |           |
|     | 'his estate that is worth at least three million (dollars)' |              |            |                 |              |           |

- (5) *keoi-ge*                      *cynbou saambaak*                      *maan*                      *sangaa*  
       his                      all                      three-hundred                      ten-thousand                      estate  
       'all of his three million (dollar) estate'

An adverbial in Chinese always appears between the verb and the subject or at the beginning of the sentence (Li and Thompson 1981, Matthews and Yips 1993), as shown by the contrast between the acceptable Cantonese sentence in (6a) and the unacceptable (6b). The adverbial therefore always occupies a position somewhere before the verb. The *zhishao* 'at least' in (1) and (2) is an adverbial but occurs after the verb. The illicit position of the adverbial thus renders the two sentences unacceptable in all Chinese dialects.

- (6) a.        *Ngo*        *zido*                      *m*        *faan*        *Hoenggong.*  
               I                      at most                      not                      return                      Hong Kong  
               'The most I can do is to not return to Hong Kong.'  
       b.        \**Ngo*        *m*        *faan*        *zido*                      *Hoenggong*  
               I                      not                      return                      at most                      Hong Kong

The phrase *zui-duo* 'the most, at most' in (3) represents a more complicated case. The word *duo* 'many, much' is an adjective and *zui* 'most' is an adverb that modifies *duo*. *Zui-duo* is an adjective phrase that is the semantic equivalent of the superlative form for English *many* and *much*, namely, the form *the most*. Such an adjective phrase can modify either a nominal or a verbal element. It thus seems possible that the phrase *zui-duo* 'most' in sentence (3) is the modifier of either *ershi-san yi meiyuan* '2.3 billion US dollars' or *jie-gei* 'lend to'. The sentence should be acceptable either way.

The reality is that there are strict structural reasons that prevent *zui-duo* 'the most' from modifying *ershi-san yi meiyuan* '2.3 billion US dollars'. There are two forms of modifiers for a nominal element in Chinese. If the nominal is a bare noun, the modifier must be an  $X^0$  item, namely, must be a word, as in *da qiche* 'big car'. If the nominal is a phrase, the modifier must be a *de* phrase, as in *da de naliang qiche* 'the car that is big' (e.g., T. Li 1995, Shi 1999, cf. Zhu 1985). The nominal *ershi-san yi meiyuan* '2.3 billion US dollars' consists of a head that is the numeral *ershi-san yi* '2.3 billion' and a complement that is the noun phrase *meiyuan* 'U.S. dollar'. It therefore has the status of a phrase, namely, a NumP (A. Li 1998). The modifier of *ershi-san yi meiyuan* '2.3 billion US dollars' thus must be a *de* phrase and cannot be *zui-duo* 'the most', which has no *de* attached.

When *zui-duo* 'the most' modifies a verbal element, it is the syntactic and semantic equivalent of English *at (the) most*, although it is not a PP. It is appropriate to translate the English phrase *at most* into the Chinese phrase *zui-duo* in sentence (3). Again, good translation is ruined by bad syntax. If *zui-duo* 'at the most' is modifying *jie-gei* 'lend to', it should appear before it but not occur after it as in (3), because the modifier of a Chinese verbal element must precede it. The phrase *zui-duo* 'the most, at the most' in sentence (3) simply cannot be the

modifier of either the *ershi-san yi meiyuan* '2.3 billion US dollars' after it or the *jie-gei* 'lend to' before it.

The fundamental issue in this case is that the structural relationship between modifier and modified in Chinese, either Cantonese or any other dialect, cannot be altered and any deviation from it is unacceptable. It is the responsibility of Chinese teachers to present the problem clearly to students and help them use the correct constituent order.

Grammatical errors sometime come from collocations that are not acceptable in any Chinese dialect. A case in hand is the slogan in (7), which appears in an elegantly designed advertisement flyer from a well-established developer to promote its new shopping center specializing in furniture, home appliances and interior decorating materials.

- (7) *Wei nin pincou lixiang jia-ju.*  
       for you put-together ideal home-appliances  
       'Put together a fashionable home appliance set for you.'

The advertisement is meant to tell potential customers that there are all kinds of furniture and home appliance stores in the shopping center and the stores can work together to furnish homes in an ideal way. Unfortunately, the slogan actually sent out a message that the stores in the center are all not trustworthy since they do not have high quality merchandise and can only put together shabby things that are not compatible with each other. What ruined the promotion campaign is an unusual collocation of a verb and its object that are semantically incompatible in all Chinese dialects.

Although the compound verb *pincou* is usually glossed as "put together", the Chinese expression and the English phrase are not exact equivalents because the former always carries a negative connotation but the latter is usually neutral. *Pincou* "put-together" implies that one could not find enough qualified persons or items to meet the demand and had to look for low quality candidates or shabby replacement for the job. The verb *pincou* "put together" is not semantically compatible with the nominal phrase *lixiang jiaju* "ideal home", which carries a positive connotation. The slogan can thus only yield a weird interpretation that the ideal home appliance set from this shopping center is actually a bunch of hastily assembled unmatched items with questionable quality. Such collocations are errors and should not be tolerated in any written form of Chinese.

#### 4. CANTONESE FEATURES IN WRITTEN CHINESE

Cantonese lexical items and morpho-syntactic features found in no other dialect are not grammatical errors but they should not be included in standard written Chinese, although they are appropriate in written forms based on Cantonese. It is

the responsibility of Chinese teachers to help students identify Cantonese features and learn the MSC equivalents. This is a long and complex process that requires careful planning based on a thorough understanding of the issues involved. The best way to achieve the goal is to start from the obvious and then take care of the subtle cases one by one. The strategy is to tackle structural issues first and lexical items second; to identify Cantonese functional words in written Chinese first and content words second.

Dialects of Chinese share most of their syntactic structures and that makes it possible for all dialects to have the same written form. There are, however, a few structural differences among them and Cantonese has perhaps the largest amount of unique structural features. If one of such features finds its way into the written form, it will constitute an obstacle in the communication with speakers of other dialects.

Certain structures found only in Cantonese, such as the reversed order of indirect and direct objects, are well known to teachers as well as students. They can be easily detected and replaced with MSC structures. What call for special pedagogical attention are structures that differ from MSC ones in certain details or only under certain circumstances.

The so-called *guo/gwo* construction is an interesting example. It is a common knowledge that in making comparison, the *bi* construction is usually used in MSC, as in (8), while the *guo/gwo* construction is always used in Cantonese, as in (9) (Mok 1998). The *guo/gwo* construction is also used in MSC for comparison, although to a much less extent. It is in essence a complex predicate construction with extent referred in the sense of Li and Thompson (1981) or a verb complementary construction in the sense of Y. Li (1990). The *guo/gwo* construction thus has a potential form like other verb complementary constructions, as in the case of (10).

- (8) *Wo bi ni gao.*  
I than you tall  
'I am taller than you are.'

- (9) *Ngo gou gwo nei.*  
I tall than you  
'I am taller than you are.'

- (10) *Ni gao-bu-guo lantian.*  
you tall-not-possible-than blue sky  
'It is not possible for you to be taller than the blue sky.'

Since the *guo/gwo* construction is used in both Cantonese and other dialects, it seems that *guo/gwo* construction should not be an obstacle for students to learn MSC. However, there is a hidden danger. What causes the problem is a unique

property of the potential form of the Cantonese *gwo* construction. When the potential form of *gwo* construction is negated, the object of comparison can appear between the verb and the negative potential morpheme if the object is a pronoun. The MSC *guo* construction, on the other hand, does not have this feature. The Cantonese sentence in (11) is thus fully acceptable but its MSC equivalent (12a) is not. The only acceptable MSC form is (12b), in which the object of comparison occurs after the verb complementary complex.

- (11) *Ngo daai-nei-m-gwo.*  
 I big-you-not-than  
 'It is not possible for me to be bigger than you are.'
- (12) a. \**Wo hen-ni-bu-guo.*  
 I harsh-you-not-than  
 b. *Wo hen-bu-guo ni.*  
 I harsh-not-than you  
 'It is not possible for me to be harsher than you are.'

The Cantonese *gwo* construction behaves similarly to its MSC counterpart in most cases but it does have one unique property that MSC lacks. It is this kind of difference, no matter how small a detail it is, that requires careful guidance from the teachers.

Another such case is the nominal object of adjectives. It is a common knowledge that adjectives or the so-called stative verbs in all Chinese dialects usually function either as the modifier of a nominal or as an intransitive predicate (e.g. Li and Thompson 1981). The Cantonese examples in (13) and the MSC examples in (14) illustrate these possibilities respectively.

- (13) a. *Ngodei jau houndo hoksaang.*  
 we have very many student  
 'We have many students.'  
 b. *Ngodei ge hoksaang do.*  
 we Poss. Student many  
 'Our students are many.'
- (14) a. *Women you henduo xuesheng.*  
 we have very many students  
 'We have many students.'  
 b. *Women de xuesheng hen duo.*  
 we Poss. student very many  
 'Our students are many.'

Certain Cantonese adjectives, however, seem to have the additional property of taking a nominal as object, as shown in (15a). There are two possible approaches to handling this issue. One way is to assume that unlike their MSC counterparts,

certain adjectives in Cantonese have the properties of taking object (e.g., Pan 1998). Cantonese thus differs from MSC with regard to the properties of adjectives. The contrast between Cantonese sentences like (15a) and their MSC equivalents like (15b) is often cited as the evidence.

- (15) a.        *Ngodei*                *do*        *hoksaang*.  
               we                    many    student  
               'Our students are many.'  
       b.        \**Womenduo*        *xuesheng*.  
               we        many    student

The other way is to take into consideration the fact that some MSC adjectives may also take an object under certain conditions, as shown in sentences like (16) and (17). It thus seems possible to assume that the behaviors of MSC and Cantonese adjectives are in essence the same (e.g., Ouyang 1993).

- (16) *Women*                *duole*                *san'ge*                *xuesheng*.  
       we                    many Asp.            three Asp.            student  
       'We have three extra students.'

- (17) *Chunfeng*            *you*        *lü*        *Jiangnan*            *an*.  
       spring wind        again    green    River-south        bank  
       'The spring breeze has made the banks south of the River green again.'

The two approaches actually are based on separate properties of Cantonese adjectives and they can be combined to provide a full description of the facts. Many MSC adjectives can take an object when their semantic content and their thematic grid have undergone some changes, namely, when they have assumed a special status (Q. Li 1996). The adjective *duo* 'many' in (16), for example, is no longer describing the number of the students but is depicting the status of the speakers, i.e., the speakers have entered the status of having too many students. The adjective *lü* 'green' in (17), on the other hand, is being used causatively. It now takes the NP *chunfeng* 'spring breeze' as causer and *Jiangnan an* 'the southern banks of the River' as the causee. It is almost the equivalent of English verb *green*, meaning to make something green or to turn something green.

Many Cantonese adjectives may also be used causatively but the *do* 'many' in (15a) is not. The status of *do* 'many' in (15a) is almost the same as the *do* 'many' in (13b). The semantic content of the object-taking *do* 'many' in (15a) and the predicative *do* 'many' in (13b) are in essence the same. What *do* 'many' describes in the two sentences is the number of students and the speakers are the possessors of the students in both cases. It is not the concern of this paper what the argument structure of *do* 'many' in (15a) should be. Suffice it to say that the argument structure of *do* 'many' in (15a) and that of *do* 'many' in (13b) have many features in common.



The most important issue here is that a small group of Cantonese adjectives can take an object while their semantic content is similar to that of their predicative counterparts. This is a structural feature only found in Cantonese and it should not appear in MSC.

A significant portion of the Cantonese vocabulary is not found in other dialects and these words should not be used in MSC. The sheer number of words in this category is problematical enough and it requires careful pedagogical and linguistic planning to tackle the issue. The strategy should be to take care of functional words<sup>3</sup> first and then content words. The rationale behind this strategy is that functional words are the most frequently used items in written Chinese (Wang 1986). The misuse of a functional word usually has a more serious consequence than that of a content word. A more practical reason is that many Cantonese content words consist of morphemes also found in other dialects or inherited from Classic Chinese. Given the morphological and semantic nature of Chinese content words, the meaning of such Cantonese words can be easily derived from their morpheme components. Although words like *ji-gong/gai-gung* 'chicken-male, cock', *zhi-su/zat-sou* 'essence-element, quality' and *yin-pin/jam-ban* 'drink-material, drinks' are not found in MSC, they are not very hard to understand for speakers of other dialects.

The words that must be excluded from MSC are those that are totally opaque to non-Cantonese speakers. Words like *lek* 'smart', *ngaam* 'suitable' and *keilei* 'neat' should not be allowed in MSC simply because they do not make any sense to outsiders.

What call for clear guidance from Chinese teachers are Cantonese words that are written with exactly the same characters as their MSC counterparts are but carry some meaning differences. A typical example is the adjective *xinku/sanfu* 'hard', which describes unpleasant physical and mental conditions caused by hard labour or excessive exercises in all dialects and it is therefore part of the standard MSC vocabulary. A sentence like (18) would look innocent enough to be accepted by everyone. The problem in this case is that the most prominent meaning of *xinku/sanfu* 'hard' in Cantonese is to describe the unpleasant conditions brought about by illness or physical suffering. Sentence (18) is thus most likely to yield a reading that the speaker is sick if it is used by a Cantonese speaker. The same sentence will mean that the speaker has done some hard work if it is written by a non-Cantonese speaker.

- (18) *Wo        hen        xinku.*  
       I        very        hard  
       'I feel bad.'

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<sup>3</sup> The term functional word is used in the sense of traditional Chinese grammar. It refers to prepositions, connectives, sentence particles and the so-called *zhuci* 'helping words', which are considered affixes in modern linguistics.

Another example is the word *fanfu/faanfuk*, which is either an adjective meaning 'repetitive' or a verb meaning 'fluctuate' in Cantonese and other dialects alike. The sentence in (19) is thus ambiguous between two readings. In one reading the word *fanfu/faanfuk* 'repetitive' is an adverbial modifying the verb *shangsheng* 'rise' and in the other reading *fanfu/faanfuk* 'fluctuate' is a verb conjoined with the verb *shangsheng* 'rise'. The most interesting characteristic of (19) is that it is unlikely to be ambiguous in many dialects. Hong Kong Cantonese speakers are most likely to understand it as that the stock market fluctuated and ended up a little high while speakers of other dialects will interpret it as that the stock market went all the way up.

- |      |                              |  |                             |
|------|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| (19) | <i>Gushi</i><br>stock market | <i>fanfu</i><br>repetitive                         | <i>shangsheng</i> .<br>rise |
|      | i.                           | 'The stock market rose repetitively.'              |                             |
|      | ii.                          | 'The stock market fluctuated and ended up higher.' |                             |

These words will harm the communication between Cantonese and non-Cantonese speakers more than anything else because each side is led to think they understand what is being said but they actually get the wrong message. It is the responsibility of Chinese teachers to provide a clear case by case explanation to students and help them to learn the correct usage.

Functional words need special attention as a category for different reasons. Certain subcategories of functional words appear in different forms in Cantonese and MSC and must be learnt one by one. The aspect markers are typical in this respect. Cantonese and MSC have the same major aspects but these aspects are not marked with the same form except for the experiential marker *guo/gwo*. The perfect aspect marker in MSC is *le* but that in Cantonese is *zo*. What is more, the two markers are not exact equivalents. The Cantonese *zo* marks nothing but perfect aspect (e.g., Matthews and Yip 1994) while the MSC *le* serves as the marker for perfect aspect as well as some other aspects (e.g., Lü et al. 1980).

The same can be said about the progressive and continuous markers, which are *zai* and *zhe* in MSC but *gan* and *zyu* in Cantonese. Although the distinction between progressive and continuous aspects is found in almost all Chinese dialects, the coverage of the two aspects differs from dialect to dialect. The distinction between the progressive and continuous aspects in MSC is mainly based on the Northern Dialect and it differs notably from that in Cantonese. Roughly speaking, the continuous aspect in MSC, which is marked with *zhe*, covers more cases than its counterpart in Hong Kong Cantonese, which is marked with *zyu*. The MSC sentence with a continuous aspect in (20) can thus only be expressed by the Hong Kong Cantonese sentence with a progressive aspect in (21a), not the one with a continuous aspect in (21b). Teachers should be aware of these relationships and help students understand them.

- (20) *Waibian xia-zhe yu ne.*  
 outside fall-Asp. Rain Part.  
 'It is raining outside.'
- (21) a. *Ceotbin lok-gan jyu wo.*  
 outside fall-Asp. rain Part.  
 'It is raining outside.'
- b. *\*Ceotbin lok-zyu jyu wo.*  
 outside fall-Asp. rain Part.

There are also some special functional words in Cantonese that are not part of MSC. The word *you/jau* 'have', for example, is a content word in both Cantonese and MSC and causes no problem as such. It also serves, however, as a functional word in Cantonese as in the case of (22), which is quoted from an article on a local newspaper. The word *jau* 'have' should not appear here if the sentence is meant to be in MSC.

- (22) *Ngo jau zoi daaihok-lei gaau sezokfo.*  
 I have in university-inside teach writing  
 'I have taught writing in a university.'

The connective *ji/kap* 'and' represents another type of problem. It marks conjunction in both Cantonese and MSC and seems to be a non-issue. A very tricky feature of *ji* 'and' in MSC is that it imposes a hierarchy of importance on the items being conjoined. The item before *ji* 'and' is assigned a status more important than that of the item after *ji* 'and'. The same connective *kap* 'and' in Cantonese, on the other hand, does not distinguish the status of the items being conjoined and the difference between the two *ji/kap* 'and' will inevitably lead to misunderstanding. Sentence (23), which is quoted from a local news report, thus means that the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has a status higher than that of the Mayor of Shanghai. This is of course not the meaning intended by the reporter, but the connective *ji* 'and' does yield such an interpretation in MSC.

- (23) *Guojia zhuxi Jiang Zemin huijianle*  
 state president Jiang Zemin meet Asp.  
*teshou Dong Jianhua ji*  
 chief executive of HKSAR Tung Chi-wa and  
*Shanghai shizhang Xu Kuangdi.*  
 Shanghai mayor Xu Kuangdi  
 'President Jiang Zemin met the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Tung Chi-wa and the Mayor of Shanghai Xu Kuangdi.'

*Ji/kap* 'and' is perhaps the most frequently used connective in Cantonese but the most often used connective in MSC is *he* 'and', which does not impose an hierarchy of importance on the items being conjoined. The functional equivalent of Cantonese

*kap* 'and' is MSC *he* 'and'. Chinese teachers should make this clear to students and help them learn to use MSC *he* 'and'.

## 5. MSC FEATURES NOT COMMONLY USED IN CANTONESE

Although MSC is based on the common core shared by all Chinese dialects, all MSC features do not have equal status in every dialect. Certain MSC features have very limited distribution in Cantonese and are therefore not commonly used in Cantonese. Some training is needed in order for students in Hong Kong to use these features properly in written Chinese.

A typical feature in this respect is the so-called *ba* construction. It is well known that Cantonese uses *jiang/zoeng* construction as the equivalent of MSC *ba* construction and it seems that Hong Kong students should not have too many difficulties learning to use *ba* construction. A less often mentioned fact in this regard is that the MSC *ba* construction is used so extensively that it has been cited as evidence for the claim that Chinese is changing from an SVO language to an SOV language (e.g., Li and Thompson 1974). The Cantonese *jiang/zoeng* construction, on the other hand, carries some bookish flavour and is not widely used. Without proper training, a Hong Kong student is not likely to use *ba* construction correctly, especially in places where a *ba* construction in MSC is appropriate but a *jiang/zoeng* construction in Cantonese is not.

Another example is the MSC morpheme *de* attached to most adverbials. The Cantonese equivalent of *de* is the morpheme *kam*. When television announcers read news reports written in MSC, they often pronounce *de* as *kam*. It seems that all teachers have to do is to tell students that the two morphemes are equivalents and they could use *de* to replace *kam*. The reality is far more complicated than this simple statement. The Cantonese *kam* is associated with a special type of adverbial (Matthews and Yip 1994) and is used in rare occasions. If the students only use *de* in places where *kam* is appropriate, they will not use *de* adverbials as often as they should. It is therefore a feature that must be learnt.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Written standard Chinese is not based on any particular dialect of Chinese. Its lexical items, morpho-syntactic structures and discourse features are those shared by most dialects, together with some features inherited from Classic Chinese or borrowed from other languages. Written form based on one dialect only is nothing new in the history of Chinese. The so-called Wu Dialect literature and the missionary Min literature are two recent examples. One of the reasons that they could not compete with the Baihuawen "vernacular literature" coming after them is that they have very limited readership. The written form based on Hong Kong Cantonese has its own life but it cannot be forced to readers outside Hong Kong. Students in Hong

Kong must learn the standard form of written Chinese in order to compete in the job market.

It is not easy for our students to learn Modern Standard Chinese and Chinese teachers have a crucial role to play. It is very important for the teachers to make a clear distinction between grammatical errors and lexical or structural features that are only found in Hong Kong Cantonese. The former has no place in written Chinese but the latter has a restricted role to play.

The main task of our Chinese teachers is to help students recognise features unique to Hong Kong Cantonese and learn their MSC equivalents. This should be done step by step, starting from the obvious and then take care of the subtle cases one by one. The strategy is to tackle structural issues first and lexical items second; to identify Cantonese functional words in written Chinese first and content words second.

Chinese teachers in Hong Kong have a very hard job to do, but it must be done. If linguists can lend a helping hand to them, their job will be a little easier. It is the sincere hope of the author that this paper will provide some help.

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# 香港小一學童普通話能力的發展\*

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## 摘要

從長遠的觀點來看，香港普及普通話教學的重點是小學。如何能夠成功、有效地在小學教好普通話，需要了解兩點：(1) 香港小學生學習普通話的規律和特點；(2) 影響學生普通話能力發展的因素。我們從語言習得的角度的對香港小學生普通話能力的發展做了一個系統性的調查。本文介紹小學一年級學生在兩種完全不同的普通話教學環境下的普通話能力的發展。一組學生在沉浸式 (immersion) 普通話教學環境中學習普通話，另一組學生在普通情況下，一週用兩課時學習普通話。顯而易見，第二組學生的學習效果一定不如第一組通過沉浸式學習普通話的學生。但是，如果我們能夠根據語言習得的規律和學生的特點為學生提供一個高質量的語言輸入 (language input)，並盡量為學生創造一個生動、活潑使用普通話的課堂環境，那麼，在一週兩課時的情況下我們也能有效地教好普通話。

## 一. 簡介

從一九九八年九月開始，普通話成為香港中、小學核心課程之一。香港課程發展議會一九九七年制定的普通話教學綱要把小一到中五的普通話教學分為四個學習階段（小一至小三、小四至小六、中一至中三、中四至中五），規定了各學習階段的學習目標，並建議學校每星期應有二至三節普通話課。從小一到中五全線展開普通話教學，這是不是說今後香港的學生一定需要學習十一年的普通話？普通話教學綱要沒有明確說明。普通話教師

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普遍認為，學習十一年的普通話似乎過長，沒有這個必要。究竟香港的學生需要多少時間才能學會普通話，能用普通話做正常交流？這個問題到目前為止，大家都無法回答，因為香港的有關普通話習得的研究正在起步階段。我們都知道，第二語言能力的發展並不是與所學時間完全成正比的，並不是學的時間越長，就學得越好。影響第二語言學習的主要因素有：年齡，母語，學習環境，學習態度和方法，第二語言的輸入等等(Dulay *et al* 1982, Krashen 1985, Ellis 1994, Gass and Selinker 1994)。

從長遠的觀點來看，香港普通話教學的重點應該在小學。目前從小一到中五全線展開的零起點普通話教學是個過渡階段。再過六年入學的中學生，經過從現在起的六年小學普通話學習，應該已具有相當不錯的普通話基礎，中學普通話教學完全需要根據小學普通話教學情況進行調整。如果小學教學成功，中學甚至不需再開設普通話課。所以，要有效地在香港普及、推廣普通話教學的關鍵是在小學。我們目前正在進行一項為期三年的縱向研究，從語言習得的角度對香港小學一年級至三年級學生的普通話能力的發展做一個系統的調查。香港小一學生現在或今後基本上都是從零起點學普通話，了解孩子從零起點開始的最初三年的普通話能力發展對小學的普通話有效教學有直接的意義。因為了解孩子的普通話能力發展才能編寫出符合孩子特點的普通話教材，制定出有效的教學方法，才能激發出孩子學普通話的興趣，才能教好普通話。

本文介紹小學一年級學生的普通話能力的發展。我們調查了在兩種不同的普通話教學環境下學習普通話的小一學生。第一組是香港蘇浙小學的小一學生。蘇浙小學是香港極少數的採用沉浸式(immersion)<sup>1</sup>普通話教學的學校之一（這組簡稱為沉浸式組）。普通話是蘇浙小學各門學課的教學語言，也是學校範圍內各種活動的交流語言。第二組是香港東華三院洗次雲小學的小一學生。這組學生在普通的學習環境下學習普通話（這組簡稱為普通組），他們和香港極大多數的學校一樣把普通話作為一門語言課程，一週用兩課時學習普通話。我們的研究分為三個部分：一、研究蘇浙小學小一學生的普通話能力的發展。沉浸式語言教學是雙語教育中最有效的語言教學模式。我們的目的是，總結出在最佳的學習環境下香港小學生普通話能力發展的規律以及影響香港普通話教學的重要因素；二、根據第一部份研究得出的小學生普通話習得規律及影響普通話教學因素來設計和改善普通學習環境下的普通話教材和教學方法；三、用改善的普通話教材和教學方法在洗次雲小學一年級進行實驗教學，同時，分析在普通學習環境下小一學生的普通話能力的發展。我們的討論首先為香港人學普通話作個定位，然後按照這三個部分依次發展，最後是討論和結論。

<sup>1</sup> 有關 immersion 教學法的漢語譯名不統一，有的學者稱之為沉浸式，有的學者稱之為浸透式，也有的用浸沒式。



## 二. 香港人學普通話的定位

香港人學習普通話屬於第一語言(L1)習得，還是屬於第二語言(L2)習得，這是個很重要的問題。這個定位直接關係到香港普通話課程的教學設計，教材編寫及教學方法的選用。表1是香港人學普通話的情況與其他幾種有關的語言學習情況的詳細比較。

表 1：香港人學普通話與其他幾種有關的語言學習的比較

	香港孩子學 粵語	香港人學 英文	外國人學 中文	香港人學 普通話
學習環境	自然環境	課堂	課堂	課堂
學習方式	自然習得	教學	教學	教學
L1 與 L2 的語音	—	不同	不同	不同
L1 與 L2 的詞彙	—	不同	不同	基本相同
L1 與 L2 的語法	—	不同	不同	基本相同
L1 與 L2 的文字	—	不同	不同	相同
兩種文化	—	不同	不同	相同

從表 1 的比較可以看出，香港人學普通話不屬於第一語言習得，因為香港是說粵語的社會，粵語是香港人的母語。普通話和粵語有不同的語音系統，說普通話的人和說粵語的人無法口頭交流 (mutually unintelligible)<sup>2</sup>。另外，香港人是在課堂上，通過老師的教學來學習普通話，完全不同於自然語言環境中的母語習得。從語言學的角度來定義，香港人學普通話屬於第二語言習得。但是，普通話和粵語之間不僅語法基本相同，基本詞彙相同，還有相同的書面語，有相同的書寫文字。所以，說粵語的香港人學普通話

<sup>2</sup> 黎歐陽汝穎 (1997) 提出普通話對香港人來說，既不是第一語言又不是第二語言，而是界乎其間的第一個半語言。

明顯不同於一般情況下的第二語言學習。有人把香港人學普通話與外國人學說普通話相等同起來，這不對。香港人學普通話著重學習普通話語音，著重聽說練習。但是，外國人學普通話不僅需要學習普通話語音，還需要學習漢語的語法，詞彙，文字，還需要熟悉中國文化。香港人學普通話不是學習一門完全陌生的第二語言。如果我們的普通話教材和教學方法能善用普通話和粵語的相同之處，普通話對香港學生來說不應該是門困難的課程，應該比學習一門完全陌生的第二語言快、容易、輕鬆得多。

### 三. 蘇浙小學小一學生在沉浸式普通話教學環境中學習普通話的情況

沉浸式 (immersion) 語言教學是公認成功的雙語教學法。其教學原則是聘用以第二語言為母語或第二語言能力接近母語的教師，用第二語言教授課程，在學校範圍內創造一個自然使用第二語言的環境，把學生浸沒到新的語言環境中。研究發現，沉浸式教學培養出的學生的第二語言使用能力遠遠超過傳統的語言課教出來的學生，甚至能接近母語的能力。他們用第二語言學習各科課程的學術能力 (academic ability) 也可以與母語學習的學生相比 (Swain and Lapkin 1982, Krashen 1989, Baetens Beardsmore 1995, Genesec 1995, Wode 1996)。

蘇浙小學採用的是完全沉浸式 (total immersion) 普通話教學。蘇浙小學絕大部分教師來自官話區，操說普通話<sup>3</sup>。學校範圍內，普通話是各門課程和各項活動的媒介。我們自 1995 年 9 月 18 日開始對 13 名普通話為零起點的小一學生進行了定期的採訪和數據收集，最後一次訪問是 1996 年 6 月 27 日。這為期約十個月收集的數據可以代表這些孩子在一年級這一學年內普通話的發展。我們每次採訪都錄了音，每次錄音都翻譯成語音形式，並輸入進電腦進行分析。沉浸式組孩子第一年普通話能力的發展可分為四個階段（有關蘇浙小學的沉浸式普通話教學的詳細情況，參看黃月圓、孫方中 1997）：

#### 1. 沉默階段 (Silent Period) (約兩個月)

所謂的沉默階段并不是指孩子完全沉默，而是指孩子普通話說得很少的第一和第二兩個月。第一個月中，孩子聽不懂普通話，有時即使聽懂了一點點，也不會用普通話表達，而是用廣東話來回答，或用點頭、搖頭來回答。個別孩子根本不願意開口，連廣東話都不願意多說。在第二個月中，

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<sup>3</sup> 漢語有七大方言區，各大方言區又有方言點（見《漢語方言字彙》1989）。官話最接近普通話，官話區的人學普通話容易，能操說基本標準的普通話，可以互相溝通。官話區有很多的方言點，如：北京方言點，濟南方言點，等。不同官話方言點的人所說的普通話帶有地區的口音，也常稱作地方普通話。

孩子稍能聽懂老師課堂上的指示，也開始用廣東話夾雜一點點普通話來回答問題。這是孩子熟悉普通話的階段。

## 2. 普通話/廣東話混合階段(約兩個月)

在這一階段，孩子的普通話聽力有很大的提高，回答問題時，普通話句子迅速增加，而廣東話迅速減少。但是，孩子平時普通話說得不多，也不流利。在這一階段，孩子對普通話聲調，單、複韻母，聲母（不包括：zh, ch, sh）基本掌握。基本掌握是指，學生對四個聲調辨別清楚，單聲調發聲準確；讀單音詞時，對韻母和聲母能正確地發音。但是對於一些難點音、調，學生掌握不穩定，說話時有時發音正確，有時會與相近的音混淆。容易混淆的難點聲母有：/j,x/ 與 /z,s/。聲調方面，說雙聲詞或說話時，有時會把第2聲和第3聲混淆。

## 3. 較自由運用普通話階段(約三個月)

這是孩子的普通話能力發展的一個飛躍階段。孩子在一般場合下談論熟悉的話題時，能夠相當自由地運用普通話，很少夾雜廣東話，孩子開始愛說普通話，說話開始流利。凡是課堂上學過的內容，都能較準確地用普通話敘說，發音正確。普通話聲調，韻母和基本聲母已經鞏固，發音趨向穩定。

## 4. 自由運用普通話階段(第八個月開始)

基本上從第八個月開始，即第四階段開始，這些孩子已經可以很自由地，很流利地運用普通話，並且發音基本準確，穩定。我們對這些孩子進行了即興看圖說話測試，他們不僅說話流利，語速正常；而且語句流暢，用詞恰當。語音語調雖說與標準普通話的語音語調仍有差別（例如，不區分舌齒音和翹舌音），但是完全可以與官話區域說地方普通話的孩子相比。雖然這些孩子的普通話說得很流利，很少帶有廣東話的口音，但是，在某些用詞方面有時仍受粵語的影響（如：慢慢行，椅子爛了，農夫慳了），個別句子也仍有粵語句型的影響（如：兔子跑先，農夫上到去，回到來）。

蘇浙小學的經驗告訴我們，小學一年級的孩子在沉浸式普通話學習中，十個月就可以很輕鬆，不費力地掌握近母語普通話的發音和語言交流能力。

## 四. 關於普通小學普通話教學的一些設想

蘇浙小學的沉浸式普通話教學很成功，但是無法在香港的學校推廣。香港是個粵語社會，沒有可能給學校提供這麼多操說普通話、訓練有素的師資。香港目前的中小學普通話師資以本地教師為主，部分經過一些普通話

進修課程的訓練，還有部分甚至沒有經過任何專門訓練。學校一般只能按照教育署制定的教學綱要每週給學生開一節或兩節普通話課。雖然沉浸式普通話教學不可能在香港推廣，但是這一教學法的成功因素對如何有效地在一般情況下進行普通話教學有指導意義。沉浸式普通話教學成功的關鍵是給學生提供了大量的，有意義的，準確的語言輸入 (input) 和給學生創造了語言輸出 (output) 與檢驗的環境。高質量的語言輸入包括操普通話的教師為學生提供標準普通話示範，並用標準普通話教授課程。語言輸出指學生在教室和學校範圍必須使用普通話。Krashen (1985) 的輸入假設和 Swain (1985) 的輸入加輸出論都強調了第二語言學習中的語言輸入、輸出的重要性。香港小學生能在短短的十個月就能達到近母語的普通話發音和語言交流能力，除了沉浸式教學法提供的有效語言輸入輸出外，還有兩個重要的因素：(1) 粵語與普通話在語法、基本詞彙方面的相同之處，以及漢民族共同享有的歷史、文化、風俗；(2) 六、七歲的小學生有學習語言的年齡優勢。總而言之，香港小學生學習普通話比學習一門完全的第二語言要容易得多。

我們的設想是：如果我們能夠根據語言習得的規律和小學生的語言發展和心理特點，利用粵語與普通話的相同之處，為學生提供一個高質量的語言輸入：好教材，好教師，好的教學方法；並盡量為學生創造一個生動、活潑使用普通話的課堂環境，香港普通小學的小學生也應該能在一週兩課時的情況下有效地學好普通話。我們認為教材最重要。在課堂語言環境中學習普通話，學生接觸普通話很有限，主要從課本和老師那裡接觸。一旦選定教材，普通話課堂活動及評估都是圍繞課本內容進行。教材對小學低年級學生尤其重要。低年級學生的學習興趣取決於教材內容，取決於教師的教學方法。沒有好教材，好教師無法發揮自己的能力，“巧婦難做無米之炊”。根據我們對香港普通話教學的定位和我們對蘇浙小學學生普通話習得的研究，我們認為香港小學的普通話教材應該遵循以下四條原則：

- 盡量利用粵語和普通話在語法、詞彙、和文化背景上有許多共同之處的優勢。盡量利用學生已學的語文知識。我們知道，普通話和粵語的語法基本相同，也有很多詞彙是共有的。另外，香港學生在語文課上學習的中文和普通話在句法、詞彙方面一致。我們不利用這些優勢實際上是對自然資源的極大浪費。我們完全沒有必要在普通話課上去強調粵語和普通話在語法、詞彙和文化背景上的少許不同，因為這些不同本來就會在語文科中解決。我們的想法是，讓語文科去打前鋒，普通話在語文科的掩護下進行，同時普通話科還能鞏固陣地，也就是鞏固語文科學的知識。這樣我們可以取得事半功倍的效果。
- 重視語音知識積累。前面提過，普通話和粵語的最大不同就是語音系統的不同。蘇浙小學的經驗也說明，讓學生盡量多聽和說是學好普通話的關鍵。怎麼樣才能讓學生多聽多說呢？我們認為，最主要的就是課文要趣味性強、上口易誦、便於組織多元化課堂活動。趣味性強才

能讓孩子們喜歡聽，喜歡說；上口易誦才能使孩子們即便是課後、校外和遊戲時都能隨口誦讀，既鍛煉普通話發音，又滿足孩子喜歡表演和自語的心理；多元化課堂活動可以避免單調，而且讓更多的孩子參與，使每個孩子有更多的說話機會。

- 不做抽象語言現象解釋。語法和詞彙的難點讓語文科去做。而將語音的難點自然地融匯到課文中去。在孩子有了許多感性認識後，可以做簡單的總結性解釋，但不要做抽象解釋。小學生的抽象概括能力弱，語言現象解釋不僅會給孩子造成畏難情緒，更會扼殺他們學習普通話的興趣。從蘇浙小學學生的習得過程來看，普通話語音中的難點會給學生在初學階段造成一些困難，但這些困難在進一步的練習下對小學生來說都不難克服。
- 尊重學生的心理和語言能力的發展規律。課文內容要符合學生的興趣，由淺入深，注意承上啟下。允許學生初期的沉默，對普通話和廣東話混雜現象不要苛責。語言教學理論和實踐發展到現在，語言習得研究者都承認語言習得是有規律的。普通話中哪一些是易教的，哪一些是難教的，哪一些是教了費力不討好的，我們都應該找出規律。將難教的語音難點逐步引進課文中，並有計劃地重覆（不是簡單的句型重覆，而是在不同的內容中，用不同的形式重覆）。普通話中的兒化、輕聲、變調都是一些特殊的語音現象，這些現象在具體的語意場中和具體的語音制約下出現，不是靠講解一兩條規則，或是靠講解一些例子就能學會的。況且，在大多數情況下這些特點掌握不好也不影響交際（見黃月圓 楊素英，1999）。這些屬於教了費力不討好的內容，過分強調反而會影響學生的學習興趣和引起不必要的困惑。蘇浙小學的經驗也說明，不對兒化、輕聲和變調進行專門的教學並不妨礙學生達到接近標準普通話的交流能力。

## 五. 普通小學小一學生普通話學習的情況

我們普通話實驗教學在東華三院洗次雲小學進行。這是一所普通學校，學生來自中下階層家庭。學生每週兩節普通話課<sup>4</sup>，每節35分鐘，普通話只

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<sup>4</sup> 實驗班的各學科每週課時: 占每週總課時比例				占每週總課時比例	
中文	9	22.5%	音樂	2	5%
英語	8	20%	體育	2	5%
數學	7	17.5%	普通話	2	5%
常識	5	12.5%	興趣	1	2.5%
美術	3	7.5%	週會	1	2.5%

佔學生每週全部課程的 5%。我們的實驗班是 1998 年 9 月 1 日入學的一年級 B 班，學生入學年齡為 6 歲。全班 33 個學生，家庭語言均為粵語。除一個學生來自深圳，有一點普通話基礎外，其餘 32 個學生的普通話能力均為零起點。

### 5.1 教材編寫

按照以上的設想，我們設計了洗次雲小學一年級 B 班的普通話實驗教學計劃。首先，我們為實驗班編寫了一套教材<sup>5</sup>。這套教材的特點是：

- 與語文課文緊密結合。我們一年級上冊的十二篇普通話課文，58% 與學生正在學的語文課文有關，25%（有關數字、文具的內容）與學生正在學的數學課內容有關。我們一年級下冊的十二篇普通話課文，83% 與學生正在學或學過的語文課文有關，8%（有關課程表的內容）與學生學過的數學課內容有關。
- 符合孩子興趣。我們的普通話課文與每課後的練習都與孩子熟悉的生活有關，如：《開學了》，《我的家》，《妹妹》，《弟弟》等。很多課文以孩子喜歡的動物為主人公，如課文：《小兔子乖乖》，《小雞》，《蜜蜂》，《拔蘿蔔》（白兔、小貓等），《清潔歌》（小鳥，小鴨，小狗等）等。其他擬人化的課文有：《太陽 月亮 星星》（太陽公公，月亮婆婆），《風雲雨》（風叔叔，雲阿姨）等。
- 上口易誦，易於多元化課堂活動。第一冊的課文以兒歌為主，第二冊仍以兒歌為主，但引入了敘述文的體裁，我們編入了三篇故事（如，《拔蘿蔔》，《過生日》）來引導孩子開始用自己的話來敘述。這些課文語言生動、活潑、上口，如：《畫畫》一課中的“哈哈，畫了一個小娃娃。”《清潔歌》一課中的“小鳥叫，吱吱，叫我刷牙齒。”《拔蘿蔔》一課中的“嘿，嘿，拔不動。”這些課文既可朗誦又可表演，很容易激發孩子在課堂上練習的積極性。
- 難點逐步引入課文，用形聲詞、重覆詞、雙聲、疊韻等生動的語言形式來提高難點的重覆率，使學生得到最大限度的練習。例如，《太陽 月亮 星星》一課中的“數來數去數不清”是重點練習難點翹舌音/sh/，

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<sup>5</sup> 目前香港普通話教學中有一種誤導，簡單地認為對話教學就是活動教學，就是培養語言交際能力。小學的普通話教材絕大部分課文採用對話形式。以日常生活對話為主的教材往往忽略或顧及不上語言的趣味性、活潑性和旋律性。這樣的教材影響孩子學習普通話的興趣，不可能有效教學，所以，我們為實驗班編寫了一套適合孩子特點的教材（參見黃月圓 楊素英 1999）。

把這句子讀一遍，就把/sh/練習了三次。《小樹葉》一課中的“小樹葉，會說話。嘩嘩嘩，嘩嘩嘩”是重點練習難點/h/，說粵語的人往往把/h/發成/k/。學生把這兩句兒歌讀一遍，需要發出八個/h/音（會 hui，話 hua，嘩 hua）。學生愛讀這些生動形象的詞，用這種方法可以幫助孩子在不知不覺中反覆練習難點。

## 5.2 課堂操作

實驗班的普通話教師是我們從國內聘請過來的一名具有豐富語文和普通話教學經驗的教師。這位教師同時也是我們研究項目的助理研究員。我們的普通話教師 1998 年 9 月 11 日正式在實驗班任教。我們教學方法的重點放在培養孩子對普通話學習的興趣。首先，我們尊重孩子的心理發展。語言習得初期有沉默階段，沉默階段的長短因人而異，與孩子的性格有關。對於害羞的孩子，不願意開口的孩子，我們不強迫他們說話。學習初期，盡量多做些集體朗讀等練習，避免個別練習。第二，不過份糾正學生的錯誤。錯誤是語言學習中的正常現象，糾正效果不大，過度糾正會影響孩子的學習興趣與自信心。第三，盡量用實物和身體動作語言來配合解釋和示範。第四，課堂以聽說為主，不做讀寫練習。下面是實驗班學生的普通話能力發展情況。

## 5.3 實驗結果

我們從兩方面收集了實驗班學生的普通話語料：學生每週自願背誦的普通話課文，以及每隔三個月的專題測試。學生的背誦和測試都錄了音，每次錄音都翻譯成語音形式，並輸入進電腦進行分析。下面我們來看看實驗班的學生從 1998 年 9 月至 1999 年 6 月這十個月中普通話能力的發展。這十個月除了假期，學校活動等，學生的普通話課真正只上了 57 節課（ $57 \times 35$  分鐘  $\approx 33$  小時）。這一組學生在這十個月中的普通話能力發展可以分為兩個階段：普通話接觸階段（1998, 9 — 1999, 1，約 5 個月），普通話入門階段（1999, 2 — 1999, 6，約 5 個月）。下面我們將詳細地討論這兩個階段的情況。

### 普通話接觸階段（第一至第五個月）

這組學生同樣經過一段時間的沉默階段。但這段時間很短，大部分孩子兩，三個星期後，雖說聽不懂普通話，但是他們很興奮，不僅願意在課堂上跟老師朗讀兒歌，唱普通話歌曲，也願意個別朗讀，唱歌，課堂氣氛開始活躍。兩個月後，除了少數孩子（4—5 人），絕大多數孩子在課堂上和課後爭先恐後朗讀、背誦兒歌，積極、踴躍地參與各種聽說的活動。他們尤其愛唱普通話歌，愛背節奏性強、形象直觀的兒歌，愛在背誦兒歌時做動作。由於我們的教材符合孩子的興趣，他們讀、背兒歌的積極性很高，

加上孩子的摹仿能力強，在第五個月，大部分學生能輕鬆、樂意地背、唱出十五首兒歌，語調流利。

在這一階段，學生一點也不能用普通話交流。他們能夠聽懂最基本的課堂用語，可以根據老師的指示做練習，但是，很少問問題或回答問題。對老師在課堂上問的簡單問題，往往用點頭或搖頭來回應。雖說孩子能在五個月內流利地背誦出不少普通話兒歌，但是他們基本上都是“小和尚唸經，有口無心”。他們把學過的兒歌或短語往往作為一個整體記憶下來，對整體的組成部份，也就是單個的詞，並沒有掌握，也不完全理解，更不會運用。例如，叫他們看著數字“十五”讀時，他們會從一數到十，讀出“十”，再從一數到五，讀出“五”。測試時讓他們讀詞條“書包”，他們會從頭背誦《小書包》這一課兒歌，背到“書包”這一詞時才停住，讀出“書包”一詞。有的學生甚至會把“書包”與同一兒歌中的語意相關的詞（例如：課本）混淆，手指著“書包”一詞，卻讀成“課本”。同樣的詞，放在課文或兒歌中讀音準確，一旦重新組合成一個新詞，就會讀錯。例如，“橡皮”和“皮球”分別在兩篇兒歌中出現。孩子對這兩篇兒歌都會背誦，這兩詞的讀音也正確。當我們組成一個新詞“皮球”時，所有的孩子都用粵語來讀。

一年級的孩子對長句子（如，帶介詞短語或有情態動詞的句子）理解有困難，讀起來就更困難。他們愛讀短句（簡單的主-動-賓句子）或雙音節/三音節的短語。我們在實驗過程中教過孩子這樣兩句話，“我愛跟同學們一起學習，一起遊戲。”和“我跟老師、同學說再見。”很多學生跟著老師讀都很困難，有些干脆就罷讀。而我們把句子改寫成短句，“我愛學習，我愛遊戲。”“我說，老師再見！同學再見！”學生馬上就來勁了，很快就掌握了。我們教他們的常用語：“我可以去洗手間嗎？”學生會簡化成，“我去洗手間嗎？”“洗手間嗎？”“洗手間。”孩子理解這句請求問句的意思，但是掌握不住句型。

### 普通話入門階段（第六至第十個月）

這個階段有兩個特點。第一個特點是孩子開始簡單地運用普通話。首先，孩子的聽力有明顯的提高，在第八個月，他們基本上完全能夠聽懂老師課堂上的問題，甚至較複雜的問題。他們聽的能力強於表達的能力。課堂上和老師的交流越來越多。除了朗誦兒歌外，孩子越來越踴躍地回答教師提出的簡單問題。回答問題時，常常把普通話和粵語混合在一起說。學過的詞用普通話，沒有學過的用粵語。例如，老師問：“除了星星數不清，還有什麼數不清？”學生回答：“樹葉數不清（全用普通話）。”“還有什麼是亮晶晶的？”學生回答：“冰（粵語）是亮晶晶的（普通話）。”有些孩子開始用一些學過的詞語來造句。例如，孩子看見太空館時，會用剛學的詞“圓”來描述“太空館是圓的”。部分孩子課後開始用普通話夾著粵語與普通話教師作簡單的交談。第二個特點是孩子學習普通話的速度明顯加快。基本上，35分鐘的一節課可以教會一首八至十句長的兒歌，更重要的是孩子學得很輕鬆，朗讀兒歌的語音、語調自然。能力強



的學生甚至馬上可以把新學的兒歌背誦出來，大部分孩子能在兩節課後背誦出新兒歌。孩子學習速度的加快與他們所識漢字的增加有關，教師不需解釋課文的內容，孩子一讀就懂。再加上語言上口、有趣，孩子愛讀，接受很快。第一階段中的整體記憶現象漸漸消失，從學生熟悉的普通話兒歌中抽出一些詞彙讓他們讀時，他們馬上可以讀出來，不再需要背誦整篇課文來確定詞。但是，有些學生會常常順口用粵語讀出這些詞，一經提醒，又會用普通話讀出。這一階段中學生的普通話夾雜著粵語的現象明顯，這說明識字的增加加快了學生普通話學習的速度，但是，同時也帶來了粵語的干擾。第二語言的書面文字干擾學生第二語言發音是學習第二語言的一種現象（Young-Scholten 1995），雖然普通話和粵語使用同一書面文字，但由於學生們在語文科學認字時用的是粵語發音，在普通話課上看書閱讀時，他們有時會不由自主地將語文科學過的字形與字音的聯繫搬過來。

現在，我們再來看看這組學生在這十個月中的普通話語音發展情況。對於普通話的四個聲調，學生讀單音節詞時，發聲準確，沒有困難，在學習的第一階段就基本上掌握了這些聲調。他們的困難在雙音節詞或三音節詞上，單音節能讀正確的聲調，放入雙音節詞或三音節詞往往讀錯。這一現象與沉浸式普通話教學組的學生在學習初級階段的情況相似（見第三節的討論）。普通組學生讀詞組時所犯的聲調錯誤主要是，混淆第 1 聲（陰平調）和第 4 聲（去聲），把第 1 聲發成第 4 聲，或第 4 聲發成第 1 聲。尤其是較有規律地把詞首的第 1 聲音節用力讀成第 4 聲，例如，“吃小蟲”的聲調組合 1+3+2 讀成 4+3+2。這種混淆在學習的第二階段仍然普遍。第 1 聲和第 4 聲的混淆在香港成人的普通話中也很普遍，我們認為這種混淆與粵語干擾有關。這裏有兩個原因。其一，普通話四個聲調中，第 1 聲（調值 55）和第 4 聲（調值 51）相對比第 2 聲（調值 35）和第 3 聲（調值 214）容易發，官話區說普通話的孩子在單詞階段（one-word stage），一歲半左右，就能正確掌握第 1 聲和第 4 聲發聲，並且不會混淆這兩個聲調；而第 2 聲和第 3 聲不僅要稍遲一點才能掌握，而且還會發生混淆（Li and Thompson 1977）。其二，粵語原有的陰平有調值 55 與調值 53 之分。粵語的陰平 55 調與普通話的第 1 聲相同，都是高平調。粵語的陰平 53 調與普通話的第 4 聲有相似之處，都是高降調，但是，粵語的陰平 53 調從 5 降到 3，而普通話的第 4 聲的調域最寬，從 5 降到 1。現代香港粵語基本上只有陰平 55 調，已經不用陰平 53 調，少數人雖保留 53 調，但是其陰平 55 和陰平 53 兩調互用，不作區分（Bauer 1997）。這些現象都可能影響了香港人對第 1 聲和第 4 聲的混淆。另一組普通話難點聲調組合是 3+3 組合，我們認為這一難點與第 3 聲的有標調性（markedness）有關。第 3 聲是普通話中的有標調，複雜、難發。兩個連續三聲會受到發音生理機制的限制，說普通話的人用變調的方式，把第一個 3 聲變為第 2 聲（3+3 → 2+3）來處理這一組難發的聲調。但是我們的學生在初學階段，仍然掌握不住正確的變調，他們常常認真地把第一個第 3 聲用全調發出，而第二個第 3 調可能受發音生理機制的作用而發成第 2 調或第 1 調，例如，把手指說成手直。

學生對普通話的單韻母掌握得較好，學習的第一階段就能正確發音。對複韻母的掌握不穩定，兩個主要問題是：有時把後鼻韻母發成前鼻韻母，有時省略介音。對於後鼻韻母，學生跟老師讀時能發得很好，但是自己讀時會往往把後鼻韻母 ing, eng, iang 簡化成 in, en, ian，例如，能，neng → nen，明，ming → min。把後鼻韻母發成前鼻韻母的現象是較為普遍的現象。官話區的一些方言點（如成都話）只有前鼻韻母 in 和 en，沒有後鼻韻母 ing, eng，這些區域的人學說標準普通話時也常常混淆這兩組鼻韻母。學生省略介音也有規律，學生常省略是複韻母 ia 和 iang 中的介音 i（例：下雨，xia yu → sa yu；好像，hao xiang → hao sang）和 uang 中的介音 u（例：床，chuang → cang）。

與聲調和韻母相比，聲母的難度大一點。容易的聲母如 b, p, d, t, k, g, f, w, m, l, r，學生在第一階段就已掌握，發音準確。他們的聲母問題在這幾個方面：

- (1) 較多地把/n/發成// 例：鳥 niao → liao  
把/h/發成/k/ 畫 hua → kua
- (2) 較多地把舌面音/j, x/發成舌齒音/z, s/  
例：雞 ji → zi，小 xiao → siao
- (3) 有時把翹舌音/zh, ch, sh/發成舌齒音/z, c, s/  
例：真 zhen → zen，齒 chi → ci，身 shen → sen  
或者相反，有時把舌齒音/z, c, s/發成翹舌音/zh, ch, sh/  
例：澡 zao → zhao，操 cao → chao，四 si → shi

## 六. 討論

比較兩組學生第一年中普通話發展的過程，兩組學生普通話發展的第一和第二階段有相同的特點。剛接觸普通話時，孩子都會經過一段自然的沉默階段，第二階段隨著孩子普通話聽力的迅速提高，孩子的普通話和粵語的混合使用尤其明顯。在這兩個階段中，孩子對普通話聲調，韻母，大部分聲母基本掌握。不同的是，沉浸式組的學生只需要四個月就可以完成這兩個階段，迅速進入較自由運用普通話階段和自由運用普通話階段。而普通組的學生需要至少十個月，也就是一學年，甚至更長一點的時間。沉浸式組學生在普通話環境中學習，他們掌握普通話的速度快於普通組的學生是完全可以預料的。這一調查結果反映出兩組學生雖然在不同的學習環境中學習，但是，他們普通話能力發展的基本規律相同，只是發展速度不同。在普通環境下一週學習兩節普通課的學生也能夠在十個月內基本掌握住普通話的語音，能輕鬆、流利地朗讀或背誦普通話課文，並能聽懂、理解教師普通話課上的解釋，尤其在第八個月裏學生的普通話學習速度明顯加快。如果按照這種速度學習下去，我們可以預見普通組學生在第二年就能進入較自由運用普通話階段。至於普通組學生需要多長時間才能夠進入自由運用普通話階段還有待我們下學年的實驗結果（我們的估計是普通組

的學生用兩至三年就可以達到自由運用普通話的能力)。但是,有一點已經很清楚,香港孩子完全有能力在較短的時間內輕鬆地學會普通話。前題是,我們能不能給孩子提供符合孩子語言發展的好教材和好的教學方法。

普通話作為一門語言課程雖然不如沉浸式教學有效,但是也有其優點。其一,我們可以從孩子的興趣出發來選編教材和組織有趣、生動的課堂活動,這樣做更能有效地提高孩子對普通話的興趣和積極性;其二,普通話課圍繞語言訓練進行,可以提高學生語言的準確性。普通話中的翹舌音 zh, ch, sh 屬於有標音(marked phonemes),是難發的音,向來是學習標準普通話的普遍難點。普通班的教材裏有兩課課文是重點練習翹舌音,我們編寫了帶有翹舌音的動物象聲詞的兒歌,課堂上通過各種活動讓孩子有興趣地練習。雖然孩子有時仍然把翹舌音 /zh, ch, sh/ 發成舌齒音 /z, c, s/, 或者把 /z, c, s/ 發成 /zh, ch, sh/, 但是,多數情況下可以正確辨別這兩組音,而且,發音也越來越有進步。沉浸式組的孩子雖然普通話流利、熟練,但是他們把翹舌音 (zh, ch, sh) 基本上都發成舌齒音 z, c, s。原因是,沉浸式語言教學不對學生開設語言課,不強調語言方面的訓練,所以沒有對這些難點的翹舌音進行專題、集中練習,因而沉浸式組的學生基本上都沒有掌握翹舌音。很多雙語教學研究都發現沉浸式語言教學出的學生有流利的語言交流能力,但語言準確性(accuracy)方面欠缺(Harley and Swain 1984; Widdowson 1990)。所以,普通話作為一門語言課程在語言準確性訓練方面有優勢。

從研究的結果,我們可以看出,香港小一學生普通話習得的過程既受語言習得普遍規律的作用,又受到第一語言的影響。兩組學生經歷的沉默階段是兒童學習第二語言過程中的一個常見的現象。大多數孩子在接觸一個新的語言時,往往在初始階段保持沉默,要過了一段時間才開口說話。Gibbons (1985) 發現孩子的沉默階段因人而異,個別孩子根本不沉默,而有的孩子的沉默階段可長達 56 天,多數孩子需要 15 天左右才開始說話。Gibbons 指出,孩子需要這麼一個階段來克服信心不足、害羞等困難。我們研究的結果與 Gibbons 的發現一致,孩子的沉默時間長短不一,短的一個星期,長的達兩個月。Krashen (1982) 認為沉默階段是孩子通過聆聽來理解新語言,從而建立新的語言能力的一個重要階段。因而,理解沉默階段對小學課堂教學有指導意義,教師對孩子的沉默應順其自然,不要強迫他們開口。

兩組孩子只需要四至五個月的時間,就輕鬆地完成了四個單聲調習得,辨別清楚,發聲準確。這一點與香港成年人學習普通話不同。成人學習普通話的上聲(調 3)和去聲(調 4)有困難。學了五個月普通話的成人在讀單音節詞時仍有 45% 的調 3 錯誤和 37% 的調 4 錯誤(黃月圓,謝春梅 1995),即使從普通話高級班畢業的成人仍有聲調錯誤。語言習得研究發現,聲調是兒童最先掌握的語音形式,說聲調語言的孩子一般在兩歲之前就能完全掌握其母語中的聲調。(見 Tuaycharoen 1977 有關泰語聲調的習得, Li and Thompson 1977 關於普通話聲調的習得, Tse 1978 關於粵語聲調的習得)但是,聲調卻是學習第二語言的成人最後掌握的語音形式,聲調對學習第二(聲調)語言的成人來說是非常困難的,即使第二語言說得很流利的

成人也會因為聲調掌握得不好而帶有口音 (Ioup and Tansomboon 1987)。從我們調查的結果來看，香港孩子在第一年裏就能操有流利的普通話語調與孩子學習普通話的年齡優勢有關。因而，香港普通話教學的重點應該放在小學低年級。

## 七. 結論

普通話對香港小學生來說不是一門難的課程。小學生有學習普通話的年齡優勢，對有趣的課堂語言活動有強烈的參與欲和積極性，小學生學習的語文課與普通話在語法和詞彙方面一致。如果我們能夠為學生提供符合他們語言和心理發展的好教材和好的教學方法，以及勝任的教師，學生完全有能力在較短的時間內學會普通話。從我們研究的兩組小一學生普通話能力發展來看，香港學生不需要學十一年普通話，甚至都不需要六年。學生普通話能力的發展很有規律性，如何結合這些規律發展有效的普通話教材和培訓普通話師資是目前的當務之急。

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# 中學中文科整合與創意性的發展

## — 展望廿一世紀的中學中文教學

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### 摘要

將於二〇〇二年實施的中學中文科新課程，重視聽說教學，強調自學能力，以單元教學編排讀文教學，而不再設置必讀課文。由此可見，新課程有很大程度的革新。本文建議新課程進一步作三點革新。首先，值得新課程注意的有語感的培養。由於語感與寫作能力有相當高的相關，因此語感培養應該整合於中文教學之中。其二，展望未來，中國文學、普通話與中文三科也應在時機成熟時作一整合。這三方面宜作有機的相輔相成，以避免現存的重複。其三，新課程可向創意性的課程借鏡，讓學習者主動參與教學，並對知識可以有新的詮釋。故此，教師須發展互動教材，學習者可以參與課程設計。

### (一) 引言

現行的中學中文科課程於1990年頒佈，1991年實施，施行將近十年，基本上採用讀文教學（舊稱範文教學）的路向，其中的問題不少，產生的流弊頗多，已不能適應資訊時代了。香港教育署課程發展處正在制訂新的中學中國語文課程。新課程將於二〇〇二年實施，其主要方向已在討論諮詢中逐漸成型。不過，由於新課程的細節尚未確定，故本文只能評述其主要方向，而未能及於細節。本文共論述以下五個方面：（1）發展中文科新課程的三大特色；（2）中文科新課程的四大革新；（3）新課程應該重視語感的培養；（4）中國語文科、中國文學科與普通話科的互相支援；（5）創意性路向的課程。

## （二）發展中文科新課程的三大特色

中學中文科新課程正在發展仍未完成。然而這次新課程的制訂過程中已顯露三大特色：一是新課程在蘊釀階段裡，就已按部就班蒐集有關意見。如邀請學者專家於課展處進行兩次內部研討，繼而出版專集：《創思薈萃－學者談中學中國語文課程》（香港教育署課程發展處中文組，1998），為新課程的產生營造有利條件。二是在課程發展之中，進行教學試驗，藉以了解單元教學是否可行與成效如何。在課程發展中進行試驗，是中文科課程發展前所未有的創舉。三是在新課程發展中舉辦研討會，歡迎前線教師就未曾定型的課程提出意見。這也是個創舉，過去的課程諮詢都是在課程初稿完成後，才向學校徵詢意見。

《創思薈萃》的前言中，言簡意賅地評述了中國語文科的一些問題。它說：“現行中學中國語文科課程提出了語文、文化、品德兼顧的教學目標和要求，而在實際教學上一般都以讀寫為主體。一直以來，說聽、文化、品德的教學都是隨機進行，單篇課文的精讀教學和精批細改的寫作練習用上了大部份課時。我們的教師默默耕耘，我們的學生卻往往未能通過語文學習充分掌握到自己民族的語文、文化和傳統美德，社會人士亦時有反映我們培養出來的下一代語文水平不足以應付生活所需，語文教學的效能已成為探討課程的焦點。”這段話贊揚了教師的辛勤勞苦；不過，它還指出學生未能充份掌握語文、文化和傳統美德。原因在目前中文科有如下的兩項主要弊病：（一）以讀文教學為主，輕視了聽說教學。（二）讀文教學耗時太多，而讀文教學無系統可言，種種教學項目只好隨機進行，以致教學欠全面不深入，一些教學項目（如比喻）卻重複施教。當然，目前讀文教學的弊端絕不止於兩項。筆者王，（1983）指出有關流弊共有八項之多。

## （三）中文科新課程的四大革新

課程發展處既然已指出舊課程有上述弊端，則新課程自然不會重蹈覆轍。其實，新課程除針對上述流弊之外，還有不少重大的新構思。總括而言，新課程革新之處有四：（一）重視聽說教學，這由於現代人聽說的機會遠多於讀寫。以前的中文教學，聽說教學並不重要。（二）強調自學能力的培養，故此包括學生資訊科技能力的訓練，如網上尋找資料進行自學等。這是新的教學項目，藉此對應資訊時代的來臨。（三）以單元教學編排讀文教學。這當然遠勝於舊課程，過去的課文篇目散列於課程中，不見課文的系統。（四）不再設必讀課文。取消必讀課文之後，將來的課文可分兩種（1）限選課文：它是推薦給教師的文章，教師可從中選取一些文章進行教學。（2）自選課文：它是由教師自行選擇的課文。

根據上述可知，新課程有頗大的革新。它不再以讀文教學為中心，而改以單元教學為主要教學單位。以前的中文科以讀文教學為中心，大部份的教學時間都耗在讀文教學上，效果不彰。單元教學列出具體可達致的目標，根據目標有系統地安排幾篇課文集中教學，能有效地達成目標，全面地編排重點，並能針對學生所需。單元教學不再有過去讀文教學的零碎與隨意性。張志公和張定遠（1981）指出，單元可以根據下列七個組織方式予以安排：（一）體裁相同或相近的幾篇課文組成單元。（二）課文加知識短文組成單元。（三）知識為主、文章為輔組成單元。（四）用比較方法組織單元。（五）語文知識為主組成單元。（六）按作家的作品組織單元。（七）按年代組織單元。

新課程的課文分為限選與自選兩種。這可以使各類型的學校有相當大的選擇教材的自由，因應其學生的程度與興趣，作出較佳的抉擇。由於新課程中有自選文章的教學，估計學生須閱讀的自選文章的數量是相當大的，故此新課程宜包括閱讀策略、閱讀方法與速讀等教學項目。由於舊課程只有一種讀文教學，新課程有兩種讀文教學；因此新課程應該扭轉一項傳統舊習，那就是課文教學耗時太多，一篇課文往往耗用五六個教節進行教學。其實，不長的課文應用兩三節教完。另外，現在一週只有兩節寫作教學課實在不足。中學生一般的毛病是寫作能力太低，閱讀能力則不致太弱。既然提高寫作能力是中文教學的難點，寫作教學就應成為中文科的重點。讀文教學大力支持寫作教學是確有必要的。應該根據寫作能力的分項來安排讀文教學的單元，令讀文教學也同時為寫作教學服務。

#### （四）新課程應該重視語感的培養

新課程既重視聽說能力，又強調讀寫能力。聽說讀寫當然是語言的四大能力，然而語言能力不止於聽說讀寫四種能力而已，還應包括語感（language consciousness）。於此向課程委員會進一言，新課程應當重視語感的培養。筆者（1996）指出，語感在語言發出之前能進行策劃，在語言發出之中能作出監控（monitor）與調整，又在語言發出之後作出更正。何況語感與寫作能力有相當高的相關（大約為0.7），即語感好的人多數寫作能力高。在寫作過程中，絕大多數的人都根據其語感進行修改，故此寫作能力不可不包括語感。許多人認為寫作能力有如黑箱，目前無從研究，難以提出有效提高寫作能力的方法。然而語感是可研究的，語感的操作定義（operational definition）是知道語言的不當，指出語言不當之處，與更正語言的不當之處的能力。語感既是可研究的，則不難有效地提高語感。語感既為重要的語言能力，則新課程不宜忽略語感的培養。



新課程既然取消必讀課文，教師可以自行選擇大量課文，這對學生語感的提高當大有裨益。因為大量的閱讀可以提高語感。大量閱讀之外，還有沒有提高語感的方法？譬如說，在作文課中，與學生共同修改作文練習的初稿，師生一起推敲文字一番，然後方作定稿。這種加強修改文章的訓練，是不是能提高語感，進而提高寫作能力？葉聖陶（1980）認為是可以的，他稱讚一些私塾的先生“為學生改文，反覆詳盡地講明為甚麼增刪。遇到這樣的先生，學生是有福的，修一年學，就得到一年應得的成績。”是不是多講修改的道理，就可以提高語感？這確實需要研究來驗證，語感的研究還很不足夠。

語感是個新的研究課題。筆者（1996）對語感曾作如下的論析：我們在說話或者寫文章的時候，語感常常告訴我們語音有些地方欠準確，語義表達有些地方不清楚，或者語法上有不恰當之處；我們很多時候就根據語感對我們的言語進行訂正。朱德熙（1980）舉例說，像“你有替我買一點白蘭地嗎？”這樣的句子，只根據我們“對口語的感性知識”，就能判斷這話不恰當。所謂“對口語的感性知識”基本上指的是語感。當然，語感也包括對書面語的感性知識。呂叔湘（1985）把語感分成三類，即語義感、語法感與語音感。說到語音感，呂先生還說：“有的人學話總是不像，就是因為語音不敏感。”語感在我們說話、寫文章的時候能有訂正的功能，在我們學習語言的時候也能起促進的作用。另外，在聽別人說話的時候，語感可以判別這些話有沒有特殊腔調；在看文章的時候，語感也能辨別這些文章有沒有特色。根據以上論述，語感與聽說讀寫的活動與能力是劃分不開的。語言運用能力除包括聽說讀寫的能力外，還應該包括語感（註一）<sup>1</sup>。這是為甚麼筆者建議新課程須重視語感的提高了。語感訓練怎樣整合於聽說讀寫的訓練中，是新課程值得思考的問題。

## （五）中國語文科、中國文學科與普通話科的互相支援

香港的中文科教學中，讀的與寫的是標準中文，說的與聽的是粵語。教師在說與聽的教學中，當然會說明在不同的社會語言環境中有不同的粵語變體。在課室內師生對談，或在正式場合中致辭（如演講等），應該用的是比較正式的粵語。可是，教師對比較正式的粵語的內涵可能不很確定。

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<sup>1</sup> 註一：語感大致與西方人說的語言直覺（language intuition）相當，其詳可見筆者另一文（王，1991）。此外，有人用語言意識（language awareness, de Villiers and de Villiers, 1972; Clark, 1978; Sinclair, 1981; Verhoeven, 1989）；也有人用 linguistic awareness 一詞（Bowey, 1988）與語言審析的意識（metalinguistic awareness, Pratt and Grieve, 1984; Tunmer et al, 1984; Gombert, 1992），這些都與語感相似。

譬如說在正式場合說“好激”是否恰當呢？課程發展處既能提供中文詞語表，能不能也提供粵語詞語表呢？

1974年，中國語文與中國文學分為兩科。前輩學者對此反對者甚多，如蘇文耀（1981）說：“從七四年中國語文文學分科以來，學生中文水準已然急遽下降。”又說：“教師在授課時，只在結構、語意、句法與修辭格等形式上的分析，排除聲情的投入，避免事義的講解，這種純工具性的處理，最易犯形式上支離破碎之病。”故此主張（1982）語文科與文學科合之則兩美，離之則兩傷。因為文學作品中的藝術性，“來自語文技巧的藝術，又來自事、景、情、理所蘊含的真善美。如果在講授語文教本而排斥後者；講授文學教本而排除前者，在教和學上強生分別，顯屬勞而無功。”張志公主張（1994）語文科應該教文學，他說：“好的文學作品能夠陶冶人的性情，培養美好的情操，提高人們的精神境界。”他又強調文學教育可以培養人的形象思維，而不只限於文學家才需要形象思維，政治家與科學家等也需要有形象思維。

中國語文科與中國文學科分家，是受了過去的英語教學的影響。這種分科有沒有必要呢？McNeil（1999：377）指出，近年英語教學的趨勢是以文學作為語言教學的基礎。Applebee 與 Parves（1992：736）也都強調文學是英語教學的重要成份。還有，Willinsky（1993：59）解釋為何文學必須成為語言課的必要成份時，反詰道：如果思考與言談的最美妙之處（按：指文學）不成為英語課的教學對象，那還可以是什麼呢？可見在英語教學中是難以把語言與文學分開的。中四中五的中國語文與中國文學兩科分立，並無必要。當然這兩科的分合，不在中國語文科新課程的發展範圍之內，不是中國語文科課程發展委員會負責的事。然而，中國語文科既然選取文學作品作為課文，正好說明語文與文學是甚難分家的。

中學中文科課程除了要與小學中文科課程銜接外，還必須注意和中小學普通話科的互相配合。普通話科負責的是說聽標準中文，而中文科負責的是讀寫標準中文。兩科怎樣互相緊密配合，避免重覆，發揮最大的教學效果，是一項重要的課題。到目前為止，現代標準漢語的聽說能力與讀寫能力分別由不同的科目來培養，耗用的課時比較多，效果則欠佳。展望將來，中文教師掌握了普通話之後，中文科就應該以普通話教授，如此中文科與普通話科便由分而合了。總之，中國語文科、普通話科與中國文學科應該整合為一個科目，使中文各方面的教學配合得更好。這樣可以避免三科有重疊之處，因而使教學更有效果。這是大的整合。大整合之外，還有小整合。小整合是上文所說的，把語感訓練整合於聽說讀寫的訓練中。

## （六）創意性路向的課程

新課程有很大的進步，但仍然可以向前邁進，以求日新又新。西方的課程理論對中文課程，是有“他山之石，可以攻錯”的效果的。McNeil（1999：15）把課程發展分為兩個路向，即傳統路向與創意性的路向。傳統路向的課程把教學內容從外貫輸給學習者。學習者依賴教師與教材所給予的外在刺激來學習。至於創意性的路向的課程，則讓學習者透過互動教學得到知識。在互動教學中，學習者以其原有知識與經驗重新詮釋學習刺激，從而修訂不適應新環境的觀念。在教師採用創意性的路向的課程時，教師須根據課堂上的變化來發展及調整課程。教師根據學生的理解架構不斷重新創造課室內的教學。

中文科新課程強調培養自學能力，避免使學生過份依賴教師與教材。這正符合此創意路向的精神。此外，自選課文使教材的空間大為擴展了。如果自選課文不限於只由教師選出，而也可由學生選擇，那就更能符合建構課程的精神，因而能使學生更有興趣學習。McNeil（1999：16）提及，傳統路向的課程要求學生接受正統的（official）知識，而創意路向的課程期望學生對知識的詮釋有所參與。創意路向持開放的態度，讓課程採納學生所選的材料。在創意路向中，課程並非權威教條，是可以改動的；一方面，教師可以根據課堂的情況而隨時調整課程，另一方面，學生可以參與課程的發展。以上的意見都值得我們注意與思考，其中一些見解可供我們採用，進而改善我們的中文課程。

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## **PART FOUR**

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

# New Professionalism and Old Practices – Voices of Language Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

In the face of deteriorating language standards in Hong Kong, the government has introduced various measures in recent years to improve the situation. Massive education reforms have recommended changes from the academic structure to language policy to curricula and assessment mechanisms. Increasing demands are made on teachers to develop a *new professionalism*. Amidst all these calls for change, how are front-line teachers really coping? With large amounts of money poured into improving students' language standard, is impact made on classroom practice? This paper gives expression to the voices of in-service language teachers enrolled in a teacher education programme in Hong Kong. Findings show that many teachers are having a hard time responding to the uncending government-initiated calls for change. In the reality of the English language classroom, old practices generally remain. Through questionnaires and focus group interviews, teachers articulate their views on what binds them to old practices and the barriers they face hindering their professional development. Their views are examined in relation to the teacher's subjective reality of belief systems and values, and the more objective context of educational change and reform. The author argues that unless the gap between new professionalism and old practices is bridged and the necessary support given to language teachers in Hong Kong, there seems little hope that big strides will be made to significantly improve students' English standard in school.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In view of perceived deteriorating language standards in Hong Kong in recent years, the government has introduced a number of measures to improve the situation. Resources have been allocated to the upgrading of language teachers,

the language curriculum has been revised, the Target Oriented Curriculum adopted and new information technology introduced. Schools have been streamlined to English-medium or Chinese-medium, the Native English Teachers' scheme has been launched and a language benchmarking system for teachers has been developed (Education Commission, 1992, 1995, 1997; HKSAR Government Policy Address, 1997 & 1998). In addition, a review of the whole education system leading to widespread changes to the academic structure, curriculum, assessment and continuing education has taken place (Education Commission, 1999a & 1999b).

The reforms cover the whole range of a teacher's work and demand a 'new professionalism' of teachers. For local language teachers who have to deal with the daily reality of teaching in school, how are they coping with all these changes? What difficulties do they face and how do they feel about the impact these measures have on classroom practice? This paper gives expression to the voices of language teachers enrolled in an in-service teacher education programme in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. In the context of rapid educational change, the teachers' views are examined in relation to the subjective reality of belief systems and values, and the more objective context of educational change and reform. The paper will first examine what 'new professionalism' entails, then discuss the teachers' voices, and finally draw implications on what this means for educational change.

## 2. NEW PROFESSIONALISM

As we start the twenty-first century, constant demands are made of teachers to develop new knowledge, new skills and new attitudes. There is no doubt that nowadays, a much more sophisticated body of knowledge and skill is required of teachers, who have to live up to increasingly demanding sets of expectations. The rapid succession of government initiatives further requires that teachers respond to changes with incredible speed and enthusiasm.

What are some of the elements of 'new professionalism'? Educators have pointed in particular to the following: a) integrating theory and practice, b) using information and communications technology, c) teaching no longer in complete isolation as in the past, and d) bringing about measurable changes in the classroom (Caldwell, 1999; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). The public expects the teacher to know all the latest developments in pedagogy and curriculum, methodology and counselling, and diagnostic and assessment instruments. Teachers are also expected to be familiar with topics previously not considered very important, ranging from contact with parents, collaboration in a team, cross-cultural communication, to commitment to a shared vision and to life-long learning (Caldwell, 1999; Fullan, 1991). The teacher must be well-suited to new circumstances at all times, with constant updating of professional competencies. Lieberman and McLaughlin (1999) point out that not only do teachers now need

knowledge *of* practice, but they also need knowledge *in* practice, and knowledge *for* practice, linking teaching, learning and research together to generate knowledge embedded in exemplary practice and reflection and for teachers' systematic and critical inquiry.

New government initiatives have now forced teachers to come out of their isolated classrooms and face up to the demanding challenges of their profession. Increasingly, "teacher professionalism is being driven by more and more government guidelines and central edicts on issues ranging from assessment to accountability to curriculum definition" (Goodson, 1999:4). This is very true in the Hong Kong context. For language teachers in particular, government and society demand from them specific competencies, as suggested in the following list by Walker, Mok and Tong (1999):

- a. Language proficiency and competence - a high level of all language skills is expected;
- b. Professional and academic competence -
  - that teachers be involved in classroom curriculum planning for different levels and abilities students;
  - that teachers contextualize skills in class involving student-centred, small-group, interactive task-based learning;
  - that teachers use metalanguage for describing language system and language learning strategies;
  - that teachers be involved in materials development including self-access materials;
- c. Reflective and strategic competence that focus on school-based and systemic curriculum development, with emphasis on collaborative research and creativity on learning and assessment tasks;
- d. Technological competence where constant use is made of information technology in presentation of new knowledge and for communication and materials development;
- e. Social and collaborative competence where teachers develop the ability to support individuals' active learning and enhance social and collaborative learning.

Apart from 'craft knowledge', Goodson (1999) further points out that teachers also need to re-examine their role and move towards more 'principled professionalism' that looks at the moral, ethical and social principles of education. To what extent are local teachers prepared professionally for all these, and what support or resources are provided for them are reflected in the following voices of language teachers.



### 3. VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Teachers are the essential implementers of change and central to the whole reform process. It is thus crucial that we have a better understanding of their beliefs and practices. For any form of innovation to be truly successful, it should have an impact in the classroom. As Fullan (1991) emphasizes, the central issue is not how many new policies have been approved or how many restructuring efforts are being undertaken, but rather what has actually changed in practice, if anything, as a result of concerted efforts. Indeed, teacher professionalism is often redefined in terms of improved workplace competencies and standards of pedagogical practice (Fullan, 1991, 1993).

Voices from in-service teachers help us explore the relationship between policy and practice, between teacher thinking and classroom behaviour, between the demands of new professionalism and the reality in the classroom. Examining voices from the field is based on the assumption that what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe, that teacher knowledge and thinking provide the underlying framework which guides the teacher's classroom actions (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). The source of teachers' beliefs is derived from a number of different ways. These include the teachers' own experience as language learners, their experience of what works best, established practice, preconceived theories of planning and teaching, personality factors, educationally-based or research-based principles and so on. Though beliefs may not necessarily drive behaviour (Barber & Phillips, 2000), the teacher's subjective knowledge and thinking do determine for the most part teachers' decision-making, action and culture of teaching in the classroom (Richards, Tung & Ng, 1992).

Beliefs and values involve a cognitive, affective and behavioural dimension (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). They provide us with a richer understanding and conceptualisation of the teaching and learning process and form the basis of renewal for classroom practices. Recent examination into teacher thinking and beliefs emphasize the importance of contextual factors for the way teachers think and act (Carlgren, Handal & Vaage, 1994). What teachers perceive, think and draw upon as a basis for their actions is closely related to the local context or situation in which the change takes place. Voices of local teachers allow us insight into how a person-oriented approach can integrate with a practice-oriented approach to interact with local structural, material, economic and organizational factors to give us better understanding of how effective change can be brought about in school (Nespor, 1987).

### 4. THE STUDY

A study was conducted with a group of 17 in-service language teachers, 15 females and 2 males, enrolled in a post-graduate course in a Hong Kong tertiary institution. All were university graduates. Most majored in language-related

subjects, had varying years of teaching experience, and taught in schools of different bandings (see Tables 1-3).

Table 1: Major subject studied at undergraduate level

Major subject	No. of teachers
Linguistics	5
English	5
Translation and Interpretation	5
Social Studies	1
Political Science	1

Table 2: Years of teaching experience

Years of experience	No. of teachers
1-3	6
4-6	9
7 years or over	2

Table 3: Banding of schools taught by teachers

Banding	No. of teachers
Band 1	4
Band 2	3
Band 3	1
Band 4	4
Band 5	5

A questionnaire was first completed. Based on the findings, focus group interviews were conducted and results analysed. The issues centred around the following areas: first, views towards the recent government-initiated changes and to what extent teachers felt they could implement them; second, any barriers or difficulties they have implementing changes; and third, what support they would like to see in their personal and professional development to cope with the changes. Though the sample size was not big, the teachers were nevertheless representative of the typical teacher found in average local schools.

## 5. RESULTS

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions which assumed different forms according to what was asked (see Appendix 1). Some items offered teachers a list of options to choose from or to rank, others required teachers to evaluate on a Likert-type scale, still others allowed teachers more open-ended responses.

*A. Teachers' views towards changes and the demand for 'new professionalism'*

Teachers were asked their general views on change and views towards specific changes. First they were asked about the pace of change resulting from various government initiatives. Only 12% thought that the pace was 'about right', while 88% thought the pace was 'too fast'. The latter group thought there were too many changes occurring together and in too quick succession. None thought that the pace was 'too slow' or that there were 'too few' changes.

When asked how the changes affected them, 65% felt that the changes affected them 'to a great extent'. They felt the changes were very demanding and exerted on them a lot of pressure. 18% said the changes affected them 'to an average extent', and 17% said the changes affected them 'to a little extent'. Regarding to what extent they felt they were able to cope with the changes, 29% of teachers responded that they had 'great difficulty' coping, 53% said they had 'some difficulty', while 18% said they could cope with little difficulty. None said that they had 'no difficulty'.

Teachers were asked whether they thought changes introduced by government were first, 'necessary' and second, 'desirable'. It was felt that teachers thought some changes were necessary even though they may not be desirable, or some changes may be desirable but not absolutely necessary. The percentage of responses to specific measures arranged in descending order were as follows:

		Necessary	Desirable
i.	Professional development for teachers	70%	82%
ii.	Changes to examination system	64%	76%
iii.	Use of information technology	58%	82%
iv.	Encouraging life-long learning	53%	76%
v.	Encouraging task-based student-centred learning	47%	64%
vi.	Recruitment of NET teachers	41%	70%
vii.	Streaming of schools to EMI and CMI	41%	41%
viii.	Implementation of TOC	23%	29%
ix.	Adoption of benchmarking system	17%	23%

It was interesting to note that some items such as the target oriented curriculum or the language benchmarking system had fairly low percentages, which meant that a large majority of the teachers did not feel that such measures were all that necessary or desirable.

Teachers were also asked to what extent they felt that they could implement the reforms proposed by government. 18% felt they could implement them 'to a large extent', 24% felt they could implement them 'to an average extent', while 58% felt that they could implement only 'to a limited extent' and had difficulty

bringing about change. When asked to what extent they felt they were free to bring about changes to classroom practice, 23% said they were free 'to a large extent', 29% said they were free 'to an average extent', while 48% said their freedom was only 'to a limited extent', given the present system and conditions of teaching in school. Reasons for this will be elaborated in later sections.

To what extent did teachers feel that the changes would affect their classroom practice? 20% felt that the changes would have a 'very significant' or 'significant' effect on classroom practice. 32% felt there would be a 'moderately significant' effect, while 48% said the significance was minimal. With regard to their beliefs in the degree of significance of specific measures on changes to their classroom practice, rated on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = 'not significant at all' and 5 = 'very significant', the mean values were as follows:

	Mean
i. Adoption of the language benchmarking scheme	1.5
ii. Collaborating with other teachers, e.g. team teaching, materials development, collaborative research etc.	1.9
iii. Improving life-long learning skills of students	2.0
iv. Recruitment of native English teachers	2.1
v. Implementation of the 1999 new English syllabus	2.2
vi. Adoption of the Target Oriented Curriculum	2.3
vii. Use of information technology in teaching	2.4
viii. Introducing fun and pleasure in language learning	2.5
ix. Change in methodology in English language teaching, e.g. use of more student-centred, small-group, interactive task-based learning & project work	3.7
x. Changing the examination culture	4.1

Teachers' perceptions were that the current government-initiated changes did not lead to very significant changes at the classroom level, the level that matters most. The daily reality of school life bound them to old practices and posed constraints. Colleagues out on school visits would readily agree that in many classrooms, entrenched old practices remain; little impact seems to have been made on the way language teachers conduct their daily business. Essentially, a transmission-oriented, teacher-centred approach that focuses on dry and formal teaching of grammar allowing for limited student language use and little active engagement of students in the learning process is evident in many classrooms. Task-based, student-centred, content-based, interactive and pleasurable learning is not widespread. Coniam (1998) reported that only 14.2% of local teachers were subject- and professionally-trained. It thus comes as no surprise that much English language teaching in local schools remains rather traditional and outdated, with many teachers lacking the confidence, ability, knowledge and skills to handle widespread sweeping government reforms.

### *B. Difficulties in implementing change*

Findings indicate that teachers felt bound by many constraints to bring about change in classroom practice. Teachers expressed what they thought the barriers were according to priority, and the ranking of barriers in descending order of priority was as follows:

	Ranking
i. Heavy workload	1
ii. Large class size	2
iii. An examination-oriented syllabus	3
iv. Low student motivation to learn English	4
v. Low English ability of students	5
vi. An overcrowded curriculum	6
vii. Lack of professional knowledge and understanding of changes, e.g. use of information technology, what the benchmarking scheme involved, what task-based teaching or project work meant	7
viii. Lack of leadership	8
ix. Lack of support	9
x. Lack of adequate resources	10

For a better understanding of the constraints, participants were requested to expand on their answers. The following information was obtained:

- i. Heavy workload - teachers stated that this was the result of
  - marking - composition or dictation was given almost every cycle and specifically stated in the curriculum by the school authorities. Home-work and regular worksheets had to be completed after almost every lesson. Often, all errors had to be corrected for several classes of over 40 students for the inspection of the panel chairperson, the principal, the Education Department or parents;
  - administrative duties - including collecting various types of fees, compiling all kinds of records, attending a variety of meetings, preparing reports, inputting data, setting test papers, arranging schedules and timetables, completing paperwork for the School Management Initiative or Parent-Teacher Association and so on;
  - handling students' problems - including counselling emotionally-disturbed students, dealing with students' discipline problems, helping weak students after school or meeting parents.

Teachers estimated that the above took up as much as 70% of their time, not to mention time spent as a leader, advisor, co-ordinator or participant of student and extra-curricular activities. Only 30% or less of their time was teaching-

related, that is, engaged in lesson preparation, materials development, academic/professional reading or reflecting on their teaching. The more experienced teachers spend even less time on teaching-related activities and more on administrative duties. Less than 5% of time was spent on professional development activities such as going to seminars or attending sharing sessions.

- ii. Large class size - teachers indicated that it was not just the actual numbers that they had to deal with, it was more the great range of ability and attitude of students. This had serious implications on discipline, on grouping arrangements, on marking load, and ultimately on how effective a language class can be. The issue of class size was more of a constraint for teachers in lower banding schools. If a few students were disruptive in class, the whole class of forty would be deprived of learning anything meaningful. If there were a handful of low ability students, good students suffered because attention had to be paid to the weak ones. Teachers who attempted more student-centred activities or project work, or who tried group or pair work, had difficulty monitoring many different groups, and disciplinary problems were common especially in low banding schools. Many students were unused to doing group work in English, so much so that when given the opportunity to interact with peers, they would become all excited and more undisciplined. The physical setting was also a big constraint, with little room to manoeuvre in the classroom, and seating arrangements not very conducive to effective communication and interaction in second language learning.
- iii. An examination-oriented syllabus - teachers indicated that an examination-oriented culture sometimes made it difficult for them to embrace new classroom practices. Students were only interested in drilling for results and felt that anything that did not directly contribute to higher examination scores was a waste of time. Little 'learning culture' was evident in which students learn for a love of knowledge. Thus teachers usually teach to the test, with students facing enormous pressure to succeed and becoming increasingly dependent on the teachers, on tests, and on textbooks (Hamp-Lyons, 1999).
- iv. Low student motivation to learn English - this was a major concern and teachers attributed this to the following factors:
  - students' perception of English as a difficult and boring subject - because of the way English was taught in many classrooms, students saw English as a subject in which complicated grammar rules had to be memorised, abundant worksheets completed and boring drills repeated. There was little fun and enjoyment learning a second language under a rigid system that was textbook-bound in closely-confined classroom settings that offered little interaction or opportunity to use the language;

- lack of an English environment for students - because students had little need to use English outside the classroom and little opportunity to interact with English speakers or texts, many students felt that English was not important to them;
  - traditional methodology used in English lessons - it is not uncommon to find formal, transmission-oriented, teacher-centred, grammar-translation approaches used in the English classroom with often untrained teachers who have previously been taught English that way. The use of rigid and culturally incompatible teaching materials that focussed on drilling and uncontextualised grammar rules allowed students little opportunity to express themselves. Teaching tended to be highly controlled and predictable, with a minimum of variety of input;
  - a "one size fits all" English curriculum - textbooks, worksheets, exercises, teaching materials, tests or examinations were often the same for all classes in the same form for standardisation purposes, irrespective of the linguistic ability, needs or interests of students in different classes or different types of schools;
  - streaming of schools and students - the fact that students were put in high, medium or low banding schools, or come from English-medium or Chinese-medium schools, exercised a subtle labelling effect on them. Some weak students would give up easily, as they felt that nothing they did would make the slightest difference to their situation. Teachers in turn expected little of them. Low achievers tended to be the ones suffering the most in a streamed environment, resulting in students having low motivation, low self-esteem and little confidence in using English.
- v. Low English ability of students - the English ability of some students was so low that they could not understand the instructions given by the teacher, could not take part in group discussions, or participate in student-centred activities or tasks that required the use of English. When placed in large classes with mixed ability students, teachers had difficulty implementing the kind of curriculum change demanded by recent educational reforms, which teachers felt were too idealistic.
- vi. An overcrowded curriculum - teachers were always in a hurry to 'finish the syllabus', which often meant finishing the textbook, irrespective of whether students really learnt from it. Adopting more innovative classroom practices would 'take up time'. Despite the fact that the Education Department said it was not necessary to cover the whole syllabus, teachers somehow felt pressured to do so. This was because not doing so would easily get them into trouble not just with students who had to sit for the same examinations for the whole form, but also with parents

or the principal. Such views were shared by both experienced and not-so-experienced teachers. The administrative mindset of having to process large groups of students through a textbook-bound curriculum prevented some teachers from trying out more innovative approaches which involve more organisation and time.

- vii. Lack of professional knowledge and understanding of changes - though government pushed for the use of information technology, or the application of task-based or project learning, or the adoption of a language benchmarking system, teachers had little idea of the content or what was involved in them. Teachers themselves have had little training and experience in these areas, and except for the occasional seminar run by the Education Department or professional groups, their knowledge, understanding and expertise in these areas were limited. Teachers did not feel comfortable or confident enough to handle the changes effectively. Opportunities to familiarise them with the content or provide them with adequate training were few and far between.
- viii. Lack of leadership - leadership plays a major role in influencing how teachers regard change. Some teachers may want to use more innovative approaches, but are hampered by the principal or panel head to be more progressive. The presence of good leaders will place participants in a very positive change environment. Commitment to change cannot be half-hearted, otherwise teachers will only pay lip service to government reforms and find implementation difficult.
- ix. Lack of support - some teachers were not getting a lot of support from their colleagues. Neither a congenial or co-operative atmosphere was evident in some schools which made implementation of change difficult. Also, while teachers worked hard at their job, there was constant criticism from parents, principals, students, employers and society at large about their work. The lack of support, recognition or appreciation for the work that teachers do was disheartening for them, hurt their morale and did not promote a positive atmosphere for change.
- x. Lack of adequate resources - teachers recognised that the textbook was inadequate but there were insufficient alternative resources, references or teaching aids readily available, and insufficient time to tailor materials to the different needs and interests of students.

Many teachers felt that they had limited freedom and autonomy to bring about change; that their hands were tied by largely systemic barriers, the culture of the school or the teaching and learning environment. Their constraints centred mainly around two areas: system or administrative constraints, and pedagogical or curricular constraints. (Similar terms were used by Jackson & Shck, 1999). The general feeling was that policy decisions made outside the classroom failed



to readily take their daily work situation into account when demanding teachers to change.

### *C. Teachers' views of the kind of support needed*

Teachers would like to see various forms of support in their daily work which would help eliminate some of the barriers to change. In terms of both administrative and pedagogical support, their ranking in descending order of priority was as follows:

#### *i. Administrative support*

- a. reduce workload in the form of a reduction in the amount of marking required, or a reduction in the number of teaching periods, or being free from administrative duties which take up teaching-related time;
- b. reduce class size;
- c. have the time to attend professional development programmes or to reflect on and prepare for their own teaching;
- d. have the channel to express their opinions and communicate with one another on various aspects of educational change, or have the opportunity to learn from others, such as arrange exchange programmes with teachers in other schools, districts or countries;
- e. employ more teachers, locals and/or native English teachers, to share their workload, assist their teaching and give them support;
- f. have much greater support, recognition and appreciation from school administrators, parents, students and employers for the work that they do.

#### *ii. Pedagogical/curricular support*

- a. provide refresher courses in methodology for teachers, familiarise them with the latest developments in language teaching ranging from using task-based activities, student-centred approaches to project work so that they can improve their teaching skills and make lessons more interesting, more practical and more meaningful for students;
- b. provide support in classroom management, especially in i) the handling of difficult, undisciplined and unmotivated students, ii) the handling of mixed ability students in large classes and catering to individual learning differences, iii) the handling of students with weak English ability, for example, new immigrants from China;
- c. provide training in how to use information technology in language teaching, and have the necessary technical and manpower support;
- d. develop an English speaking culture and promote the reading of English in school to make the work of an English teacher easier;
- e. provide ready-made, tailor-made teaching aids, materials, resources and references;

- f. create a better learning environment for students, e.g. help students solve problems, give them extra lessons if necessary, help them develop a sense of belonging to the school, try to be more encouraging rather than discouraging to students in English classes;
- g. provide a tailor-made English curriculum for low banding schools;
- h. provide assistance to teachers in handling their multi-faceted roles as teacher, coach, counsellor, advisor, link with parents etc.

Teachers clearly recognised the importance of professional development and the integration of theory and practice, whether in using information technology or in dealing with mixed ability students. Many were studying for additional professional qualifications that not only provided them with knowledge and training, but also gave them extra pay and better promotion prospects. Through studying at tertiary institutions, teachers had the opportunity of participating in a learning community, interacting with peers, reading academic materials and reflecting on their own teaching. However, because of their heavy workload during the day, most found that studying part-time for additional qualifications in the evening or on weekends highly demanding and stressful. Participants' main concern was still mostly centred on getting practical knowledge that dealt with content and methodology in language teaching, focussing on what Goodson (1999) would call 'practical professionalism', namely craft knowledge. To facilitate change, measures to enable more fundamental changes in beliefs to occur should be more closely examined.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### *A. Coping with change*

Teachers' voices indicate that recent government reforms and demands for new professionalism affect them a great deal, exert great pressure on them, but ignore their daily work circumstances. The teachers are the first to admit that professional development is necessary, and would like to improve their professional knowledge. While they agree that certain changes are desirable, they feel that there are many constraints that prevent change occurring at the classroom level. Some teachers are not comfortable with their own ability to cope with the changes, nor are they convinced of the necessity and effectiveness of specific measures, especially on classroom practice.

More practical assistance in the form of reducing workload, relieving administrative duties, reducing class size, improving classroom settings or helping them deal with students' disciplinary problems are some of their immediate concerns. More intensive training in integrating theory and practice, improving teaching methodology, use of information technology, and opportunities to learn from others are measures that would change their classroom practices much more than successive government-led calls for sweeping reforms in all areas. It is a sign of

failure on the part of the authorities not to fully take implementation issues and teachers' thinking and feelings into account when introducing change. The gap between policy and practice is not anything new. It is often caused by a top-down approach resulting in teachers' lack of ownership and involvement in the reforms. Teachers' voices here reflect the problems of putting well-intentioned ideas into practice.

Marris (1974) points out that demands for change are often met with resistance, that the first encounter with a change often elicits a defence of one's present practice, especially for untrained personnel. Such resistance should however be seen as an integral part of the change experience, and is something that should be played out as part and parcel of an 'acceptance-of-change' process (Sarason, 1982). The individual's need for meaning should pervade the introduction of a change. Fullan (1991:xi) points out that "teachers must find meaning concerning *what* should change as well as *how* to go about it", but this is precisely what is lacking in the present proposed reforms. The dilemma between 'control' and 'delivery' (Goodson, 1999) in the Hong Kong context is serious. The view of the teacher as the technical deliverer of guidelines and schemes devised elsewhere is common. While the objectives, management and control of change are defined by government, the delivery and sometimes professional standards are left to the occupational group, resulting in wide rifts between policy-makers and practitioners.

For teachers to develop as professionals, they need to be seen as more than just implementers or 'deliverers' of change. They need control and ownership, autonomy and empowerment to carry out reforms (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). They are participants in the entire change process, with their own subjective worlds. Often, curriculum innovations are directed at cognitive and academic goals rather than personal or social development goals that embrace teacher's thinking and beliefs (Bolin & Falk, 1987). Changes are often adopted piecemeal without much thought as to whether the sum total of what is expected can feasibly be implemented. Voices of teachers need to be more loudly heard in broader policy and decision-making matters. A better understanding is necessary of the organizational and institutional factors that influence the process of change, when government departments, universities, teacher unions, school systems, and schools interact in the process. As Fullan observes, "factors affecting change function in interaction and must be treated as such; solutions directed at any one factor in isolation will have minimal impact". (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992:58).

### ***B. Constraints and teacher autonomy***

Many of the constraints on classroom practice are not new (Board of Education, 1997; Lam, Yuen & Mak, 1998; Jackson & Shek, 1999), but it is the extent to which language learning is affected that is a big concern. Government may want higher English standards for students, but teachers who feel they have limited autonomy to bring about change and are bound by limited professional knowl-

edge to act, are not likely to effect successful reforms. Teachers who are over-worked, burnt out and have little job satisfaction do not have the time, energy or motivation to prepare teaching materials or to improve their teaching. Teachers who have to deal with over forty mostly undisciplined students in crowded classrooms are not going to dare try out more student-centred activities or project work for fear things will get out of control. Teachers who find accessing computers in schools troublesome are not going to use information technology in their teaching. Only with professional training and appropriate support that provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to overcome barriers will teachers have the confidence, ability and will to change what happens in classrooms.

### *C. Teacher support*

Lam, Yuon and Mak (1998) note that teachers do not have much support when they face difficulties, especially in dealing with difficult students with behavioural problems. Often, such students are the ones who are also weak in English. Findings indicate that teachers in low banding schools are the ones that need extra resources and considerably more help, and a greater flexibility to manage teaching and learning in their own way instead of following rigid curricula and assessment. Unfortunately, the lower banding schools tend to have the more inexperienced teachers. Measures such as having smaller classes, being given the time to develop relevant and interesting materials, having bigger classrooms to move around for student interaction, having suitable teaching materials, or having more opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills, are all the more important for teachers in these schools. In Hong Kong, the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is wide in language education. Decision makers, from policy planners, curriculum developers, textbook writers to classroom teachers, tend to come from relatively better schools and may not have a full understanding of the classroom or student conditions of the low banding schools.

## **7. RETURN TO FUNDAMENTALS**

Based on the voices of these teachers, a return to fundamentals is called for. Put simply, teachers would like to have enough time and resources to do their job properly, be provided with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle demands in their profession, have smaller classes if possible, fewer non-teaching duties, more diversified teaching materials, less rigid curricula and examinations, and a change in the culture of teaching and schools. Opportunities for improvement should be made available to teachers, the system should allow them greater flexibility and autonomy, and the authorities should incorporate their views.

For change to have any real effect, teachers must be seen as part of the improvement process (Brousseau, Book & Byers, 1988). Changes outside the classroom are necessary to affect changes inside it, with appropriate support

provided in individual contexts. Hoyle and Megarry (1980) point out that teachers do not just need professional training, they also need professional knowledge and skills, professional guidance, professional autonomy and personal job satisfaction. If one is to think in terms of strategies for teacher development, three kinds of reform strategies can be considered: standards-based strategies, school-based strategies, and development-based strategies (Liebenman & McLaughlin, 1999). If change can occur at all the three levels, then chances of success for reform are greater.

For change to have a more lasting impact, efforts of single individuals in a culture not generally receptive to change will not go far. To facilitate a climate for reform, new knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be introduced on a mass scale and a coherent, cohesive and united understanding and common vision be built. That means greater identification with the thinking and beliefs of the average teacher. If many teachers in the same school, or the same district, or the same school sponsoring organisation can share a common vision and together strive for a common goal under a good leader, then implementation of change and chances for success will be much greater.

In Hong Kong, implementation of change is often centred on things, for example textbooks, computers, teaching aids, the syllabus and so on, sometimes forgetting that teachers are *people* with their own subjective worlds. Change is not one-sided but is a process during which the teacher adapts to his or her subjective reality. Thus implementation of new professional practices should be seen as a process of the shared ownership of the changes (Fullan, 1993). Changes in the culture of teaching and the culture of schools also imply that improvement is more than just what teachers think and do. The nature of educational change should be examined according to the specific values, goals, events and consequences that obtain in concrete situations. Educational innovations should not be viewed, as is often the case in Hong Kong, as ends in themselves.

For teachers to do a good job, Fullan (1982) points out that three basic dimensions need to be re-examined: resources, methodologies, and beliefs. Beliefs in particular, develop over long periods of time. The following framework may serve as a useful reminder for what should be considered in the experience of educational change and for changes in beliefs to occur (adapted from Thiessen, 1990):

- a) Personal and practical engagement - involving reflections, meanings, action.  
To what extent are the participants involved in these?
- b) Talk - involving dialogue, collegiality, debate.  
To what extent are talk, dialogue and debate occurring in staff rooms, in schools, in public? What opportunities, avenues and channels have been created for talk and debate to take place? Has collegiality and a collaborative culture been promoted among colleagues?

- c) Support – in the form of time, resources, people.

What support has been given to teachers to receive training, attend conferences, join professional development programmes? Has money and time been allocated to these? Is there co-ordination and organisation in setting up, for example, professional development days, or school-based programmes?

- d) Understanding – based on information, interpretation, evaluation.

Have resources and literature been disseminated, or materials in the form of articles, reports, policies, been made available to people? Can examples, demonstrations and workshops be conducted to see how to implement a new programme, practice, or procedure? Have teachers been approached with suggestions to join, co-ordinate, or monitor particular projects, committees, or courses?

- e) Voice and choice – involving empowerment, collaboration, deliberation.

Are voices of stakeholders heard, and are they empowered to bring about their own change? How can the gap between 'control' and 'delivery' be bridged?

School and classroom-based teacher development with an orientation that situates the professional growth of teachers within the daily realities of classroom life will likely bring greater improvement to teaching and learning than the unending sweeping reforms now proposed by government. The focus should centre on improving the quality of instruction in the language classroom, with power and support given to those who have the most influence on and stake in what happens (Chaudron, 1988). Genuine efforts that transfer the balance of power to teachers to help them either work alone, or with other teachers or with their students, need to be encouraged to improve classroom practice. Constructive and critical actions which engage teachers in reflective, interactive and transformative experiences would be helpful in making changes to classroom practice and meeting the demands of new professionalism (Woods, 1996).

## 8. CONCLUSION

There is much more to educational reform than most people realise. Government-led calls for change that deal with massive structural changes to the system but do not target improvements at teacher professionalism and classroom practice are not likely to be very effective. Reforms that focus on reshaping the governance and structure of schools as a means of increasing their effectiveness, but do not address how learning capacities of students and teachers may be enhanced will not result in much improvement in the quality of classroom instruction. "While the theory of successful educational change do make sense, and do point to clear guidelines for action, it is always the case that particular actions in particular situations require integrating the more general knowledge of change with detailed knowledge of the politics, personalities, and history peculiar to the

setting in question" (Fullan, 1991:345). The focus should thus be, in Fullan's words, on 'planned change' to meet the demands of new professionalism. Individuals and groups at all levels of the system will only be able to accomplish major improvements if the content as well as the process of educational change are both given attention (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1998). Only then can teachers move from passivity to action, and from narrowness to comprehensiveness of solutions.

People resist change very often because they do not know how to cope with it. There are many conscientious and responsible teachers in our midst interested in making a difference. They need to be provided with multifaceted insights into the knowledge, the will, and the skill necessary to engage in changes profitably, while minimizing the intrusion of unwanted change. It is necessary to promote the creation of institutional environments supportive of the kinds of teacher reflection and action educators want to encourage. In the complex societies that we live in, demands for change will always be with us. Teachers need to be provided with the strategies and support to deal with change, carve out a niche of renewal and build on it. Unless the gap between new professionalism and old practices is bridged for local language teachers, there seems little hope that big strides will be made that would significantly improve the English standard in Hong Kong schools.

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**Appendix 1: Questionnaire**

For questions 1 to 9, under each question, please circle the number that best represents your view.

**1. The pace of the current educational change is**

1	2	3	4	5
Too slow		about right		too fast

**2. The current changes proposed by government are**

1	2	3	4	5
too few in number		about right		too many in number

**3. The proposed changes affect me**

1	2	3	4	5
not to any extent		to an average extent		to a great extent

**4. The proposed changes are**

1	2	3	4	5
not demanding		moderately demanding		very demanding

**5. I can cope with the changes with**

1	2	3	4	5
No difficulty		some difficulty		great difficulty

**6. I can implement the reforms proposed by government**

1	2	3	4	5
to a limited extent		to an average extent		to a large extent

**7. I am free to bring about changes to classroom practice**

1	2	3	4	5
to a limited extent		to an average extent		to a large extent

**8. The effect the proposed government changes have on my classroom practice is**

1	2	3	4	5
not significant		moderately significant		very significant

**9. In implementing change in my work environment, my colleagues are**

1	2	3	4	5
not supportive		moderately supportive		highly supportive

**10. My knowledge and understanding of the proposed government reforms is**

1	2	3	4	5
very limited		average		very good

**11. Opportunities for professional development in my present situation are**

1	2	3	4	5
very limited		average		very good

**12. Do you think the following proposed government changes are**

i) necessary, ii) desirable ?

Please tick as appropriate.

	necessary	desirable
a. encouraging task-based student-centred learning	—	—
b. recruitment of native English teachers	—	—
c. use of information technology	—	—
d. implementation of the Target Oriented Curriculum	—	—

- e. streaming of schools to English-medium and Chinese-medium \_\_\_\_\_
- f. changes to examination system \_\_\_\_\_
- g. adoption of language benchmarking system \_\_\_\_\_
- h. professional development for teachers \_\_\_\_\_
- i. encouraging life-long learning \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you believe the following government proposals will significantly change your classroom practice? Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 stands for 'not significant at all' and 5 stands for 'very significant'.

- a. implementation of the 1999 new English syllabus \_\_\_\_\_
- b. change in methodology in English language teaching, e.g. use of more student-centred, small-group, interactive task-based learning and project work \_\_\_\_\_
- c. use of information technology in teaching \_\_\_\_\_
- d. recruitment of native English teachers \_\_\_\_\_
- e. adoption of the Target Oriented Curriculum \_\_\_\_\_
- f. adoption of the language benchmarking system \_\_\_\_\_
- g. changing the examination culture \_\_\_\_\_
- h. collaborating with other teachers, e.g. team teaching, materials development, collaborative research etc. \_\_\_\_\_
- i. introducing fun and pleasure in language learning \_\_\_\_\_
- j. improving life-long learning skills of students \_\_\_\_\_

14. (i). Do you have any difficulty implementing the recent government changes?

Please circle.

Yes / No

(ii) If 'yes', rank the following difficulties in implementing change, where '1' stands for the most difficult, '2' stands for the next most difficult, and so on.

- a. low student motivation to learn English \_\_\_\_\_
- b. large class size \_\_\_\_\_
- c. heavy workload \_\_\_\_\_
- d. an examination-oriented syllabus \_\_\_\_\_
- e. low English ability of students \_\_\_\_\_
- f. overcrowded curriculum \_\_\_\_\_
- g. lack of adequate resources \_\_\_\_\_
- h. lack of leadership in school \_\_\_\_\_

- i. lack of professional knowledge and understanding  
of new changes
- j. lack of support from colleagues
- k. Others (please describe)

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**15. I would like to see the following support in my work (list the top five items ranked in order of priority).**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

List in the space below other items that you would like to see

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# Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning: A Qualitative Analysis on the Use of ESLPs by the New Arrival Children\*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a follow-up study on the development of learner autonomy by New Arrival Children (NAC) via their adopting the English Self-Learning Packages (ESLPs). The production of the ESLPs was funded by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to help the NAC catch up with local English instruction. Previous studies on developing learner autonomy have largely focused on adult learners at the tertiary level while those that involve young elementary learners are few and far between. The results of the present study suggest that young second language learners could also be instilled with the responsibility for organizing their own learning process. Our study shows that in the process of developing learner autonomy in young learners, teacher guidance in establishing the learning routines as well as nurturing decision making capability is extremely crucial in this joint venture.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, interest in learner autonomy has sparked a series of debates

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\* Some parts of the study were reported at two conferences, Children's Agenda for Hong Kong in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (1999 at University of Hong Kong) and the '99 International Language in Education Conference (1999 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong). We thank the audiences there for their comments and useful feedback. Special thanks to two anonymous reviewers, whose critique led to significant revision of parts of this article.

learner autonomy at various educational settings seem to culminate into a general acceptance that adult learners are more receptive to developing this mode of learning, in particular, to the development of self-learning strategies, and there has been an increasing number of publications dealing with such a mode of learning (See Gardner and Miller 1999 and the literature cited there). Yet, attempts to investigate how young second language learners can respond to this new pedagogical orientation are few and far between. The current study aims to address this issue, by examining, in particular, how the new arrival children in Hong Kong responded to a mode of learning which could be perceived as alien to their culture of language education they had received before arriving in Hong Kong. It is argued that developing learner autonomy is a joint venture engineered between the teacher and the students.

Over the years, the notion of learner autonomy in language learning has acquired a number of interpretations and embraced a wide range of pedagogical and methodological ideas which may be summarized as 'self-directed learning', 'self-access learning', 'self-instruction', 'individualized learning', 'independent learning' or 'autonomous learning' (Geddes and Stutridge 1987; Gardner and Miller 1999). Two crucial elements lying at the core of this concept are 'autonomy' and 'self-direction'. According to Jones (1998), they can be situated and understood as being a means to an end. 'Autonomy' denotes the awareness and ability to take charge of one's learning, and 'self-direction' implies a set of procedures and strategies adopted by the learner to achieve the state of 'autonomous' learning. As Holec (1985) argues, and subsequently echoed by Little (1991), learner autonomy is not another teaching method; rather, it should be perceived as a set of psychological reactions to a learning task that stresses the importance of learner participation. The ability to manage one's own learning is not innate and the learner has to learn how to learn, particularly in the areas of critical reflection, decision making and independent action, as well as a capability for detachment. As mentioned earlier, self-directed learning schemes were first developed precisely with adult learners as target (see Benson and Voller 1997, Broady and Kenning 1996 for an overview). This has eventually led to the claims that (a) self-directed learning is unsuitable for initial language training, and (b) it would not work with children.

But there have been queries whether such claims are too conservative. In fact, Gremmo and Riley (1995) called into questions these apparent assumptions, and recently, reports on developing learner autonomy among young elementary learners in some conventional educational settings have been cited. Dickinson (1987) outlines three models of developing autonomous learning. The first two models -- the Circle Model and the Flower Model -- were carried out in Denmark with learners whose age range between 11 and 17. In both circumstances, the presence of the teacher, hence some form of control within the system, is inevitable. But the teacher's effort is re-directed towards facilitating the learner's conceptualization of autonomy in language learning. The third model as reported in Cross

(1980) is self-study by nature. This system operates in an English comprehensive school where 25% of the time of French instruction is allocated to 'self-study' with pre-designed materials. Dam (1995), on the basis of her own diary studies, documented changes that occur from a teacher-directed curriculum to teacher/learner centred curriculum. She comments quite positively that developing learner autonomy in the school context stimulates personal involvement and motivation not only for students, but also for teachers. However, she admits that it is no easy task to encourage teachers to reassess their role in the classroom. Instilling a sense of responsibility for learning among the students, facilitating their decision making process, and most important of all, accepting responsibilities for these decisions are both frustrating and rewarding. Locally, at least two reports are available which used the ordinary classroom as basis for developing learner autonomy under the general concept of 'self-access' learning. Forrester (1994) describes how self-access learning was built into a bridging programme for the students who studied in the Chinese medium schools preparing for English medium tertiary education. Tibbetts (1994) outlines a series of pedagogical and practical considerations for producing materials for self-access learning in a secondary school in Hong Kong. In sum, in an ordinary language classroom, one can readily perceive that any teacher with an intention to develop autonomous learning among the students is bound to assume two roles. He/she has to cope with practical constraints such as implementing the school syllabus or preparing the students for the final examination and has to strive to implement some form of autonomous learning mechanisms into the system. Certainly, the teacher is required to reassess the function of classroom activities, material development, and most important of all, his/her role as a teacher *qua* counselor, particularly in negotiating learning outcomes with the students.

Quantitative studies comparing the effect of autonomous and traditional learning are not many. Dam and Legenhausen (1996) report on a comparative study involving traditional and autonomous learners in their acquisition of vocabulary. The results reveal that the autonomous group compares favourably with results from the traditional group. In particular, the number of words that emerge in the first few months exceeds the figure set in the official syllabus guidelines for the traditional group.

Taken as a whole, the studies argue that training young learner to achieve some form of autonomy is a viable pedagogical procedure in the classroom situation, however painful the process appears to be.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study was based on a project funded by the Education Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in their attempt to help the new arrival children (henceforth NAC) cope more effectively with local English lan-



guage instruction.<sup>1</sup> The NAC were new immigrant children arriving from various parts of the Mainland of China and, at the time of the study, had entered the primary school system of the local territory for less than one year. With the help of the Education Department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the NAC were provided with additional courses on English during which the packages were used. The following introduces some relevant aspects of the project.

### 2.1. Pedagogical Designs of the ESLPs

The project involves the development of the English Self-learning Packages (henceforth ESLPs). The design of the ESLPs was couched in the communicative language teaching paradigm, identifying a set of situations pertinent to the life experiences of the NAC who would be trained to observe via the interactive video mode how the respective communicative functions are realized linguistically under those circumstances.<sup>2</sup> The specific objectives of the ESLPs are:

- to expose the NAC to samples of language use in the classroom or in their daily encounters with people under a variety of speech events;
- to improve primarily the NAC's listening and speaking abilities, i.e. fluency training;
- to promote inductively the NAC's awareness of some basic grammatical facts about English, especially the pragmatic relationship between word order and language functions, and
- to acquire a set of vocabulary for expressive purposes.

### 2.2. Components of the ESLPs

The ESLPs contained a set of 30 programmes of interactive videos, supplemented with audio materials and worksheets, all divided into six levels according to content, functional and linguistic complexity. The worksheets were designed for (a) Conversation Practice, (b) Extended Practice, and (c) Skills-based Entry and Regular Assessments. To encourage the NAC to chart their progress in learning, there were records of performance after each practice (i.e. The Performance Record) and assessment exercise (Assessment Record). There was also a Learner's Profile to be filled by the teacher in initial consultation with the NAC, principally to help the teacher understand more the background of the NAC. To assist the users (teacher and NAC) in the effective use of the ESLPs, information booklets were included in the packages. The Teacher's Manual contained information about the components of the ESLPs and how each module could be utilized ef-

<sup>1</sup> For more details about the NAC, refer to Pemberton, et al (1996).

<sup>2</sup> As pointed out in Gardner (1994), Gardner and Garcia (1996), and Gardner and Miller (1999), interactive videos serve as self-access support in language learning. They provide learners with ample opportunities to experience their peers using language strategies in real life situations and create enjoyable atmosphere which helps encourage learners to take part in the learning process.

fectively by the learner. Information about the perceived role of the teacher was also included to enable the teacher to know how to help the NAC establish the learning routines as well as strategies. The Learner's Guide graphically displayed information about the ESLPs and its use, as well as the role of teacher and learner in the learning process. Except for the key to the Conversation Practice which was provided instantly on the screen, there was a key to all the worksheets and assessment exercises of the ESLPs.

### **2.3. Learner Autonomy as a Principle of Design**

At the practical level, the ESLPs could be perceived as some ancillary learning materials for the NAC to catch up with the mainstream English language instruction in Hong Kong especially from primary one to primary three. Having little or no previous English learning experience, most NAC initially found it difficult to cope with the radical switch in the language of instruction and to adjust themselves to an array of unfamiliar teaching styles and content. Gaps of some NAC might be bigger if their age required them to study at the senior primary levels where the demand for English was bigger, according to Pemberton, et al. (1996). Seen in this light, the design took into consideration learners from different levels of elementary proficiency or learners who wished to achieve a level of elementary proficiency that would enable them to cope with the local English syllabus. The ultimate objective of the design was that the learner could liberate himself from the highly predetermined mode of learning to one that involved the learner to take charge of the learning process actively.

The decision to 'programme' the NAC to adopt the learning routines at the initial stage was the outcome of the designers' analysis of the cultural and educational backgrounds of the NAC. Having submitted themselves to traditional classroom culture for some time, the NAC's perception of education was one that required their absolute compliance with a system of learning heavily guided by the teacher who assumed authority of classroom management and linguistic information. Therefore, a drastic switch from this traditional teacher-directed mode of learning to learner autonomy did not appear to be a realistic answer to the NAC's language problems. This issue was not new. Jones (1995) argues that the concept of 'autonomy' is "laden with cultural values, particularly those of the west." Whether one agrees with his argument or not, at least in the case of the ESLPs, the traditional Chinese cultural and educational backgrounds of the NAC were crucial considerations.

### **2.4. Nurturing Decision-making Capability: Process and Procedures**

To develop autonomous learning, procedures were built into the learning system to encourage the NAC to make independent decisions on the options available to them. In general, the ESLPs were designed in such a way that would allow the NAC to decide independently on (a) entry level, (b) mode of learning, and (c) method of assessment. These three aspects are characterized as follows:

(a) *Entry Level*

- The NAC could enter the programme at a level judged by themselves or by the language counselor to be the most adequate and manageable for their own purpose.
- The NAC could treat the ESLPs as resource materials and simply identify the most relevant topics or practice in the curriculum that best suit their learning purpose.

(b) *Mode of Learning*

- The NAC could choose to work in groups, pairs or independently.
- The NAC could choose from a range of pre-designed learning activities those that they prefer to develop at any point of the learning process. These activities involve the development of listening and speaking skills primarily, but there are activities for writing and listening.
- The NAC could modify the mode of practice, from speaking aloud to silent responses, from speaking to writing, from silent reading from captions to reading aloud, etc.
- The NAC could review the materials as frequently as they wish.
- The NAC were allowed to reduce the demand for an instantaneous response by putting the progression of the video on hold while searching for an appropriate reply.

(c) *Method of Assessment*

- The NAC could choose not to assess themselves when not feeling ready.
- The NAC could choose to assess any or all of the skills areas.

## 2.5. Role of Teacher

While in the literature, the teacher has been perceived as having various roles throughout the enterprise, right from the setting up of learning objectives to evaluating learning outcomes. Such roles range from helper, facilitator, strategy instructor, to material developer, assessor, evaluator, manager, administrator, organizer, and counselor (Rubin 1987, Oxford 1990, Wenden 1991, Yang 1998, Gardner and Miller 1999, among others). Given the pedagogical orientation of the ESLPs, the role of the teacher was bound to change. He/she would no longer be imparting language information to the learners; rather, he/she would be there to help the NAC learn how to acquire English through the use of the packages while relinquishing some of his/her control over the learners. The teacher would be required (i) to nurture in the NAC a sense of independence and responsibility for organizing the learning process, and (ii) to engage the learner in the process of negotiation by encouraging the learner to go through the various cognitive procedures of decision making such as identifying learning objectives and outcomes, and handling learning difficulty, etc. Guiding the NAC to make independent decisions on their learning procedures requires the teacher to have an understanding of following aspects in learner autonomy: (i) the general concepts and issues surrounding learner autonomy, (ii) how to approach the intrinsic beliefs and attitudes

towards second language learning, learning styles and strategies of the NAC, and (iii) how to transform them into more positive and efficient means towards the learning of a second language. As Yang (1998) comments, the role of the teacher is no longer one of imparting linguistic information to the learner, but one that promotes learner autonomy with strategy instruction being a crucial item on the teaching agenda. Gardner and Miller (1999) explicitly point out that the role of teacher in establishing self access in learning is to provide learners with learning opportunities.

### 3. THE PRESENT STUDY

The ESLPs were distributed to the schools and centres in February 1997, followed by a seminar series introducing the packages to the teachers and school/centre administrators. The follow-up study commenced in October of the same year, allowing roughly 6-8 months for the 'users' to get familiar with the packages.

The present study was based primarily on questionnaire surveys (a Pilot Study in Phase one and investigations in Phase Two and Phase Three), supplemented with post-hoc interviews.<sup>3</sup> The initial objectives of the study were to investigate the extent of use of the ESLPs, and the factors contributing to or affecting the use of the ESLPs. The factors are mainly classified into two sets of operational variables on the basis of which the study is organized, the learner external variables and the learner internal variables.<sup>4</sup>

During the Pilot Study in Phase One, three different questionnaires were designed for the NAC, teacher/tutor and the school/centre administrator. Each of the questionnaires contained items set up to investigate the above-mentioned operational variables. Two main components in the questionnaires are (a) the general background of the respondent (i.e. teacher/tutor or the NAC) or that of the learning setting (if the questionnaire was directed to the administrator), and (b) the use of ESLPs either in the learning setting or by the respondent. Evaluative questions regarding the ESLPs were incorporated directly into the original questionnaire.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> One reviewer pointed out that our study does not provide data from notes taken during prolonged classroom observation. In fact, attempts were made, but failed, to solicit permission to record the NAC's behaviour in class, and in particular, during the ESLPs sessions. The refusal, as we perceive, was due partly to the infrequent use of the ESLPs at these settings, and partly to the school/centre administrator's worry that too much interference would disrupt the progress of the sessions.

<sup>4</sup> A detailed description of these variables is reported in Tang and Gu (1999), Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> Due to space limit, the contents of the questionnaires are not discussed in this article.

One school and one community centre that reported to have been using the ESLPs participated in the Pilot Study.

The Phase Two investigation aimed to establish a general picture (a) the extent of use of the ESLPs; (b) the operational factors contributing to the current use situation, and (c) identifying respondents from the Pilot Study who had actually used the ESLPs as resource materials in their respective learning context.<sup>6</sup> Three different questionnaires were designed in this investigation for the NAC, teacher/tutor and the school/centre administrator. 18 schools (out of the 50 schools with a record of NAC enrollment) and 5 community centres (out of the 30 community centres that received the ESLPs) responded to the questionnaires.<sup>7</sup>

The objective of the Phase Three investigation was to establish a clear picture of the relevance and the effectiveness of the ESLPs to the learners. A questionnaire supplemented with post-hoc interview was designed to solicit the views of the teachers who had experience in using the ESLPs. 9 teachers (out of 15 teachers identified as users of the ESLPs) responded to the questionnaire. In addition, another 15 in-service primary teachers were invited to participate in a structured content review of the entire ESLPs.<sup>8</sup>

A post-hoc telephone interview was conducted at Phases Two and Three for the purpose of verifying the data solicited through the questionnaires and of eliciting more in-depth opinions of the teacher/tutor and NAC on the ESLPs.

The study adopted a qualitative approach. It was an attempt to investigate to what extent young learners from ordinary classrooms are ready for developing autonomous learning via the adoption of an English self-learning package.<sup>9</sup> Precisely, the study aimed to find out whether they also display the awareness of being able to 'take over' this learning responsibility from the teacher and steer the learning course by themselves. In what follows, we proceed with the general learning patterns and attitudes of the NAC, followed by reports on the teachers' perception of learner autonomy. In Sections 6 and 7, the views of the participating teachers and NAC on the effective use of the ESLPs are examined, which reflect respectively their perceptions of learner autonomy. The research issues addressed include (i) to what extent the learners are ready for autonomous learning; (ii) their awareness of the value of this mode of learning, and (iii) the teachers' readiness to facilitate such a mode of learning. A conclusion is drawn in Section 8.

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<sup>6</sup> A major modification was made on this part of the questionnaire for the investigation, as the research outcome of the Pilot Study indicated that it was important to divide the respondents into those that had or had not used the ESLPs.

<sup>7</sup> The relatively low response rate was due primarily to the fact that many of the schools and centres had not started using the ESLPs.

<sup>8</sup> Due to space constraint, detailed description of the evaluation is not included in this paper.

#### **4. THE NAC's GENERAL LEARNING PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES**

A total of 254 questionnaires were collected for the analysis, yielding the same number of NAC. Of these NAC, 141 (55.5%) are male and 113 (45.5%) are female. 83 (32.7%) of them are aged below 10 and 173 (68.3%) are between 11 and 16. 218 (86%) of them speak Cantonese as their first language; but 167 (66.1%) of them can speak Mandarin. 15 (6.7 %) of the NAC say they can speak English. Among them, 228 (89.9%) have been residing in HK for no more than 12 months. 228 (90%) of the respondents were at primary six or below but there were about 20 (8.3%) NAC in our survey who were studying at the secondary level.

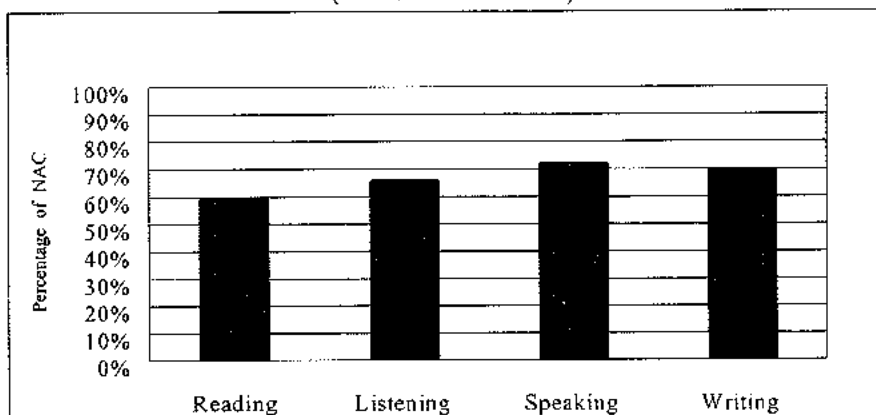
##### **4.1. English Learning Background of the NAC**

The NAC considered their current English standard poor, as revealed by their self-assessment on a number of areas such as vocabulary and language expressions in the target language. The overall poor self-assessment is understandable. From the data collected, the lack of support in the learning process arouses our concern. Firstly, most NAC's parents were illiterate even in Chinese. Only about one third of the NAC claimed that their parents knew English but were unable to help them improve their English, neither could their siblings. Secondly, very few of the NAC had any previous English learning experience before emigrating into Hong Kong. The education system they came from is very different from that of Hong Kong. English is not a major subject in the primary and junior secondary curricula there. Only less than one fifth of the NAC claimed to have learnt English before coming to Hong Kong. In sum, one can envisage the degree of difficulty the NAC face when entering the local education system where English learning is a major goal of language education.

The overall self-assessment result is reflected in Figure 1 below. 110 (43.3%) of the NAC claimed to have some previous English learning experience and among them 99 (90%) have had less than one year of English training before coming to HK. 98 (99%) of them indicated that their English experience came from regular lessons at school in the Mainland. Hiring part-time tutors and engaging in self-study account for only around 7% of the responses.

Apparently the NAC do not regard themselves as proficient users of the English language. Very few NAC manage to seek assistance from their family members if problems of English do arise. Only 19 (7 %) of the NAC said their brothers and 31 (12.2%) said their sisters could help them resolve English language problems. Only 50 (19.7%) of the NAC attempt to improve their English standard through self-learning materials.

Figure 1: NAC's Self-assessment on English Language Abilities  
(with scores below 50)



#### 4.2. The NAC's Language Learning Patterns

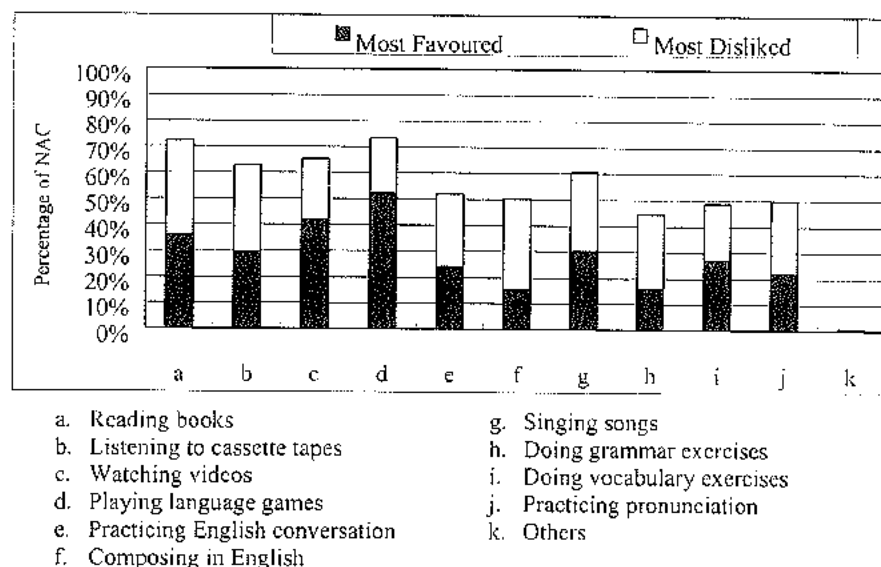
To examine whether the NAC are ready for autonomous learning via the ESLPs, we carried out an investigation into the following areas for a better understanding of the NAC's general patterns in English language learning: learning styles, motivation, anxiety, and NAC's Perception on language learning mode.

##### 4.2.1. Learning Styles

In order to find out whether the ESLPs suit the learning styles of the NAC, a small section was included in the questionnaire in which the NAC were invited to indicate their preferences and dislikes on a set of basic English language learning activities. They were also asked to indicate what they prefer to do to improve their English in the home learning condition. The results of the analysis on their learning styles can be found in Figure 2.

Language games turn out to be the most favoured language learning activities, followed by learning English through videos. Reading books, listening to cassette tapes and singing English songs are less popular among the NAC. The least popular activities are those that display analytic styles of learning – sentence composing, grammar and pronunciation practice. Between them we find, interestingly, vocabulary and conversation exercises. As can be observed, reading English books, composing in English, listening to cassette tapes are most disliked by the NAC, followed by pronunciation practice, grammar and conversation exercises. The least rejected activities are watching videos and playing language games.

Figure 2: NAC's most Favoured Language Activities



The figures on most favoured and disliked language activities clearly reveal that young learners are not prone to analytic style of learning and traditional language practices may not be able to motivate them to resolve language problems. If viewed from the perspective of the ESLPs, the use of the interactive video appears to be a desirable alternative since it is one of the most favoured language activities, second to language games. However, requiring the NAC to engage in oral communication might beg more serious reassessment of the learning situation. The data show that conversation practice and pronunciation practice are less favoured by the NAC and their rate of rejection is second to the traditional language activities.

When learning English privately such as in the home learning condition, the NAC prefer to watch English programmes (68 NAC, 26.8%) and work on supplementary learning materials (73 NAC, 28.7%). The motivation for the NAC to use English in daily communication is relatively low (35 NAC, 13%), whether it was with friends (47 NAC, 18.5%) or with foreigners (13 NAC, 5.1%).

#### 4.2.2. Motivation & Anxiety

Recent theories on second language learning have ascribed importance to personality factors which are hypothesized to influence the success in learning a second language. The increasing awareness of the necessity in personality research has led to the ESLPs designers' decision to incorporate this aspect into the follow-up study. While many variables of the affective domain have already been identified



to have some bearing on second language development, pertinent to the present examination of learner readiness are motivation and anxiety.

Previous studies have shown that they are related to successful second language learning. In the present analysis, a broad distinction is made between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the one hand, and debilitating and facilitative anxiety on the other. Following Brown (1991), if a learner is intrinsically motivated, his incentive to learn is an outcome of the learner's own desires to succeed through the task he engages in and to develop feelings of competence and self-fulfillment. Dickinson (1987) pointed out, autonomous learning by involving the learners centrally in the decision making process promotes intrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated learners are driven by consideration of external variables such as desires for better academic achievement, prizes, praises, positive feedback and in some cases, anticipation of punishment from teachers may also be an extrinsic driving force. MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) claim that foreign language anxiety<sup>10</sup> can have a negative effect on the language learning process. But they also point out some degree of apprehension is in fact facilitative in the learning process. Diary studies have shown that facilitative anxiety is a key to success and is closely related to competitiveness (Bailey 1983). But Brown (1991) cautions that too much anxiety is debilitating and it hinders the process of second language learning.

In the current analysis, we attempt to analyze the NAC's motivation and anxiety as two prerequisites leading to the effective use of the ESLPs. Figures 3 and 4 below respectively display these two psychological dimensions in second language learning.

#### 4.2.2.1. Motivation for Learning English

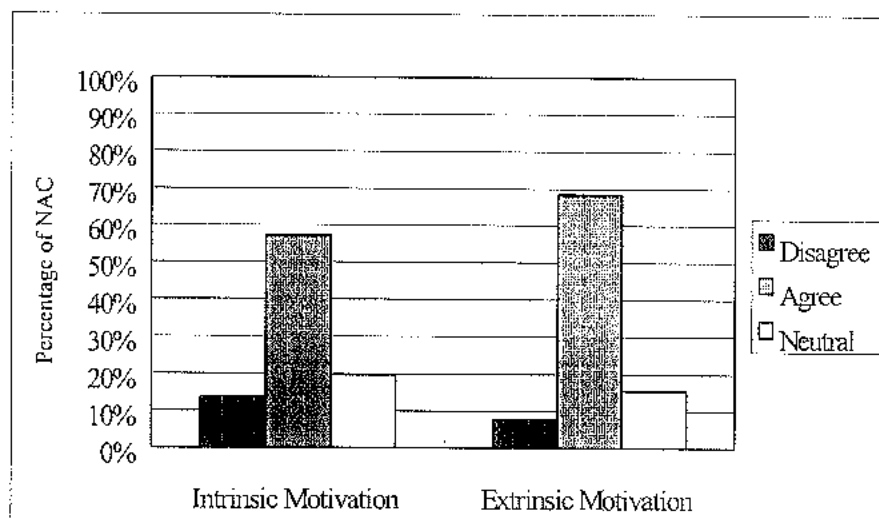
Our investigation reveals that there is a general tendency of weighing English favourably among the NAC who believed that English proficiency was vital to their future success in education and career. 90% of the NAC in our study strongly agree that English is important for studying abroad. Even though there seems to be some mismatch between the NAC's perception of English and their self-assessment as shown in Figure 1 in 4.1., the results in Figure 3 below indicate that the NAC are motivated to learn English.

The NAC's extrinsic motivation is greater than intrinsic motivation (68.4% vs 57.22%), suggesting that they are more concerned about what English attainment might bring to their future. To them, a strong English attainment in education means good career prospect, being able to enroll in English secondary schools,

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<sup>10</sup> According to these authors, there are three components of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, fears of negative social evaluation, and test anxiety.

Figure 3: NAC's Motivation for Learning English



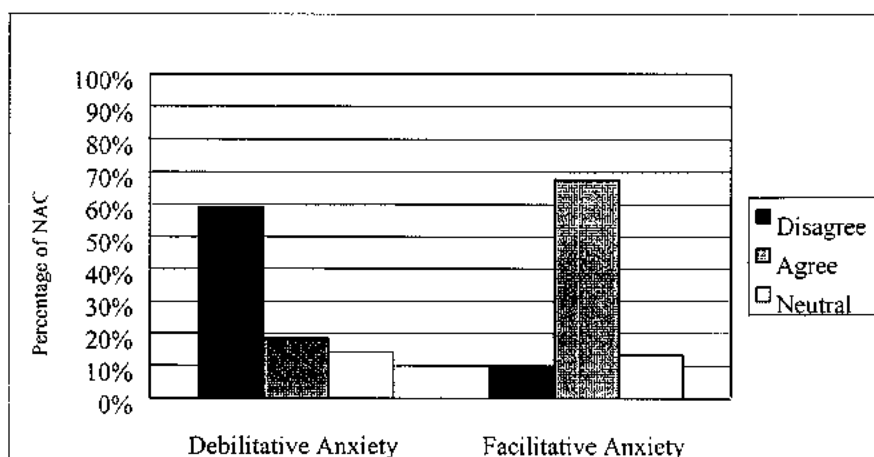
- a. Eventually I will be able to use English to tell a vivid story.
- b. My purpose of learning English is to find a good job.
- c. Learning English will help me study abroad.
- d. I can eventually use English to write a good article.
- e. If I don't do well in the exams, my teacher will say I'm not working hard enough.
- f. If I achieve good results in English, I can be enrolled into an English secondary school.
- g. If I know English, I can read a lot of English books and watch English movies, which will enhance my knowledge about the world.
- h. Others

being able to read more English books and magazines, and being able to study abroad. The sense of self-fulfillment as achieved during the learning process such as feeling capable of performing competently in English or willingness to take up challenging language learning tasks are secondary, according to these learners. It is also interesting to note that the NAC are ambivalent in their attitude towards being able to narrate fluently in English. These NAC do not seem to be convinced that they may develop this sense of achievement through narrating orally in English.

#### 4.2.2.2. Anxiety in Learning English

Being aware of their poor proficiency in English, the NAC show anxiety in the English learning process, as indicated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: NAC's Anxiety in Learning English



- a. Even if others say I'm too proud of myself, I will continue using English.
- b. I'm afraid of making errors, so I'd better not speak English in class.
- c. My English sounds odd, but I believe it can be improved.
- d. New arrival students can also study English well.
- e. I'm afraid of speaking English, so whenever I think about it, I'll lose interest in the language.
- f. It's fun to speak English with my teacher, although I'm a bit nervous.
- g. I'm concerned about the English exams, but I'll try my best to achieve good results.
- h. Even if I study hard, I still feel that my English is not as good as my Hong Kong peers.
- i. Others

In fact, most NAC display facilitative anxiety than debilitative anxiety (67.5% vs. 18.22%). This implies that most NAC hold a positive attitude towards the problem of learning English. Specifically, they agree that they are worried about their English language performance in class and their English may sound a little strange to the ears of the local people. However, they are willing to take risk and anxious to grasp every opportunity to learn English so that they can perform as competently as they can. Furthermore, there is a sense of competition among the NAC, as reflected by the majority's belief (75%) that immigrant children may excel in English or the general disagreement that even if they work hard, their English is worse than their local counterparts (55.9%).

### 4.2.3. The NAC's Perception of Language Learning Mode

It would be a misconception if one assumes that the NAC, having undergone some traditional classroom practice, would prefer to study English in a conventional language classroom. The results reveal that only 102 NAC (40%) prefer to study under this environment. In fact, some are prepared to study English in groups (62 NAC, 24.4%) or in pairs (64 NAC, 25.2%). Whichever learning environment they prefer, 158 NAC (62.2%) admit that the teacher is absolutely indispensable and he/she is the first sought when problems arise (142 NAC, 55.9%). In fact, there is little evidence showing that the NAC are prepared to study English entirely on their own. Only 25 (9.8%) NAC want to adopt this mode of learning, and only 9 (3.5%) said they could forego teacher-centred language learning activities and devise ways to learn English on their own. Where problems occur, only 41 (16.1%) NAC say they will try to find a solution independently.

### 4.3. Implications

The NAC can be perceived as 'concrete' rather than 'analytic' learners, as judged from their preferences for learning tasks based on activities to those where the language is broken down into minute units and analyzed systematically with respect to a set of rules. Activities that encourage some degree of global language development are more desirable in their circumstances. But the NAC do not prefer oral communication activities such as engaging in English conversation with friends or foreigners, or any sound practice. The NAC are motivated to learn English and their state of anxiety in reaction to the learning task is more facilitative than debilitating. They are prepared to accept alternative modes of learning such as studying in groups or in pairs where they can actually learn from each other and receive support from their peers.

## 5. THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

40 teachers who were centrally involved with teaching the NAC English participated in the follow-up study. Out of these 40 teachers, 27 (67.5%) were English majors but only 10 (25%) had received training in English language teaching (i.e. ELT). 23 (57.5%) had over five years of English language teaching experience, however, their experience in teaching the NAC was relatively new as almost 27 (70%) teachers had been involved in teaching the NAC for just under two years. The subjects were required to respond to a general questionnaire, out of which 9 teachers were identified for a second questionnaire survey which focused on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the ESLPs in helping the NAC improve their English.

In the report of this study, we categorize the teachers' responses according to (A) whether they had used the ESLPs, and (B) whether they had heard about it but

had not started using it.<sup>11</sup> 15 (37.5%) teachers responded that they were using the packages; 22 (55%) said they were aware of the ESLPs but had not yet adopted them.

### 5.1. General Responses

A questionnaire item was included in the follow-up study to tap whether the teacher had a general understanding of learner autonomy. The following table categories the various respects which reflect the general understanding of the teachers on the issue, regardless of the categories they belong to.

Table 1. Items for tapping teacher's general understanding of learner autonomy

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Help the learner adapt to autonomous learning.</li><li>b. Provide a solution to the learner's language problems.</li><li>c. Provide a solution to problems arising from autonomous learning.</li><li>d. Train autonomous learning abilities and strategies.</li><li>e. Assess the learner's language abilities regularly.</li><li>f. Inspire the learner to resolve his/her learning problems.</li><li>g. Others</li></ul> |
|---|

In Table 1, item (a) simply focuses on the teacher's attention to the concept in question, but by itself it is not revealing to what extent the teacher can consciously do so. We would accept items (d) and (f) as general indications of the teacher's understanding of the issue. (d) is crucially important. As mentioned in Yang (1998), one requirement of training learner autonomy is to provide learning strategy instruction to the learner. (f) obviously stands in contrast with items (b) and (c) for the former implies that the teacher is only a facilitator for the learner's problem solving while it is certainly the teacher who bears the task of resolving all the learning problems for (b) and (c).

### 5.2. Classified Responses

#### 5.2.1. Teachers who used ESLPs (Category A teachers)

##### ● *Knowledge about learner autonomy*

All 15 teachers who were using the ESLPs perceived the teacher as having an important or extremely important role to perform under the general concept of

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<sup>11</sup> In the actual study, we also identified a third category of teachers, i.e., those who had not heard about the ESLPs but might consider adopting them in the future. Given space limit, we do not include that category here.

autonomous learning. As observed from Figure 5 below, the roles as accepted by the teacher of this category were wide ranging.

In terms of the awareness of training autonomous learning, out of 15 teachers, 13 (87%) said they should help the learner adapt to autonomous learning. 9 teachers (60%) claimed that they should train the learner's autonomous learning abilities and strategies and 7 teachers (47%) agreed that they should inspire the learner to resolve the learning problems. On the other hand, most of these teachers still maintained the conventional roles of a language teacher, such as providing a solution to the language problems raised by the learner (9 teachers, 60%), assessing the learner's performance regularly (7 teachers, 47%), and providing a solution to the problems arising from autonomous learning (6 teachers, 40%).

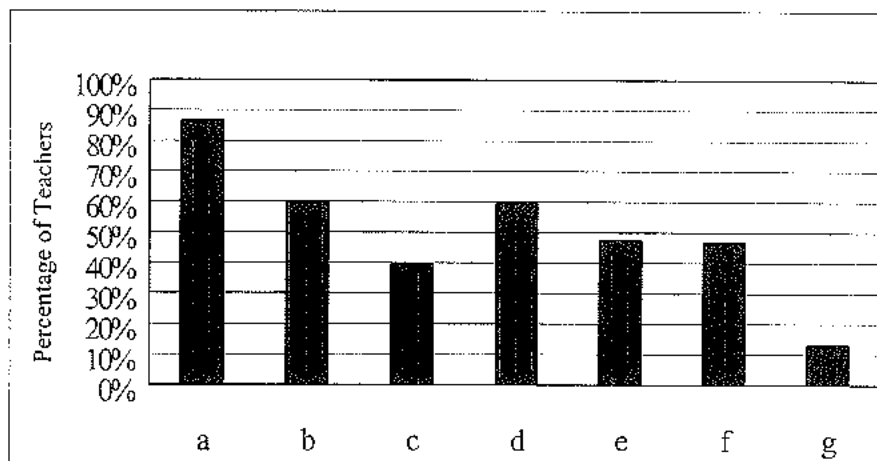


Figure 5: Perceived Roles of Teacher in Autonomous Learning (Cat. A)

- a. Help the learner adapt to autonomous learning
- b. Provide a solution to the learner's language problems
- c. Provide a solution to problems arising from autonomous learning
- d. Train autonomous learning abilities and strategies
- e. Assess the learner's language abilities regularly
- f. Inspire the learner to resolve his learning problems
- g. Others

The results above seem to suggest that training learner autonomy is an additional task for the teacher. In fact, a full-fledged model of autonomous learning may allow the learners the opportunity to explore their learning problems or to assess their language progress independently, thereby enabling the teachers to shift their role from someone who engineers the learning process to someone whose aim is

to nurture the learner's responsibility for learning. This implies inspiring the learners to make decisions about the learning process, and to accept problems as what they are and attempt to derive a solution based on their judgement of the situation. The conventional roles of the teachers can in fact be lifted so as to allow the teachers to refocus their attention to encouraging the NAC to explore the ways and means of learning a foreign language and to practice risk-taking in language learning.

### ● *Use of ESLPs*

The results in Figure 6 show that ESLPs were adopted in teacher-centred activities. 11 (73%) teachers did not follow the suggested mode of operation in the Teacher's Manual but selectively incorporated some components into their teaching schedule.

Figure 6: ESLPs Components Adopted by the Teachers (Cat. A)

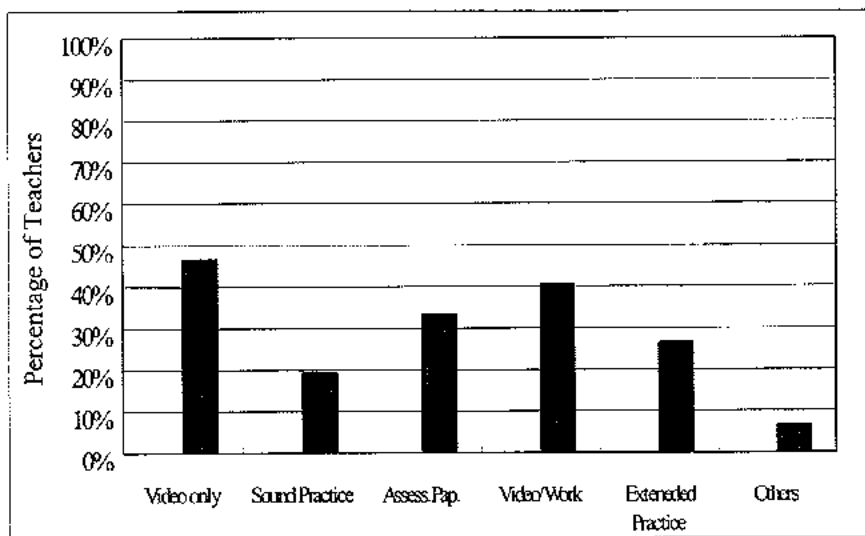


Figure 6 reveals that the video was regularly adopted on its own as independent teaching materials (7 teachers, 47%). Only 6 (40%) teachers chose to watch the video with the worksheets and 4 (26.6%) teachers let their NAC complete the Extended Practice. 5 (33.3%) teachers made use of the Assessment Papers. The rest of the components were not used regularly; only 3 (20%) teachers reported that they used the Sound Practice regularly during the lesson. In fact, one could readily imagine that other components such as the Performance Record, the Assessment Record, or the Learner's Profile were seldom used by the teachers. The telephone interviews confirmed that very few teachers followed the suggestions in the Teacher's Manual. 6 (40%) of these teachers were worried that the

level of English in the ESLPs might be too difficult for the NAC. 3 (20%) teachers reported that they were not clear about how to use the ESLPs effectively. 3 (20%) teachers complained about insufficient manpower and resources. 3 teachers from the telephone interview regretted the lack of support from the school. 2 teachers hired specifically to teach remedial English complained that they could not access the AV-equipment, which prevented them from adopting the ESLPs in class. Despite inadequate support, the third teacher who was working full-time continued with implementing the ESLPs with her NAC. It was only fortunate that she was free to explore whatever the school system might offer her in the setting-up of the ESLPs.<sup>12</sup>

### **5.2.2 Teachers who were aware of the ESLPs but had not adopted them (Category B teachers)**

22 teachers belonged to this category, out of whom 7 (31.8%) had received TESL training. Except for 1 teacher, all the 6 (40%) teachers had over six, if not ten years, of ELT experience. On the other hand, their NAC-teaching experience was relatively less, as most of them had less than two years of teaching the NAC English.

#### **• Knowledge about learner autonomy**

As shown in Figure 7, 18 (81.8%) teachers accepted the role of counselor assisting the NAC in adapting themselves to the autonomous mode of learning. Other roles were to train the NAC's autonomous learning abilities and strategies (12 teachers, 54.5%) and to inspire the learner in deriving a solution to his learning problems (10 teachers, 45.5%). Similar to the teachers in Category A, they also regarded themselves central in providing solutions to problems arising from autonomous learning (18 teachers, 81.8%), assessing the learner's language abilities regularly (9 teachers, 40.9%), and providing a solution to the learner's language problems (6 teachers, 27.3%).

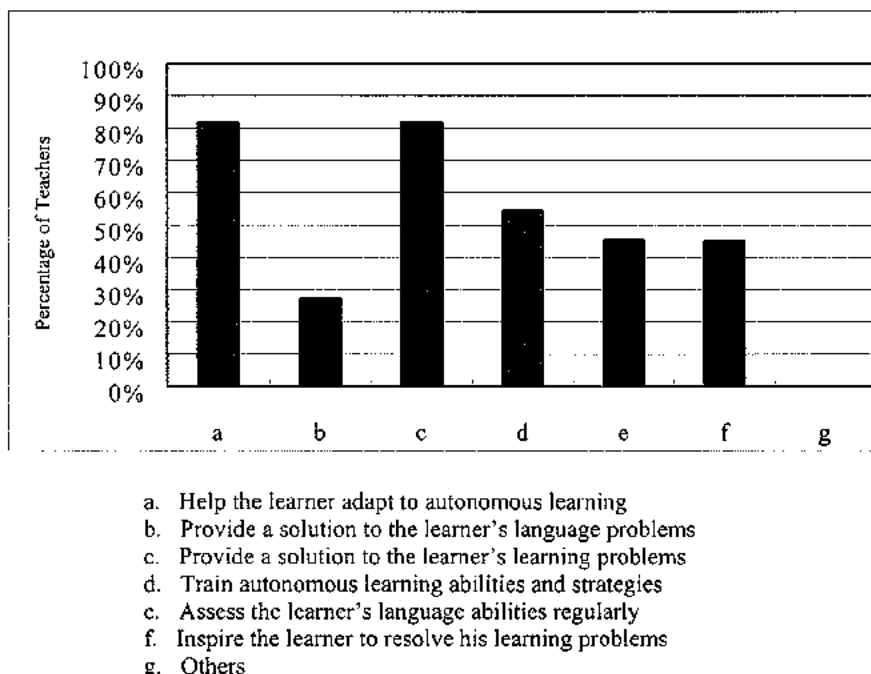
When asked specifically during the telephone interview whether they believed that the NAC could develop autonomous learning using the packages, the teachers were all negative about this issue. According to two teachers, only the exceptionally motivated NAC might stand a chance of developing autonomous learning via the packages. They believed that the main problem did not come from the design characteristics of the ESLPs. One teacher commented that it was difficult to assign the NAC with no English language background to different levels, making the task of helping them catch up with the regular English lessons more

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<sup>12</sup> The teacher reported that she actually used some money from the School-based Support Scheme Grant to duplicate some of the materials for her students.



Figure 7: Perceived Roles of Teacher in Autonomous Learning (Cat. B)

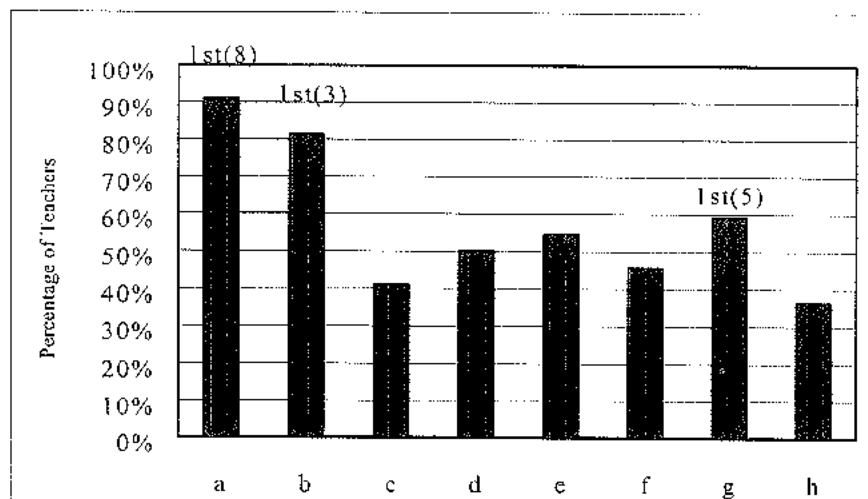


daunting than they had ever experienced. One teacher, in particular, complained that many NAC exhibited low motivation, poor discipline, and little support from the family. It is not clear at this stage whether or not the observation of this particular teacher is generalizable, but certainly, her opinions are apparently in contrast with the results of the attitudinal survey where we find the NAC extrinsically motivated (Tang and Gu 1999).

#### ● *Reasons for not Adopting the ESLPs*

Figure 8 reveals that insufficient manpower (20 teachers, 90.9%) as well as time and space constraints (18 teachers, 81.2%) were the two biggest complaints among these 22 teachers in this category. Between them, insufficient manpower was ranked top. This was followed by the suspicion that the ESLPs failed to take care of the inadequate English standard of the NAC (13 teachers, 59.1%). Other reasons were the teacher's lack of opportunity to know the concept of autonomous learning (12 teachers, 54.5%), and their fear that using the ESLPs might entail too many complicated operational procedures (11 teachers, 50%). Less than half of the teachers in this category said that insufficient AV-equipment or ESLPs contributed to their reasons for not using the ESLPs.

Figure 8: Teachers' Reasons for Not Adopting the ESLPs (Cat. B)



- a. Insufficient manpower to provide extra guidance
- b. No extra time and space for self-learning purposes
- c. Insufficient AV-equipment
- d. Complicated operations
- e. Teacher's lack of opportunity to learn the concept of autonomous learning
- f. Insufficient ESLPs
- g. ESLPs' inappropriate English standard
- h. Others

From the telephone interview, 2 teachers (9.1%) of this category who had not yet used the ESLPs suspected that the ESLPs could not help the NAC catch up with the mainstream English instruction. In their view, only the very bright and highly motivated NAC might stand a chance of success.

### 5.3. Implication

Most teachers had some but vague knowledge about autonomous learning but the perception that the teacher was crucial in all aspects or modes of learning was so deep-rooted that they still perceived themselves as the sole organizer of the learning process. It should be noted that all 15 teachers selected only some components from the ESLPs to support their teaching objectives. This strongly suggests that the teachers have an inclination to adopt ESLPs only as teacher-centred activities, rather than using the packages to develop learner autonomy in the NACs as was originally intended in the design of the ESLPs. This explains why the video plus the worksheets was the most popular component in the actual use of the ESLPs. Insufficient manpower and time was the main problem faced by the

teachers who had or had not used the ESLPs at the time of the survey. The worry prevailed that the ESLPs' level of English might add difficulties to the NAC's language learning.

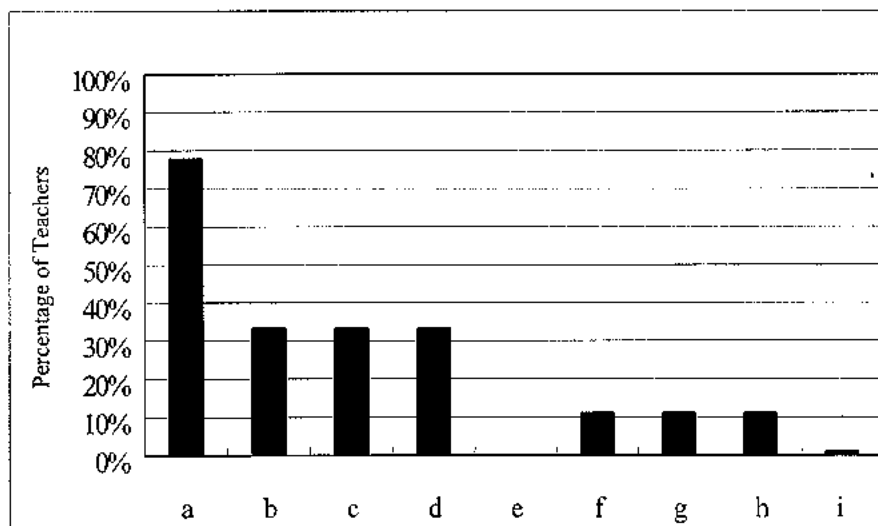
## 6. THE TEACHERS' VIEWS OF THE ESLPs

A questionnaire supplemented with post-hoc interviews was designed to solicit the views of the teachers who had experience in using the ESLPs. The questionnaire was sent to the 15 teachers who had previously been identified as users of the ESLPs (i.e. Category A teachers). Only 9 teachers responded. As such, the views and comments provided by these teachers should be interpreted with caution.

### 6.1. Their Initiative and Involvement

Figure 9 below reveals the extent of teacher involvement in the use of the ESLPs.

Figure 9: Teachers' Initiatives in the Use of ESLPs



- a. Clarify the content of the video
- b. Clarify the content of the Sound Practice
- c. Assist the NAC in using the worksheets to complete the Conversation Practice
- d. Clarify the content of the Extended Practice
- e. Clarify the use of the Performance Record
- f. Conduct Regular Assessment
- g. Conduct Entry Assessment
- h. Teach the NAC how to use the ESLPs as self-learning materials
- i. Others

As indicated, 7 teachers had taken initiatives in explaining the content of the video to the NAC. 3 instances of teacher initiation were also recorded in other aspects: (a) to teach the NAC how to use the worksheets to complete the conversation practice, (b) to clarify the content of the Extended Practice, and (c) to clarify the content of the Sound Practice. Only 1 teacher taught the NAC how to use the ESLPs as ancillary English learning materials.

## 6.2. Their Perceived Problems with the NAC

5 teachers reported that the NAC failed to understand how to use the ESLPs despite their repeated explanations. Among these cases, 2 teachers resorted to watching the video with the NAC and 1 teacher requested the parents to do the same at home. The same 5 teachers claimed their NAC did not understand how to learn English autonomously but 3 indicated that their NAC had shown interest in this mode of learning. In fact, seldom did the NAC consult the teachers on the various aspects of the ESLPs; while most enquiries were concerned primarily with vocabulary explanations and pronunciation, others were about the grammar of the sentence patterns presented in the video.

## 6.3. Their General Comments on the ESLPs

Figure 10 below displays the teachers' general comments on the ESLPs. The teachers were required to indicate on a five-point scale concerning their agreement on a number of statements about the characteristic nature of the ESLPs.

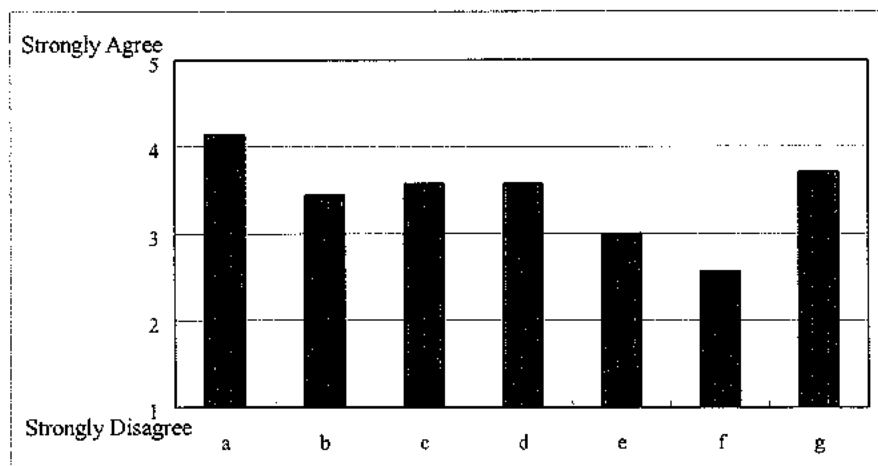
As indicated, the teachers only found statements (a), and (g) relatively more agreeable than the others. They were positive that the ESLPs could help the NAC improve their English and they regarded the self-learning mode as a solution to handling mixed abilities of the NAC in the classroom situation. Moreover, they generally disagreed that the ESLPs increased the workload of the teacher. As for the telephone interview, only 2 teachers were convinced that their NAC could learn English under the autonomous mode; the others had reservations about this issue.

While holding no special opinions regarding having native speakers in the cast,<sup>13</sup> the 9 teachers held a relatively more positive though not obvious attitude towards (a) the advantages of adopting English supported with pictures in arousing the NAC's interest in learning English, and (b) the motivation of having a cast that were all Chinese. 3 teachers agreed that the use of a Chinese cast in the video drama might convince the NAC that even Chinese students could attain a reasonably good standard of English. 2 teachers from the telephone interview opined

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<sup>13</sup> One unique characteristic of the ESLPs is that the majority of the characters in the video programmes were played by native Chinese speakers.

Figure 10: Teachers' General Comments on the ESLPs



- The ESLPs can raise the English standard of the NAC.
- The ESLPs were suitable only for those NAC that had some basic knowledge of English.
- The use of English supported by pictures increases the NAC's interest in learning English.
- A Chinese cast may convince the NAC that Chinese learners can speak good English.
- An English cast provides a better language model to the NAC.
- The ESLPs put extra workload on teachers.
- The self-learning mode allows more flexibility for accommodating NAC's mixed language abilities.

that adopting a purely English cast would alienate the NAC and present them with a remote speech situation which they would fail to associate themselves with.

In fact, 6 teachers from the questionnaire survey reported that their NAC had shown improvement in both listening and speaking abilities. 2 teachers observed improvement in all four language abilities. 1 teacher put forward the overall comments that the ESLPs were flexible enough to cater for individual needs of the NAC. While 1 teacher said that future modifications were unnecessary as the ESLPs were good enough, 2 teachers urged that the production of the ESLPs be extended to Levels 4 & 5.

Dissenting voices were also reported during the telephone interviews. 2 teachers complained about their NAC's persistent frustration in using the ESLPs. On the other hand, 2 teachers observed general improvement in the listening and speaking abilities of their learners. 1 of these teachers said that her NAC were more willing to speak in English, probably due to consistent exposure to the task requirements of the ESLPs.

#### 6.4. Their Views on the Problems with the ESLPs

5 teachers attempted this section that mainly involved open-ended questions and all complained against the lack of resources and manpower. Generally speaking, the lack of AV-equipment at home drastically reduced the NAC's chance of using the ESLPs for self-learning purposes. This was usually coupled with the lack of space and person-in-charge of the ESLPs at school. 1 teacher from the community centre suggested that the ESLPs be used in the school environment and another commented that more cassette tapes on Sound Practice should be provided. 4 teachers reported that there was insufficient time to run the ESLPs at school. 1 teacher directed the complaint to the 60 hours of remedial English which were already packed with helping the NAC deal with the problems deriving from the regular English lessons and homework from school. She advised that a three-month programme be set up to help the NAC improve their English and during this period, there would be time to run the ESLPs properly. 1 teacher complained about the learning activities of the ESLPs that emphasized oral communication practice, leaving little opportunity for grammar practice.

#### 6.5. NAC's Requests for Teacher Assistance

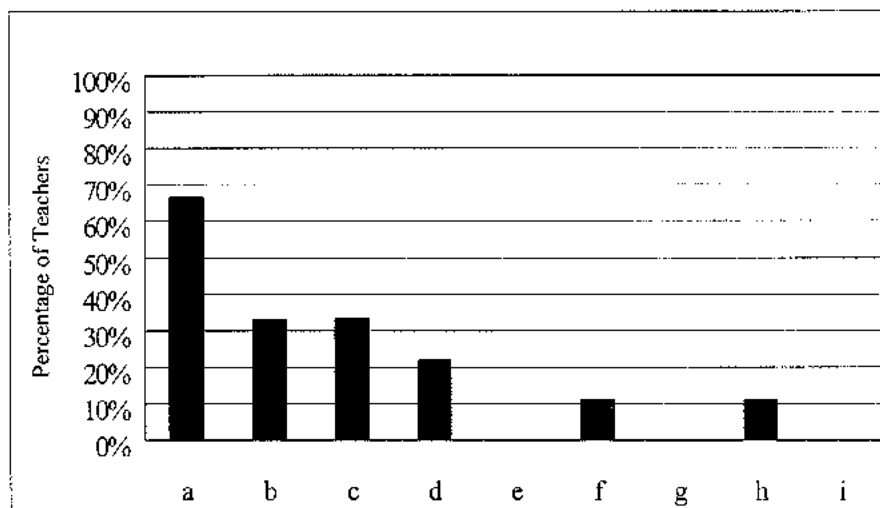
As Figure 11 in the following shows, instances of NAC's requests for teacher's assistance were not many, probably due to the fact that the packages were mainly used in teacher-centred activities.

Where NAC's requests were concerned, they mainly have to do with asking the teacher to clarify the content of the video (6 teachers) and to assist them in completing the Conversation Practice (3 teachers) together with the worksheets. 2 teachers reported that their NAC had asked them to clarify the content of the Extended Practice. 1 teacher indicated that her NAC wanted her to teach them how to learn English autonomously via the ESLPs.

#### 6.6. Discussion

The results of this section indicate that most teachers had only a vague understanding of their role in the implementation of the ESLPs. As mentioned, they still regarded themselves to be central to the NAC's use of the ESLPs in improving their English, which, in our term, means the English learning process. Alongside the general understanding that the teachers would assist the NAC in adapting themselves to the autonomous learning process and nurture the NAC's autonomous learning capability and strategies, these teachers still maintained the various roles of a conventional language teacher: (a) to provide a solution to either the learners' language problems, or their autonomous learning problems, and (b) to assess the learners' language ability regularly. In fact, the teachers in our study could have lifted their conventional mentality so as to release the NAC and encourage them to explore the means and ways of learning a foreign language at

Figure 11: NAC's Requests for Teacher Assistance



- a. Clarify the content of the video
- b. Clarify the content of the Sound Practice
- c. Assist the NAC in using the worksheets to complete the Conversation Practice
- d. Clarify the content of the Extended Practice
- e. Clarify the use of the Performance Record
- f. Conduct Regular Assessment
- g. Conduct Entry Assessment
- h. Teach the NAC how to use the ESLPs as self-learning materials
- i. Others

their own pace. A full-fledged model of autonomous learning may allow the learner the opportunity to come up with a solution to the problems and to assess his/her language progress independently. Embedded in this learning process is how to take efficient and effective risk in language learning. The teacher should, therefore, bear in mind that a motivated language learner is one who is willing to practice risk-taking and to commit himself to decisions concerning how to approach learning English effectively. Hence risk-taking on the learner's part should be encouraged, rather than being stifled.

Without a solid understanding of the rationale of the ESLPs, most teachers just incorporated the packages into their own teaching schedule, treating them as supplementary teaching materials. As reported, 11 out of the 15 teachers in Category A used the packages in group learning mode and chose the programme randomly based on their impressionistic assessment of the NAC's abilities. This would in effect make it very difficult for the ESLPs to operate effectively where students of mixed abilities were forced to start at the same level of difficulty. Subsequently, at the end of the programme, there was often little opportunity for

Regular Assessment, which was designed originally to make the NAC aware of their individual learning progress. Unfortunately, it was often the case that where group learning was involved, the teacher would determine the coverage of the video programme. As a consequence, cutting out the last part of the programme – Conversation Practice – was not uncommon, partly due to time constraint, and partly due to the teacher's perceived difficulty on the part of the NAC to complete a particular section of the video programme which requires the learner to apply the linguistic information obtained from the video programme. This seems to indicate that the Conversation Practice is a component in the ESLPs where the teacher easily detects loss of control over the learning situation.

Another factor which limited the use of the ESLPs was the teacher's perceived difficulty in the content of the packages. Some teachers complained and many predicted that the content of the ESLPs was beyond the grasp of the NAC. From the survey we derived the impression that the local teachers were extremely worried about a language programme for the NAC that was solely in English. Many teachers, especially those who had used the ESLPs suggested the use of Chinese translation in various parts of the video because they considered the NAC's failure of understanding to be one of the major reasons for their giving up the packages. The teachers seemed to have formed an opinion that good language learning materials must be those whose content was perfectly comprehensible to the learner. Quite on the contrary, not all NAC complained about the level of difficulty of the ESLPs, which implies that learners engaged in any communicative activities tend to expect a certain degree of difficulty and they would build up a degree of tolerance in wrestling with the comprehension of the programme.

## 7. THE NAC's VIEWS OF THE ESLPs

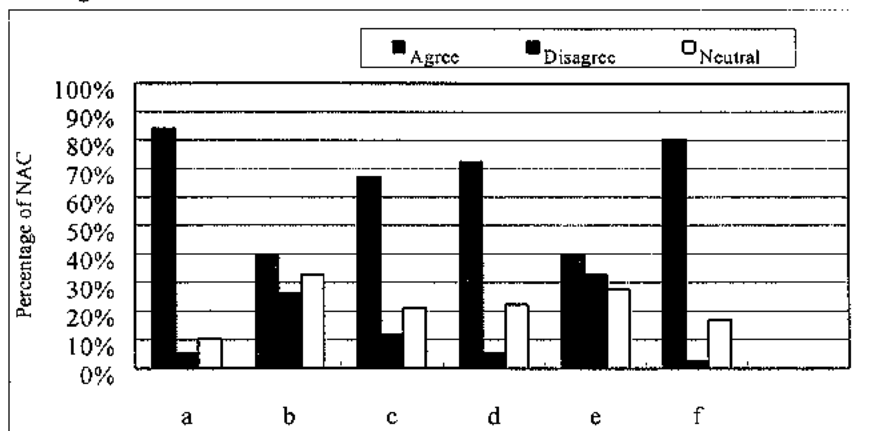
### 7.1. Their General Comments on the ESLPs

76 NAC who had been identified as regular users of the packages were invited to provide some general comments on the packages as a self-learning kit. These are shown in Figure 12.

One could observe from Figure 12 that a majority of the NAC believed that the ESLPs could help them improve their English and the adoption of a Chinese cast did convince them that even Chinese students could speak good English. They agreed that there were more learning opportunities since the ESLPs components, especially the video, could be used repeatedly. They also appreciated the sole use of English supplemented with pictures, a strategy adopted by the designers and the production team who believed that *total immersion* in the language environment is the key to successful language learning. This positive attitude was shared by some of the 6 NAC who took part in the telephone interviews. Although they faced problems of comprehension when working on the ESLPs, they believed that in the long run, learning through the ESLPs could help them improve their English to some extent. 4 NAC claimed that at least there seemed to be some



Figure 12: NAC's General Comments on the ESLPs



- The ESLPs could help improve my English.
- The self-learning mode suits my learning style.
- The sole use of English supported by pictures arouses my interest in learning English.
- The Chinese cast convinces me that Chinese students could speak good English.
- Native speakers in the Video could serve as a better language model.
- The ESLPs provide more learning opportunities due to repeated exposures.

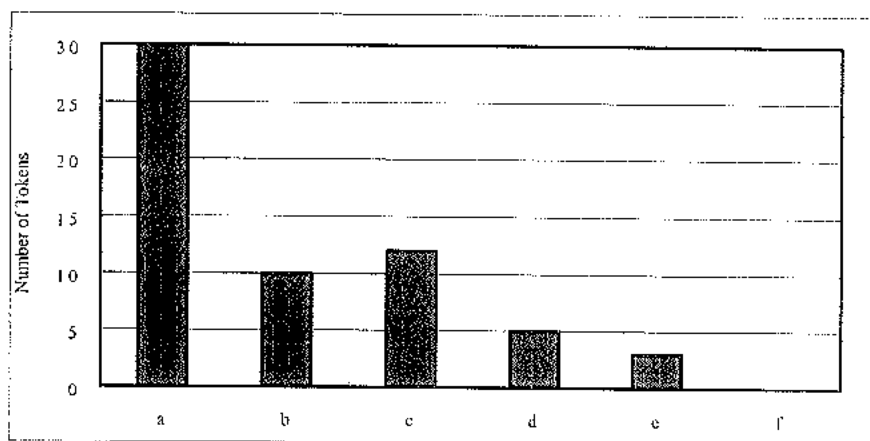
improvement in their listening abilities. When coming to learning style, the NAC's views were divided on whether a full-fledged self-learning mode suited their learning style. This result begs a reconsideration of the whole issue of developing learner autonomy among young elementary learners and further research is necessary to tackle which aspects of learner autonomy are appreciated by young elementary learners so that more effective organization of autonomous learning can be achieved in the future.

## 7.2. Their Specific Comments on the ESLPs

When asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed to a set of statements concerning the ESLPs, the NAC seemed to display quite positive attitudes towards the ESLPs as a tool to learn English. Figure 13 shows the NAC's responses to the individual items.

As shown in Figure 13, the content of the video was ranked as the most popular component by the NAC, followed by the Worksheets/Extended Practice and the listening practice on the cassette tapes. Other components such as the two types of Assessment Papers were not favourably rated, probably due to the infrequent use of these components.

Figure 13: Most Popular ESLPs Components (Tokens of Responses)



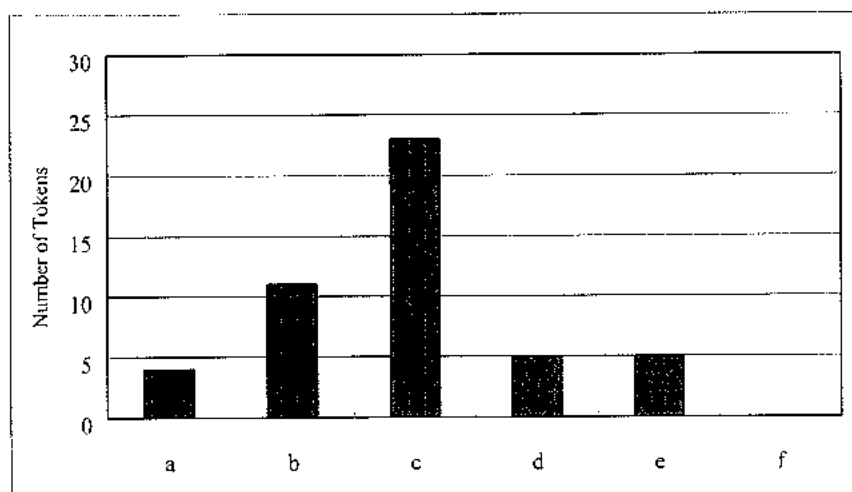
- a. Content of the video
- b. Listening practice on the cassette tapes
- c. Writing practice in the Extended Practice
- d. Regular Assessment
- e. Entry Assessment
- f. Others

Contrary to the teacher's perception who rated the Video as the most difficult component, the Video was not ranked as the most difficult component of the ESLPs (see Figure 14) by the NAC. Rather, it was the Extended Practice/Worksheets and the listening practice that were being ranked the most difficult.

### 7.3. Discussion

The results in this section reveal that most NAC were willing to submit themselves to an alternative mode of language learning. Although they rated themselves as poor English language users, psychologically, the NAC were more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated to learn English and their state of anxiety in reaction to the learning task was more facilitative than debilitating. At least, they were motivated to improve their English and the crux of the matter is how one can help them to bridge this gap in the learning process. Apparently, what they were not yet ready to accept was the responsibility for organizing their own language syllabus and assessment. Although one may argue that the ESLPs are just a set of highly directed self-access programme, it should be noted that self-access can only be perceived as a necessary condition for most forms of self-directed and learner-centred work, but not a sufficient one (Riley 1987). In the present study, the ESLPs is viewed as an aim to help the NAC nurture a sense of responsibility for directing their own course of English learning through a series

Figure 14: Most Difficult ESLPs Components (Tokens of Responses)



- a. content of the video
- b. listening practice on the cassette tapes
- c. writing practice in the Extended Practice
- d. Regular Assessment
- e. Entry Assessment
- f. others

of decision making processes. Our observations and the opinions of most of the NAC suggest that these learners are willing to organize the learning activities according to their own perceived capabilities. Our study reveals that the ESLPs could serve as a window to this new perspective of language learning, at least making the NAC aware of this alternative mode of learning and providing them with some preliminary training in developing autonomous learning capacity.

We emphasize the word *alternative* as this study does not amount to saying that autonomous learning is the preferred mode or suitable for learners of all sorts. Our study did reveal that some NAC found this mode of learning unacceptable.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The present study documents the reaction of the NAC in their adoption of the ESLPs to learn English. The results suggest that some NAC could eventually and to some extent liberate themselves from a form of programmed learning as assumed by the ESLPs. Although programmed learning is perceived as reflecting minimal learner autonomy, given proper guidance and opportunities for self-

exploration, the learner, at least some of the NAC in our study, managed to reach a state of awareness that autonomous learning is a possible alternative for language learning and showed willingness to explore other means and ways to improve their English. Generally speaking, at the end of the observation period, we found that they developed a better sense of commitment to the learning process, and became more cognizant of their needs and learning objectives as well as how these needs and objectives could be achieved. However, the results by no means indicate that this mode of learning wins an appeal to young elementary learners across the board. In fact, we had some NAC who consistently resented this particular mode of language learning and displayed a negative attitude towards following the procedures.

A challenging task of learner autonomy research is therefore how to convince these learners that effective language learning could be achieved via this alternative mode. Meanwhile, further research is necessary to discover whether there is a correlation between learner characteristics and development of learner autonomy. As far as the present study is concerned, although the NAC exhibited some awareness of their own autonomous learning capacity, further research on 'self-direction' training is necessary in order to verify whether it is a viable language learning option for young elementary learners.

In the mean time, the study clearly reveals that the teachers concerned are still in need of training in forming concepts of learner autonomy. In particular, they need to develop skills on how to help their students acquire the necessary strategies as well as how to raise their awareness of the importance of assuming responsibility for learning a language autonomously. In the absence of a sufficient understanding of the concept, most of these teachers resorted to a conventional teacher-fronted approach and used the ESLPs as supplementary materials. This phenomenon has been previously studied by researchers as a need for developing teacher's conscious of learner autonomy. Little (1991), for instance, reports that in some cases where learner autonomy does not work, it is the teacher who fails to see himself/herself as an equally active and responsible co-participant in the learning process. Little hence argues that a prerequisite for developing learner autonomy among the students is *teacher autonomy* and the development of learner autonomy and that of teacher autonomy are interdependent. Similar to learner autonomy, the teacher needs to liberate himself/herself from the conventional mode of thinking regarding classroom teaching and to set up *pedagogical dialogues* with his/her students in making decisions on learning objectives, learning materials as well as language assessment. He/she also needs to undergo 'cognitive restructuring', although at a different level. He/she needs to devise strategies for encouraging students to modify their beliefs and expectations about language learning, and he/she needs to judge realistically in face of institutional constraints, individual differences, age of learning, as well as how competent as an autonomous language learner a student comes out to be. All this implies that teachers need to be trained to be autonomous trainer of learner autonomy. Such

innovation could turn itself into a threat if the teachers are not ready for such a change. As Dam (1995) reflects, it is no easy task to encourage teachers to transform their role in the classroom as such a transformation could be quite frustrating.

On the basis of our findings, we propose that more seminars be organized to enhance the teacher's knowledge of the ESLP's objectives, learning mode and operations. This is in accordance with the fact that a number of teachers in the survey actually requested more demonstrations on how to use the packages. We believe that on-site visits should be useful to help the teachers set up the ESLPs programme. Guidelines on adapting the ESLPs to some typical teaching situations may be inserted into the Teacher's Manual or workshops can be organized to let ESLPs users share their experiences with one another, as the learning situation is unique at individual schools and teachers may have different expectations about the ESLPs. As discussed earlier, the presence of the teacher is of paramount importance at the initial stage of ESLPs adoption, for the sake of providing some guidance in shaping the autonomous learning process and of boosting the NAC's confidence in using the packages. Teacher involvement can be reduced to a minimum, according to our research experience, once the NAC have established a routine in working with the packages on their own.<sup>14</sup>

In the long run, as suggested by Little (1991), learner autonomy could be incorporated into the curriculum of teacher education and provide the teacher trainees with the skills to develop autonomy in the learner. One way to implant such a concept into the teacher trainees is by way of arousing their own capacity for autonomous learning within their own curriculum through pedagogical dialogues, i.e. negotiation between the teacher trainer and the trainee. In fact, the concept of negotiation is not new and it has been empirically investigated in second language acquisition (Allwright and Bailey 1991), the results being that negotiation for meaning brings about positive changes in the learner's knowledge of the target language. Viewed from the perspective of the development of learner autonomy, negotiation between the teacher trainer and the trainee provides a solid piece of evidence to the trainee that the trainer is not the ultimate authority to his/her own learning process. The trainee has to contribute to the process and be responsible for co-constructing it, making him/her realize that the responsibility for achieving successful learning also rests with how critical and reflective he/she is as a learner. We support this suggestion because such prerequisite training is going to be beneficial to potential teachers in general, encouraging them to under-

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<sup>14</sup> The conservative attitude of the teachers towards giving a free hand to the NAC to use the ESLPs may be largely caused by their worries about the "English-only" mode of presentation of the package, as discussed in section 6.6. Nevertheless, the teachers' professional judgement of the appropriate use of the ESLPs needs to be considered carefully in future research. We thank one reviewer for alerting us on this point.

stand the fundamental philosophy and techniques of learner autonomy. However, successful language learning as against learning of general concepts depends a lot on other factors and more research is needed to identify those factors that are sensitive to issues such as autonomous learning strategies, metacognitive awareness and planning, as well as cultural interpretation on autonomous learning so that more effective training can be provided for the language learner.

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# Reconsidering Language Learners' Needs: A Critical Look at Verbal Play in a Reading Lesson

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper I describe the impish verbal practices of some well-heeled Cantonese lower form secondary school students of English. These playful verbal practices are taken from a pilot study (Kwan, 1997) on the role of codeswitching in vocabulary teaching in Hong Kong English language classrooms of lower form students. By investigating the recorded classroom episodes of a reading lesson, I can see how these middle- to high-income class students employ their indigenous L1 resources in the classroom public discourse to subvert the teacher's agenda. While the students' active verbal bids might help them gain peer recognition and assert their creativity in their playful world, their subversive play also reflects their apparent resistance to the alienating English language lessons. In the concluding part, I shall discuss the implications of these classroom impish verbal play practices.

## 1. BRINGING CLASSROOM VERBAL PLAY INTO BEING: THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENTS

The lesson excerpt to be depicted here is taken from my pilot classroom study on the role of codeswitching in vocabulary teaching (Kwan, 1997). In particular, this study describes and examines the functions and significance of L1 and L2 in Hong Kong English language classrooms of lower form students. The classroom data include audio and video recordings, classroom observation with on-site fieldnotes, informal interviews with the teacher and small groups of students, and collection of institutional materials (e.g., worksheets, teaching schedule, scheme of work, syllabus, circulars, etc.). The results of this discourse analytic study not only display the roles of L1 and L2 in vocabulary teaching but also



reveal how these well-off students of distinguished socioeconomic status (hereafter, SES) struggle within their native cultures.

### 1.1 The school and the teacher

The reading lesson data described below were recorded in a boys' school. This government-aided school was founded in 1958 and has a long religious background. It is allied to Band 3<sup>1</sup> and is moderately prestigious in its district. The school population is mainly made up of students of its feeder section in which English is greatly used.

The teacher-participant, Mrs. Lee<sup>2</sup>, is a young fresh graduate at one of the local universities where she majored in Public Social Administration. Mrs. Lee has a good command of written and spoken English. The schools where she received her primary and secondary education are locally highly prestigious and difficult to enroll in.

In the period of recording, Mrs. Lee has only two months' teaching experience. Although she is rather young in her teaching career and has not received any pre-service and in-service teacher training before, she has already developed quite a number of teaching beliefs. Having been strongly influenced by the teaching methodology of her primary and secondary schools' English language teachers, Mrs. Lee fully supports monolingual English-medium teaching. As she recounted, even if her students did not understand, she would still insist on using English. She stressed that English should be used in English classrooms all the time.

The class observations of and personal contacts with Mrs. Lee suggest to me that Mrs. Lee is a teacher with great sincerity, enthusiasm, open-mindedness, tolerance, kindness, support. It is also evident that Mrs. Lee has developed rapport with the students. I would say that their relationships are very harmonious. In the lessons where there were many occasions of being teased, Mrs. Lee rarely immediately showed displeasure and repressed her students' disobedience. When a student forgot to bring the necessary learning materials, instead of punishing (which is actually a usual practice of local English language teachers), she arranged the student to share the materials with others. Above all, she tried her best to tackle the questions of every student.

While her distinctive personalities, teaching styles and classroom management might increase her popularity and help establish and reserve her image, it does not seem to be of much help in her management of the lessons and students. In

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<sup>1</sup> It is a unit grading local secondary schools. There are altogether five bands. Schools of Band 1 are the most prestigious whereas those of Band 5 are the least.

<sup>2</sup> It is a pseudonym.

the data corpus, there are many examples showing her using of difficult, abstract language. In one grammar lesson, terminology like 'auxiliary verbs', 'comparatives', 'superlatives', 'interrogatives', etc., could be heard repeatedly. When giving explanations orally, she very often gets the meaning across by introducing some other difficult words. A case in point is that she introduced the word 'deteriorate' while describing the nature of perishable foodstuffs. The word 'procedures' is employed instead of 'steps' to explain a recipe for a Christmas pudding. There are also cases where Mrs. Lee was deliberately led far away from the lesson agenda. For instance, she would spend a lot of time to respond to each of her students' questions regardless of the relevance to the teaching goals. All these seem to help us understand later why the students have so many opportunities to capitalize on the immediate context and slip their impish verbal play in the legitimate classroom discourse afforded by the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) structure (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) and why they resist the English curriculum.

## 1.2 The students

The vast majority of students come from medium- to high-income families. They typically live in private residential areas of high SES. Most of the students have Filipino domestic helpers at home and they are escorted to school by automobiles. Some of them receive individual academic guidance from private tutors. Generally, the well-to-do live in a bilingual surrounding where English as linguistic and sociocultural resources are available and rich.

The students themselves have known each other for long as most of them were directly promoted from its feeder school, where English is employed as the authoritative language of instruction. These students share similar interests as well. They enjoy playing PC or TV games, musical instruments, reading Japanese comics and travelling. These pastimes are in fact costly and practiced exclusively by this special group of students.

I was told that the students are very concerned about their academic results and they all realized the importance of English. In fact, their English proficiency is generally above average. In an ETV lesson where Mrs. Lee elicited cases of emergency, the students can immediately offer rather reasonable suggestions/examples in L2 like 'unconscious', 'when XXX falls into the sea', 'robbery', etc., though their pronunciations may be a little less accurate. When they are named to read the English passage, they can read rather accurately and fluently without much help.

However, it does not mean that they are willing to use English during lessons. Their actual classroom behaviors help me ascertain within a short period of time that these students are rather unmanageable and uncooperative. The students seem to be comfortable in using L1 in class. Talking loudly with and across their

classmates during lessons appears to be very habitual and so as to tease the teacher. I also notice that some of the students even carry out other subject matters in the English language lesson. For example, I noticed that some students were busy in copying homework of other content subjects. English actually is rarely heard from them and voluntarily used by them. When the students have something to propose, they seldom wait until the teacher has finished, or being named. Very often, they self-select and abruptly shout in L1 from their seats. Nonetheless, I also noticed that the students are always capable of giving the teacher quick responses. Though they seldom use the English language, I noted that their ideas are rather creative, sharp and constantly related to the teacher's prompt. All these actually help me a great deal to appreciate the richness of their background knowledge and their enthusiasm in their own playful world.

The students' classroom behaviors described above are not atypical in Hong Kong language classrooms. In Lin's (1996) examination of the organization of English language lessons of junior form students, she describes the playful verbal practices of working class students and shows how they seek to assert their indigenous identities in the alienating English language lessons actualized by the culturally incompatible curricular. As she notes, this particular group of students comes from a low socioeconomic family background. With little access to English resources, these students are compelled to stay in a subordinated and insulated Cantonese sociocultural world.

Lin's study (1996) helps us to picture how these lively working class school children reproduce and perpetuate their native cultures. However, do students from high SES also engage in such classroom verbal practices? Is language play independent of SES, or universal in language classrooms?

My classroom data look somewhat similar to those of Lin's study (1996). However, the students in my study enjoy a higher SES and they have access to plentiful English resources. In contrast, the students in Lin's study (1996) happen to be placed at a lower socioeconomic position and they are situated in a linguistically and culturally disadvantaged environment where there is very limited access to bilingual resources.

In spite of the SES differences, the classroom resistant behaviors of students in both studies look very similar. In a like manner, these students of different socioeconomic classes demonstrate their discontentment to the uninteresting English language lessons (e.g., use L1 instead of L2 in class). Through subverting the classroom interaction afforded by the IRF discourse structure, the students can uncover their ideal playful world where they can assert and retain their native cultures.

This uniformity does not seem to bring about the same consequences to the students. The students in my study have more assets, and are in a better position in terms of for example family backgrounds and linguistic resources, which greatly encourage them to constantly make fun out of the English lessons without suffering from a lack of their English resources. It seems that these wealthy students can always obtain all sorts of compensation. As mentioned above, these students live in a bilingual speech community where they can readily access cultural and linguistic resources. In addition, these students have private tutors to take care of their schoolwork outside school. All these seem to be a luxury for the working class students (cf. Lin, 1996). In fact, they are rarely entitled to such privileges in their linguistic and cultural lives. By acting out resistance to the alienating English lessons, these disadvantaged students only make themselves trapped into a more subordinate position. In contrast, it seems that the wealthy students in my study will not suffer even when they do not learn anything in their school English lessons in school.

## **2. A DIAGNOSIS OF MRS. LEE'S READING LESSON: THE READING MATERIALS, THE LESSON ORGANIZATION**

Though in Hong Kong there are specific syllabuses for English (Curriculum Development Committee, 1983), different schools have different arrangements of English language teaching for different levels and classes of students. Typically, the school panel chair lays down the specifications of English language teaching agenda for each single lesson. This piece of information will accordingly be given to students in the very first English language lesson of each semester.

The one-teaching-cycle-visit allows me to see not only the organization of real English language lessons but also their engaging classroom happenings. From Mrs. Lee's lesson recordings, I actually found that there was much going on other than what had been previously specified in each particular English language lesson (I personally confirmed this by looking at the teacher's teaching schedule and scheme of work). Interestingly, I noticed that the teacher is typically very textbook-dependent. At first glance, the recordings seem to speak for themselves as they show a majority of segments of teaching based on the English textbook. Above all, I witness that the reading activities are greatly limited to those of mechanical and meaningless, similar to those 'meaning-reduced' and 'linguistic-operations-oriented' activities described in Lin's paper (1996). This situation in fact is quite common. Indeed, it can be easily met in other similar English language classrooms of working class students in Hong Kong (Lin, 1996).

Basically, the reading data to be described below were collected from a double period<sup>3</sup> punctuated by a lot of different transitions. There were not only teaching-related transitions; unrelated events like collecting money for the class committee or reply slips for the school picnic can also be found within the same lesson.

Besides that, I observed that a reading comprehension passage of medium length had to be taught across several lessons in several weeks. It appears that reading is taught whenever there is class time left and no more important agendas have to be covered (the reading lesson segments below were actually recorded in the middle of the double period). This helps explain why there are quite a number of teaching segments on the English textbook.

From these observations, I tend to believe that teaching reading is not taken seriously. I found this situation rather weird and uncomfortable and I attempted to show my concerns to her. As she responded, there were always so many matters to handle within the limited class time. Apart from teaching, classroom management and school administration occupy much of the lesson. That is why she could not conduct a complete reading or speaking lesson and has to carry out a number of teaching-related / -unrelated agendas. She also commented that English textbooks are the central English learning material in her school and in particular, English language teachers of lower form students regard it as an integral component of English language lessons. As such, the lower form students have to bring it to class almost every day.

Basically, Mrs. Lee has done a lot of teacher talk in the reading lesson. She typically starts by doing a review with the class. Then, she nominates an individual student to stand up to read the specific paragraph aloud. Yet, there are a few cases where she also accepts students' bids. When the student encounters pronunciation problems, she offers help immediately. After that, she summarizes the main points of the paragraph. While doing that, she explains difficult vocabulary items, offers examples and draws on the students' previous knowledge and lifeworld. These steps are repeatedly carried out in L2 until the target portion of the passage has been gone through.

### **3. 'PAPER' – PROVIDING GROUNDS FOR CLASSROOM VERBAL PLAY**

In this section, I shall illustrate how a verbal play is formed and kept going within the IRF format afforded by Mrs. Lee and her students.

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<sup>3</sup> It means two consecutive lessons. Generally, each English lesson lasts about 35 minutes.

Below is the excerpt taken from a double period in which Mrs. Lee has already accomplished a few teaching goals. After checking answers on the grammar test, Mrs. Lee directed the class to the English textbook to continue with the rest of the reading comprehension passage. The reading comprehension passage is all about Christmas.

The excerpt is developed after an appointed student has finished reading a paragraph aloud. While Mrs. Lee is going through a recipe for the 'Tropical Christmas Pudding', she comes across 'greased paper', a term which she aims to illustrate.

The verbal play starts right after Mrs. Lee's elicitation from the students on the meanings of 'greased paper'<sup>4</sup>. Throughout the excerpt, you will not only notice cases where the students overly challenge the teacher's descriptions and explanations but also learn a lot of different kinds of paper that are contributing by the students to keep the language play going.

Before going further, let me briefly clarify the meanings of the papers appeared repeatedly in the excerpt:

- Ngau4-jau4-zi2 - a kind of drawing paper which is translucent and widely used in Geography lessons
- Kap1-jau4-zi2 - a kind of kitchen paper used for absorbing excessive cooking oil
- Min6-jau4-zi2 - a kind of cosmetics paper which is mainly for women to absorb excessive face oil
- A4-zi2 - a kind of plain paper for copiers, laser, ink-jet printers, facsimile machines and offset presses
- Syut3-lei6-zi2 - a kind of drawing paper which is very delicate, breakable, transparent

### 3.1 How and why does 'paper' matter?

In order to allow readers to grasp a quicker understanding, the whole excerpt will be divided into several smaller units which are followed by descriptions and analyses.

#### EXCERPT<sup>5</sup>

{A STUDENT HAS JUST FINISHED READING A PARAGRAPH ALOUD, MRS. LEE BEGINS TO GO OVER THE MAIN POINTS WITH THE CLASS}

<sup>4</sup> It actually refers to 'baking papers', which normally does not exist. It can only be made when we grease the tin or a thin paper sheet with butter before baking cakes.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix for more detailed transcription notes.

- 1 T: YES:: steam for eight to ten hours {T REPEATS THE  
 2 LAST SENTENCE OF THE PARAGRAPH}..do you know  
 3 GREASED::, GREASED PAPER::..paper that is..you you have a  
 4 paper...You brush some OIL ON TO {SS HUBBUB} IT::...you  
 5 BRUSH some OIL ON TO IT...{T GESTICULATES}  
 6 S1: Ngau4-jau4-zi2 <literally: 'butter paper' – a kind of  
 7 paper which is generally used for drawing>! {IN A MOCKING  
 8 TONE} {SS LAUGH}

Despite the fact that this excerpt is rather lengthy, it provides us with a perfect example illustrating how the students tease the teacher on one trivial issue. After the student has finished reading the paragraph aloud, Mrs. Lee begins to discuss the main points of the paragraph with the class. She first checks if the students understand the lexical item 'greased' (lines 2-3). Instead of eliciting from the class, Mrs. Lee instantaneously offers the explanation herself, which is followed by a pause (lines 3-5). The pause at that moment appears to be interpretable as an invitation for student response. Without delaying the teacher goes further with the explanation and any sorts of nomination, a student (S1) takes the lead to stretch his imagination. His very first proposal *ngau4-jau4-zi2* (meaning: baking papers) (line 6) suggests that the student seems to have been impelled by the teacher's L2 explanation, particularly by her accentuation on the lexical item 'oil' (lines 4-5). One can also be convinced that the student may know or may have some speculation in mind as he could have proposed another kind of paper even though this is done mockingly and rather inappropriately. To a minimum, we have reason to conclude that the student has paid attention to the teacher and has activated his previous/background knowledge (e.g., the student may have learnt this kind of paper used for drawing maps in Geography lessons). Sharing the same L1 meaning with the L2 term 'greased paper', his L1 proposal *ngau4-jau4-zi2* indicates a start in the language play.

- 9 T: NOT *ngau4-jau4-zi2*:: <literally: 'butter paper' – a kind  
 10 of paper which is generally used for drawing>!..IS (???)..is  
 11 BAKING PAPER..but...{T OBVIOUSLY RAISES HER TONE} {SS  
 12 HUBBUB}  
 13 S2: *Kap1-jau4-zi2* <literally: 'oil absorption paper' – a kind  
 14 of paper for cooking purpose; to absorb excessive oil>! {IN A  
 15 MOCKING TONE} {SS LAUGH}  
 16 T: NOT, it is NOT a kind of PAPER:: {T GRIMACES}  
 17 [S3: *Min6-jau4-zi2* <literally: 'face oil paper' – a kind of  
 18 paper which is mainly for women to absorb their excessive face oil>!  
 19 {IN A MOCKING TONE} {SS LAUGH}  
 20 T: It is a PAPER...that you..you BRUSH YOURSELF..BRUSH  
 21 OIL ON TO IT {T GESTICULATES} *Nei5 zi6-gei1 laa1 jau5*  
 22 *zeong1 zi2 laak3, nei5 m4 soeng2 keoi5 ci1-dai2, so2-ji5 le1 nei5 zi6-*  
 23 *gei2 jau4 di1 jau4 soeng2 heoi2 gam2 joeng4* <you have a paper, you

- 24 don't want (the food) to get stuck to the medium and therefore you  
 25 brush oil on to the paper>! {T GESTICULATES} {SS LAUGH AND  
 26 YELL}...Okay..I have ALREADY:: said GREASED PAPER is  
 27 NOT:: a kind of PAPER M4 hai6 jat1-zung2-zí6 lai4 gaa3, nei5  
 28 mou4 lam2 zyu6 jau6 me5 zí6, jau6 me1 ge3 zí6 aa1, ji4 hai6 nei5  
 29 go1 zoeng1 zí6 hou2 laak3 nei5 go1 di1 oi3 lai4 zyu2-sik6-jung6.  
 30 jau6 di1 zí6 zyu2-sik6-jung6 jau5 di1 zí6, nei5 ji1 gaa3 <not a kind  
 31 of paper, don't think that it is such and such a kind of paper, it is, in  
 32 fact, your paper, okay, the paper you use of cooking purpose. there is  
 33 such a kind of paper, there is a paper, that you want to>  
 34 GREASED..GREASED:: Gaa1-jau4 aa1 maa1 <it means greased>!  
 35 {T LOOKS TONGUE-TIED} {SS YELL} GREASED: Hou2-jau4  
 36 <very greasy>! GREASED:: Zik1 hai6 hou2-lap6 <that means very  
 37 sticky>! {T BREATHES OUT DEEPLY}

Mrs. Lee appears to have sensed the student's mocking intent as she immediately responds by deliberately raising her tone. Her response can be discernible as a 'warning', which is structurally realized in an 'L2-L1' pattern (i.e., NOT *ngau4-jau4-zí2*) and an officially appropriate L2 expression (lines 9-12). While her attempt to prevent and stop the growth and expansion of the mockery is evidently not effective, another student (S2) puts forward his imaginative and creative L1 proposal *kap1-jau4-zí2*, literally oil-absorbing paper (meaning: kitchen papers) (line 13), which structurally corresponds to the preceding proposal *ngau4-jau4-zí2*. The employment of 'but' and the pause coming next in her response (line 11) seems to be perceptible by the students as a legitimate occasion to propose. Actually, the students have already got ready for fun or even got very involved in participating in the verbal play as the recordings clearly capture the students' laughter (lines 8, 15). The L1 impish verbal proposals not only help us appreciate the students' ingenuity but they also convey an interesting but reflective message: *the students themselves have a different agenda: not that of learning L2 lexical items but that of verbal play* (i.e., finding as many three-syllable words as they can to match the 'butter paper').

While Mrs. Lee seems to know that the students are contributing more proposals than enough, and their acts of contributing are officially acceptable, she still tries hard to deny their attempts (line 16). As the interactive verbal-play-cycle goes on, the L1 impish proposals become less appropriate and new participants begin to join in. A student (S3) self-selects to put forward a rather unimaginable proposal *min6-jau4-zí2* (meaning: cosmetics papers) closely after Mrs. Lee's negation (line 17). This artful proposal permits us to see how sharp the student is. After the teacher follow-up, he resolutely self-selects to continue the verbal-play-cycle by offering *min6-jau4-zí2*, which is in fact a quick, original and creative proposal. We could also appreciate the richness of the student's background knowledge because *min6-jau4-zí2* is unlikely well within his



knowledge. For one thing, *min6-jau4-zi2* is a kind of cosmetics paper used mainly by females. For another, the institutional context (boys' school) does not seem to allow him to easily access such pieces of knowledge. These assumptions are certainly limited to my observations and knowledge of the students, and need further examinations.

The ridiculing verbal practices *ngau4-jau4-zi2*, *kap1-jau4-zi2* and *min6-jau4-zi2* seem to be discernible as bait to motivate Mrs. Lee to reiterate her former explanation. On top of that, the teacher's clarification is sequentially done in L2 and L1 (lines 20-37). Beyond her effort, we can acknowledge the cost she has paid. First of all, she is cajoled to go against her English language teaching philosophy (i.e., a language should be taught in that language only) and switches to L1. Though Mrs. Lee is unwilling to switch to the mother tongue, it looks paradoxically highly effective at that moment as it is the shared classroom language which can undoubtedly make her justification more accessible and understandable. Second of all, Mrs. Lee attempts to enrich the justification. Apart from articulating the nature of 'greased paper' (lines 20-23; 26-30), she furnishes the L1 equivalent of 'greased' ('*Gaa1-jau4 aa1 maal*', '*Hou2-jau4*', '*Zik1 hai6 hou2-lap6*') as well (lines 34-36).

- 38 [S4: *Mel jau4 aa1* <what kind of oil>? {IN A MOCKING TONE}  
 39 {SS LAUGH}  
 40 T: {T GRIMACES} *Gam2 aa1 gan2 hai6 sik6-dak1 gol di1*  
 41 *jau4 laa1, nei5 ho2-ji5 le1 jung4 zo2 di1 ngau4-jau4 keoi5, nei5 ho2*  
 42 *ji5 jung4 zo2 di1 ngau4-jau4 keoi5, gam2 ne5 jin4 hau6 le1 sou2*  
 43 *lok6 gol zoeng1 zi6 gol dou6*, Okay:: <certainly, we are talking about  
 44 the oil for consumption, you can melt the butter and then brush it on to  
 45 the paper>? {T gesticulates}  
 46 S1: *Gam2 mai1 jau6 hai6 zi6 lo1* <it is a paper after all>! {IN A  
 47 MOCKING TONE} {S1 SNEERS}  
 48 T: *Nei5 soeng2 jiu3 GREASED PAPER go3 gaa12-sik1 aa1*  
 49 *maal gam2 mai1 jat1-zoeng1, gam2 mai1 zi6-gei2 jau4 soeng2*  
 50 *keoi5 lo1* <It is you guys who demand the explanation of greased paper,  
 51 after all, it is a paper, that you brush some oil on to it>! {T  
 52 BREATHES OUT DEEPLY} {THE SCHOOL BELL IS RINGING}  
 53 {SS LAUGH AND YELL}  
 54 S1: *Gam2 mai1 ngau4-jau4-zi2 lo1* <after all, it means 'butter  
 55 paper' – a kind of paper which is generally used for drawing>! {IN A  
 56 MOCKING TONE} {S1 SNEERS}

While the effectiveness of the code-switching has not been assessed yet, a student (S4) starts off another verbal play (line 38). His proposal is entirely different from those former ones. And yet, we have reason to believe that the mocking proposal is developed closely after the L1 equivalents of 'greased'. The student's initiation *Mel jau1 aa1* (meaning: 'what kind of oil?') is a

premeditated distortion of *Gau1-jau4 aal maal* (meaning: 'greasy') and *Hou2-jau4* (meaning: 'very greasy'). This distortion appears to be induced by their different perceptions on *jau4*. The L1 translation *jau4* can generally be applied to the L2 lexical items 'greased' and 'oil'. However, this application will bring out different interpretations, as *jau4* can be hearable as either a noun or an adjective. Actually, the teacher refers to its pre-modifying form (as in 'greased paper'), that is of more intangible meanings whereas the student refers to its noun form, that is of more concrete, describable and tangible meanings (e.g., peanut oil, vegetable oil). In fact, *jau4* is more commonly understood as 'oil' than 'greased' as the former is believed to be well within the student's English vocabulary knowledge.

The student's initiation *Me1 jau4 aal* (line 38) does cause a big sensation at that moment as some student laughter is shown in the video and audio recordings. Above all, it elicits feedback from the teacher as well. *Gam2 aal gam2 hai6 sik6 dak1 go1 di1 jau1 laal* (meaning: it certainly refers to the oil for consumption) (lines 40-41) seems to confirm the presupposition: the student perceives *jau4* as its meaning of 'consumption' but not that of conceptual sense. What follows is a more acceptable justification of 'greased paper', which seems however not appreciated at all. One may note that the originator of *ngau4-jau4-zi2* (S1) begins to join in again. *Gam2 mail jau6 hai6 zi6 lo1* (meaning: it is paper after all) (line 46) seems like a public challenge to Mrs. Lee's justification. Interestingly, this time Mrs. Lee defends herself by a retreat: *Nei5 soeng2 jiu3 GREASED PAPER go3 gau2-sik1 aal maal, gam2 mail jat1-zoeng1, gam2 mail zi6-gei2 jau4 soeng2 keoi5 lo1* (meaning: it is you guys who demand the explanation of 'GREASED PAPER', that is, a paper that you brush (some oil) on to it) (lines 48-50).

Aside from the fact that the students did not overtly request an explanation of 'greased paper', the retreat is actually ambiguous: it can be hearable as an indirect acknowledgement of the student's comment or as uncertainty about the proposed justification. These assumptions in fact can be verified without much deferment. The student (S1) has never thought of letting Mrs. Lee go. Instead, he precisely grabs her retreat to resume his very first impish proposal *ngau4-jau4-zi2* (line 6). His sneering tone is especially revealing (lines 47, 56). It seems to convey to Mrs. Lee that 'greased paper' is after all the same as *ngau4-jau4-zi2* as both of them are greased with butter.

57 T: Ngau4-jau4-zi2 m4 hai6 jau4 di1 ngau4-jau4 soeng2 keoi5  
58 go1 zoeng1 zi6 dou6 aal, ngau4-jau4 zi2 oi3 lai4 guk6-daan3-gou1  
59 aal <'butter paper' – (a kind of paper which is generally used for  
60 drawing) does not mean that you brush some butter on it, it means  
61 another different kind of paper that is used for baking cakes>! {T  
62 GRIMACES}

The resumption successfully triggers off another round of teacher L1 evaluation and explanation (lines 57-62). It also allows us to see how skillful the student entices the teacher away from explaining 'greased paper' to explaining *ngau4-jau4-zi2*.

One may query why the verbal play can artfully go on and on. Some may suggest that the students themselves are ultimately naughty and disobedient which may have certain validity. Others may stress the teacher's incompetence in managing the students. Certainly, the underlying cause is not as simple and cursory as it looks. And yet, we can say that the teacher and the students are holding different standpoints. These standpoints, however, seem equally explainable from both participants' perspectives. If we look at the excerpt over and again as we may derive the following possibilities:

- (1) the students do not know that the L1 translation *ngau4-jau4-zi2* can be applied to both 'baking paper' and 'paper for drawing purposes'
- (2) they are confused by the teacher's explanation
- (3) the teacher believes that the students construe *ngau4-jau4-zi2* as 'paper for drawing purposes' rather than 'baking paper'
- (4) the students do not know the L2 expression 'baking papers'

Assumption (1) seems reasonable because the inexactness and inclusiveness of the L1 translation *ngau4-jau4-zi2* may confuse the students. This is especially plausible when the students have no previous knowledge of 'baking paper'. In fact, if we look at the sex distribution and subjects of the school, we may have reason to believe so. Assumptions (2) and (3) look possible too. The teacher has never succeeded in stating the different meanings of *ngau4-jau4-zi2* but at the same time, she seems to believe that the students are holding a different interpretation from hers. That is why she keeps saying that *ngau4-jau4-zi2* does not mean 'baking paper'. Assumption (4) appears less convincing. If we go back to the excerpt lines 10-11, we may note that the teacher did introduce the legitimate L2 expression 'baking paper' for *ngau4-jau4-zi2*, which seems however not to be learnt at all. The students at that moment are actually oriented towards laughing and yelling. Both the video and audio recordings show that the vast majority of them are not attentive to Mrs. Lee no matter what she is doing and saying (lines 11-12).

- 63 S3: Gam2 mai1 zik1 hai6 ngau4-jau4-zi2 <after all, it means  
 64 'butter paper' - a kind of paper that is used for drawing>! {IN A  
 65 MOCKING TONE} {S3 SNEERS} {SS HUBBUB}  
 66 T: OKAY::...HERE...GREASED..GREASED::= {'S5' RAISES  
 67 HIS HAND} =Yes  
 68 S5: {S5 STANDS UP} Waak6-dei6-tou4 go3 di1 hai2 me1 gei3  
 69 zi2= <what do we call the paper used for drawing maps>? {SS  
 70 HUBBUB - MAKING GUESSES AMONG SMALL GROUPS}

- 71 T: {T LOOKS TONGUE-TIED} =Waak6-dei6-tou4 <draw  
 72 maps>? {T SEEMS OFF HER HEAD AND TURNS TO ME TO  
 73 SEE IF I KNOW THE NAME OF THE PAPER}  
 74 O<sup>6</sup>: Syut3-lei6 zi2 {SS LOOK AT THE RESEACHER}  
 75 =Yes:: {T LOOKS RELIEVED} aa1 syut3-lei6-zi2, hai2 aa1, syut3-  
 76 lei6-zi2, waak6-dei6-tou4 go3 di1 aa1, hou2-bok3 go3 di1 aa1, tau3-  
 77 ming4 go3 di1 aa1 <literally: 'snow pear paper' - a kind of paper  
 78 which is very thin, soft, delicate, breakable, transparent and mainly  
 79 used for drawing purpose, they are used for drawing maps, they are  
 80 thin and transparent>! {SS HUBBUB} Okay..GREASED PAPER..that  
 81 is you GREASED::..GREASED the paper= [S1: Me1 lai1 gaal  
 82 <what is it>? {IN A MOCKING TONE} =you use OIL to BRUSH  
 83 OIL onto the paper {T GESTICULATES}=  
 84 S1: Hai2 mai1 zik1 hai2 A4-zi2 aa1 <does that mean A4 paper>  
 85 {IN A MOCKING TONE} {SS LAUGH AND YELL}  
 86 T: {T GRIMACES} Haa? You go home and ask your  
 87 MOTHER whether {T LOOKS TWISTED}= [S1: Ngo5 aa3-maal  
 88 m4 zi3 <My mother does not know that>! {IN A MOCKING TONE}  
 89 {CHALLENGES THE T'S SUGGESTION} {SS LAUGH} {A  
 90 SUDDEN RISE IN VOLUME} =whether you can use an A4  
 91 PAPER::..okay..you can go {SS HUBBUB} to the MARKET..you can  
 92 go to the MARKET...do you know the..GLAD..Gaai1-nang4 <the  
 93 brand name of wrap paper>! GLAD::..they have that kind of  
 94 paper..okay..For cooking purpose::..the paper for cooking  
 95 purpose::..okay..{T LOOKS ANGRY AND SOUNDS COLD, SHE  
 96 ALSO BREATHEs OUT DEEPLY AND PUTS HER HEAD  
 97 DOWN TO THE ENGLISH TEXTBOOK}..okay the  
 98 LAST paragraph {A SUDDEN RISE IN VOLUME}..

Another student (S3) subsequently manipulates and expands his crony's (S1) sneering tone *Gam2 mai1 jau6 hai6 zi6 lo1* (meaning it is a kind of paper after all) (line 63) to *Gam2 mai1 zik1 hai6 ngau4-jau4-zi2* (meaning: it is the 'butter paper' after all) (line 54) which again catches Mrs. Lee's attention. Though the two students (S1 & S3) mockingly and scornfully express more or less the same idea, that of the latter (S3) sounds more influential and reassuring, which appears to be supported by the students' hubbub (line 65). The sudden disquiet seems to reveal that Mrs. Lee's explanation is motivating more students. From the video and audio recordings, we can sense how downcast Mrs. Lee is. Verbally, her utterance *OKAY::..HERE..GREASED..GREASED::* (line 66) is lengthened and stressed. Non-verbally, she grimaces and looks crestfallen. The syntactmatic and paralinguistic cues however cannot help her secure an exchange for a termination of verbal play or even simply a pause. Instead, her telegraphic utterance with obvious pauses permits the students to formulate

<sup>6</sup> 'O' denotes the researcher.

another impish proposal. A student (S5) makes a bid by raising his hand (lines 66-67). This time, the student does not propose but he asks for the name of the map-drawing papers which is followed by a piece of students' hubbub embarks (lines 69-70). The student's question, which is far deviant from the former proposals, is not immediately answered by Mrs. Lee. By repeating one of the purposes of the paper *waak6-dei6-tou4* (meaning: draw maps) (line 70), we may understand that Mrs. Lee does not know the answer. This is actually defended by her facial expression and behavior: *she looks tongue-tied and turns to me to seek for help*. While I am doing the recording and observation at the end of the classroom, her eye contact invites me to offer the correct expression: *syut3-lei6-zi2* (lines 71-80).

My suggestion has brought Mrs. Lee out of the embarrassment. Her relief is followed by further L1 descriptions of the new term (lines 75-77). The students' hubbub seems to remind Mrs. Lee to get back to the main agenda (line 80). While attempting to accomplish the hidden reminder, a student (S3) puts forward a playful question *Me1 lai1 gaal* (meaning: what is it?) (line 81). While the answer is still pending, his contribution seems to summon another participant (S1) to join and support the language game (lines 84-85). The proposal *Hai2 mai1 zik1 hai2 A4-zi2 aal* (meaning: does that mean A4 papers?) helps us experience the student's (S1) keenness and assiduity as one of the verbal game players. His intent to lure and hold back the teacher into the verbal trap appears to be crowned with great success: he puts the teacher into a psychologically twisted situation and makes her digress from the prepared explanations to respond to his mocking proposal (lines 84-85). Nevertheless, her conformity does not seem rewarding which sounds particularly unwelcoming to a student (S1). This student, being supported by other players, sternly presents his judgment over the teacher's proposition: *Ngo5 aa3-maa1 m4 zi3* (lines 87-88).

One can be convinced that these instances of verbal play are well and systematically fabricated in the sense that the students make good use of the legitimate discourse formats normally used for vocabulary teaching / learning to slip in their impish verbal practices. It seems that this cycle never ends until Mrs. Lee has chosen to ignore the students and forcibly got back the authority (lines 97-98).

This vicious cycle, afforded by the 'IRF' format (Grahame & Jardine, 1991; Lin, 1996) shown in the whole excerpt above is believed to be formed because of the ungovernable evaluation of the students' impish L1 proposals and the inability to provide the L1 equivalent for greased paper. Interestingly, Mrs. Lee acknowledges each L1 proposal but none of it helps her get out of the verbal trap set by the students. It seems that her acknowledgements realized in L1 and L2 have allowed the students to keep the teasing going in a co-operative way. It seems not fair to say that the mocking verbal practices are and deliberately and

solely made up by the students themselves. It may be wiser to name this situation as a co-construction (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995). That is to say, if Mrs. Lee decides not to go into the clarification and simply provides the L1 equivalent for the students, their verbal practices may not have been formulated so publicly and successfully. Indeed, Mrs. Lee should immediately and directly stop the students whenever there are signs of 'fooling around'. As such, one can believe that these students are in fact clever to slip their playful acts in the present and legitimate classroom discourse (Lin, 1996).

Although one may argue that Mrs. Lee is trying to make her explanation more accessible, understandable and comprehensible, the effectiveness of such attempts remains debatable. In the first place, the L1 meaning offered by her appears inappropriate for greased paper. It also seems unwise to start off something additional when the students still cannot get rid of their confusion. Above all, it appears that Mrs. Lee should realize that her students are in fact teasing her. This is supported by their creative L1 proposals (e.g., lines 54-56). On that account, it is suggested that she should stick to the explanation that she has developed previously and should try to reiterate, rephrase it to help her students to simplify their comprehension. Besides, she should directly stop her students from inserting verbal play.

Indeed, the crux of the matter here tends to that: Mrs. Lee has failed to give her students the L1 equivalent of greased paper. In addition, she seems to have problems in judging when, where and how to use L1 to explain L2 lexical items.

#### **4. IMPLICATIONS: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM CLASSROOM VERBAL PLAY?**

Through the description and analysis of classroom impish verbal play practices, we can see the resistance and indigenous resources of some well-off junior form secondary school students of English in a reading lesson. A moment of reflection may lead us to question why this particular group of students has constantly shown their resistance to English language lessons. Their derisive classroom behaviors seem to carry their public announcements. They appear to call attention to their discontentment about the English curriculum (e.g., the teaching methodology and styles, the lesson organization, the teaching and learning materials, tasks and activities), eagerness to depart from the uninteresting learning context, enthusiasm in asserting their creativity and bringing their native resources to their everyday encounters.

The English curricular resources employed in the lesson excerpt above appear to have provided the means for understanding the students' subversive behaviors. In the first place, it seems that the teacher seldom succeeds in engaging the students to learn in a meaningful, interesting and cooperative way in the

language classroom. The way she carries the lesson seems to be problematic too. In the lesson excerpt, one may note that there is much teacher talk going on. The talk itself sounds however not adequate to arouse the students' interest and get them to participate in the lesson tasks and activities. While repeating similar explanations to the target lexical item (i.e., greased paper) is only one of the pieces of evidence, the failure to offer convincing reasons when negating and presenting officially appropriate explanations to the students seem to help us understand further and better why the students have chosen not to interpret the teaching in the main stream, but tried hard to go against, substitute and experiment with the teaching by creating fun for themselves and resisting the English curriculum in order to claim and assert their identity and, expand and highlight their existence within the English-dominant-territory. If we look at the teacher and the students separately, there is hardly any doubt see that the two classroom participants are actually operating different strategies with different goals. It happens to me that the teacher primarily aims to finish the reading passage on schedule whereas the students attempt to strive for getting and expanding the space to develop and channel their linguistic creativity and to keep their creative play going.

It sounds reasonable to flexibly employ different teaching approaches to language students of different levels and backgrounds. In a way, it looks as if that the comical effects created by the impish verbal play illustrated by the lesson excerpt above could be pedagogically capitalized on and manipulated as alternative and plausible classroom resources. For instance, the teacher could elicit the English equivalents from the students after their L1 mocking proposals (e.g. cosmetics papers for *min6-jau4-zi2*). By doing English lessons in such a way, it seems to have the effect of mediating between the two different conflicting agendas and, help achieve a more animated and exciting learning environment.

My data have only revealed one side of the classroom story and seem specific to this group of well-off school children. It appears that accomplishing and organizing English lessons in such a mechanical manner and monotonous context could be realized and characterized contrarily by different levels and backgrounds of student, and in different institutional contexts. What if the teacher has to teach students of very different levels and backgrounds? What classroom behaviors can we predict? It looks as though that we could sketch some other scenarios of such an alienating language learning environment.

The teacher could suffer a lot if s/he would have to teach very disruptive students, who are usually found in schools of low banding. These students mostly come from a lower SES and they have very little access to English resources. This particular group is very uncompromising because such an alienating language learning environment goes very much against their Cantonese-dominant lifeworld. Their native worlds and linguistically, culturally

insulated environment make them suspect the usefulness and meaning of learning English language (Lin, 2000). In addition, their social backgrounds teach them that they could never get rid of their low SES. As such, these students may be very obstructive to their English curricular resources. For instance, they may be very hostile to their English language teacher by ignoring the teaching and taking over the teacher's authority.

The students in my classroom data seem to be rather ambivalent in their classroom life and role. Because of their socioeconomic backgrounds, on the one hand, they happen to understand that they have the responsibility to respond to the public lesson discourse. On the other hand, they subvert the English curricular resources by publicly showing their resistance during English language lessons. These students however situate in a more prominent position than the previous group as they are always bounded with compensatory channels of linguistic resources and will not suffer even when they do not learn anything in their school English lessons.

Another possible case could be that the students may not enjoy learning English under such a programmed manner and tedious context but they never publicly demonstrate their dissatisfaction and resistance to the lessons. Such behaviors could be rather gender- / age-specific and be readily found in girls' schools. In a way, these students are respectful. They may regard that being cooperative and receptive during lessons is the major duty of students during lessons. However, their cooperation does not mean that they enjoy the English language lessons. Rather, it might reflect their imprisoned situation created by their school norms (Foucault, 1995).

The last ideal group may be those enthusiastic students who enjoy learning under such a manner and context and always learn in a collaborative way. These students may get used to such a traditional alienating environment. In all likelihood, these students could be found in schools of all sorts.

It looks apparent that within such a continuum students of various types could have quite distinctive goals in their mind. Such pieces of information are pedagogically revealing. It helps us interpret and explain their different behaviors in English lessons. It also acts as a guiding principle for English language teachers to design appropriate learning tasks to facilitate different learning styles. At a local level, for language students of low banding schools who have rather pessimistic language learning goals in mind, teachers should try to encourage them by letting them see how worthwhile language learning is. Affirming and building on their linguistic and cultural resources could be a first step (Lin, 1997). During classroom activities, language teachers may need to help students to find out the participation structures in a manner that they feel comfortable and consistent with their native worlds to arouse and promote their interests towards language learning (cf. Au, 1980). For language students of



high banding schools (e.g., those in my classroom data), teachers should activate the students' creativity by challenging their proposals. English language teachers should also improve and upgrade their English curricular resources, particularly their professional expertise occasionally. At a global level, we may consider transforming the education system and alter the present language curricular so as to build and expand a dialogic channel between the students' native language and the socioeconomically dominant language – English (Lin, 1996, 1997).

## 5. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the paper, I described the school, teacher and students of the reading lesson data video-recorded in a rather prestigious Hong Kong secondary school. I also described how the teacher generally organized the reading lessons: appointing a student to read a paragraph aloud and then highlighting teaching points such as vocabulary by either eliciting from the well-to-do students or by offering explanations directly. I have found that while the teacher is accomplishing the teaching goals, the students tend to respond to them mockingly. The consequences of their different agendas are what this paper aims to present to display the students' enthusiasm in departing from the uninteresting learning context and asserting their creativity and bringing their native resources to their daily encounters. It is suggested that language teachers should learn from a group of students with different learning goals and behaviors to design culturally appropriate learning tasks to facilitate different learning styles.

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### Appendix: Notes on Transcription

- (1) English is transcribed orthographically and Cantonese is transcribed in the Cantonese Romanization Scheme (LSHK).
- (2) English translations of Cantonese utterances are provided in pointed brackets < >.
- (3) The English utterances, Cantonese utterances, and the English are each written in a different font type.
- (4) Line number is given at the beginning of each sentence of the excerpts.
- (5) 'T' denotes 'Teacher'; 'Ss': 'Students' and 'Sn' where 'n' represents the number of the student, e.g. 'S1' means 'Student 1'.
- (6) '...' denotes a short pause which is not more than two seconds whereas '...' represents a long pause which is more than two seconds.
- (7) Contextual Information / The Transcriber's Comments is written in capital letters and placed in curly brackets and in bold typeface: {}.
- (8) Unintelligible utterances are indicated by '(??)'.
- (9) Contiguous utterances are marked by equal signs. They are used to indicate the connection of the broken utterances of an on-going speech cause by interruption.
- (10) Accentuation is marked by capitalization. Also, the stressed syllables and lengthy sounds are indicated by colons.
- (11) Simultaneous utterances are marked by '[', which indicates the point where another utterance join the on-going one.

# Feedback to Writing: Focusing on Grammar, or Content, or Both

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reports a study of the effects of different kinds of feedback to writing on the quality of re-writes. The scripts of 38 Cantonese-speaking undergraduate students of English in Hong Kong were randomly assigned to four groups, receiving, respectively: (1) no feedback; (2) feedback on grammar; (3) feedback on content; and (4) feedback on grammar and content. Results suggest that: (1) to improve content, feedback may not be necessary; (2) to improve grammar score, feedback focusing on content only, or that on both grammar and content, is effective; (3) to improve overall impression of writing, feedback may not be necessary; and (4) to reduce error ratios, feedback on grammar is necessary.

## 1. L2 RESEARCH ON TEACHER FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS' WRITING

While most L1 studies<sup>1</sup> on feedback have not suggested a clear direction for the best approach to responding to students' writing, a number of current L2 studies,

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<sup>1</sup> For reviews, see Leki 1990, Knoblauch and Brannon 1981, Hillocks 1986; for research studies, see Carnelli 1980, Herrington and Cadman 1991, McKendy 1990, Sperling 1990, Wong 1988.

among other research work on ESL students' preferences about and reactions to teacher feedback to their writing, have attempted to look critically at the overall usefulness of the various focuses of teacher feedback and the nature of teacher commentary in relationship to students' revision. Tannacito's (1995) annotated bibliography on ESL/EFL writing recorded 61 entries on the topic of "feedback" and 50 entries on "responding" with works from textbooks, journals, conference papers, dissertations and theses, indicating growing bodies of research in the area.

#### ***A. Students' preferences about and reactions to teacher feedback***

Abundant evidence from the literature shows that L2 students find feedback on grammar useful (Cohen, 1987; Enginarlar, 1993; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994 & 1996; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994). In all these studies, students generally prefer grammar comments to content concerns. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994, 1996) studies specifically examined the differences between foreign and second language writers and found more complex results: Foreign language students reported that they learned the most when their teacher highlighted their grammatical errors and mechanical mistakes, while ESL students were interested in comments on both grammar and content. One possible explanation for such findings, as suggested by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, is that foreign language and ESL students have different expectations; the former group tends to practice the language through writing while the latter group has to use their writing skills for different academic purposes other than in the language class.

A number of previous studies indicate that, in spite of current composition trends to delay treatment of surface errors (defined as errors which do not affect the underlying meaning, thus differing from the definition of grammar errors in the present study which includes errors which affect the underlying meaning as well), teachers still respond most frequently to errors at the sentence level. Applebee (1981) found that many teachers maintained a strong interest in grammatical correctness and the majority of the teachers studied ranked mechanical errors as the most important criterion for responding to students' written work. Cumming's (1985) work reported that the ten experienced teachers under study marked an ESL essay only for surface errors. Similarly, Zamel's (1985) findings suggested that teacher feedback tended to concern itself more with accuracy in form (surface-level features of writing) than with meaning.

#### ***B. The overall usefulness of the various focuses of feedback***

Though most L2 studies on students' preference for teacher feedback reported that students favored grammar feedback and that teachers still paid a lot of attention to grammar, Ferris, Pezone, Tade, and Tinti's analysis of 1500 teacher comments on a sample of 111 ESL essay first drafts found that "grammar/mechanics comments were relatively infrequent on all papers" (1997:176).

Ferris' (1995, 1997) own studies on the nature of teacher commentary in relationship to students' reactions and revisions found that, while students paid most attention to comments on grammar, they also valued teachers' suggestions about their ideas and organization, especially in preliminary drafts. The two studies suggested that teachers might be shifting their priorities and responding more to students' ideas and organization than they did in the past. In the 1997 study, Ferris found that the teachers under study responded mostly to the content of students' writing and at the same time indicated students' major patterns of error by some in-text underlining and in endnotes. This combination of commentary proved to be useful in helping students make substantial and effective revisions.

Ferris' findings seem to lend support to some of the implications drawn in Fathman and Whalley's (1990) study and Robb, Ross, and Shortreed's (1986) study. Fathman and Whalley (1990) suggested that simultaneous content and grammar feedback could help students improve significantly when they rewrote their compositions though the mere act of rewriting without any feedback could in itself improve the content of the writing. Similarly, Robb et al. (1986) recommended that, as highly detailed comments on sentence-level errors did not help much, teachers could respond with feedback that would force students to attend to the shaping and restructuring of their ideas, or in other words, the content of their writing, and that less time-consuming methods of directing students' attention to errors would be enough.

While the above studies do not totally dismiss the provision of grammar feedback to students' writing, Truscott's (1996) extensive review on grammar correction in L2 writing classes poses a very strong argument against grammar correction. Truscott claimed that none of the research work done on grammar feedback to students' writing in both L1 and L2 domains proved to be useful or effective and that grammar correction in fact has harmful effects on students (in particular, see Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992). This review article further states that although students prefer grammar correction, "this does not mean that teachers should give it to them" (1996:359) and teachers should try to help students adjust to the absence of grammar correction. To Truscott, accuracy can probably be improved through extensive experience in reading and writing. In response to Truscott's review, Ferris pointed out that Truscott's arguments were premature, overly strong, and would potentially put students at risk, as these arguments are "based on limited, dated, incomplete, and inconclusive evidence" (1999:9). However, she agreed that Truscott made several important points that should be thoughtfully considered by teachers and researchers, and these called for further research on error correction including the accuracy of grammar feedback and instruction provided by teachers, and the effects of individual student differences on learners' willingness and ability to benefit from error correction.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT STUDY

Despite the amount of work done by L2 researchers, the debate between content focus and grammar focus persists, and different implications for L2 writing instruction are drawn in different studies. Further research is still needed. In an attempt to seek an effective approach to help L2 students improve their writing, the present researchers set out to investigate how and when teachers should correct errors and comment on content of students' writing. Specifically, the differential effects of three types of feedback were examined: feedback on form, feedback on content, and feedback on both form and content. In addition, the effect of getting no teacher feedback was also studied.

The impetus of the present research came from the study by Fathman and Whalley (1990) which asked these research questions: (1) How effective is teacher feedback that focuses on form in improving student writing? (2) How effective is teacher feedback that focuses on content in improving student writing? (3) When should teachers provide feedback that focuses on form versus content? In Fathman and Whalley's study, 72 students of primarily Asian and Hispanic backgrounds were enrolled in intermediate ESL college composition classes. They wrote a story. Their scripts were randomly assigned to four groups, receiving, respectively: (1) no feedback; (2) feedback on grammar; (3) feedback on content; and (4) feedback on grammar and content. Grammar feedback took the form of location of errors. There was no indication of the types or correct version of errors. Content feedback was given in terms of positive, general comments written on the top of the paper. The comments were short and varied only slightly between compositions. A few days later, the students re-wrote the story. Content was scored holistically, and grammar was scored as the number of errors made. Paired t-tests were conducted. Results showed that all groups significantly improved content (the groups with content feedback improved more); grammar improved only when grammar feedback was given; and focus on grammar in addition to content did not have a significant effect on content itself.

While replicating the basic design of comparing four treatments in Fathman and Whalley's study, the present study differs in various aspects: participants, measure, feedback, and scoring. In this study, the learners were of homogeneous L1 background - Chinese. They wrote an expository text<sup>2</sup>, which was part of their course syllabus. Text-specific comments on content of varied nature were given, which the investigators believe to be useful. When giving such specific comments, the investigators were well aware of the possible problem of text appropriation, which risks confusing the student's purpose in writing the text with the teacher's own purpose in commenting (Sommers, 1982), and which is a worry shared by some researchers such as Caulk (1994) who would therefore tend to be general

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<sup>2</sup> The topic was: Who should teach our youngsters moral and family values?

and avoid making specific suggestions when responding to students' writing. The investigators also considered the implications of Reid's (1994) comment that the more assistance the teacher offers, the less responsibility students will take to improve their own writing. Despite this possibility, the investigators would agree with Hall that the problem of text appropriation should not be taken with an over-reaction and thus should not limit the teacher's responses. Otherwise, students may end up with some sort of "vacuous writing experience" (1995:160). In fact, the participants in the present study find text-specific comments common in their process of learning to write in English. The choice of such comments is in tune with Zamel's (1985) remark that students would tend to ignore comments on content if these comments were too general or vague.

Content score in the present study is a composite of two analytic scores - Content and Organization. Grammar is scored in two ways, first as a composite of three analytic scores - Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics, which take account of levels of effectiveness, sophistication, etc., of language form. Based on the assumption that the more one writes, the more mistakes s/he risks to make, an error ratio (the number of mistakes by the total number of words written) is calculated as a more informative measure of accuracy of language form. A total score, which is a summation of the content and grammar scores, forms an overall impression of the overall quality of writing. As for analysis, non-parametric signed-rank test is chosen as it is more appropriate for a small sample like the present one.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aimed to examine whether feedback has an effect on the quality of re-writes in terms of content, grammar, and overall impression of writing. Three research questions were formulated:

1. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the content of writing?
2. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the grammar of writing?
3. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the overall impression of writing?

Feedback was shown to have an effect on the quantity of writing in the study by Fathman and Whalley (1990). Quantity is not fluency. Quantity may be a strength or weakness. A longer text may mean writing readiness as a result of overcoming mental blocks (Tsang & Wong, 1993). Alternatively, it may be interpreted as writing wordiness, i.e., lacking succinctness. Evidence is needed, e.g., effectiveness and sophistication of mastery of language, without which length of writing can only be taken as an objective description of that piece of writing. Therefore,

while it remains interesting to find out whether feedback increases or decreases the amount of writing and whether any change in quantity of writing is significant, no research question is posed to address the issue separately in this study.

#### 4. METHOD

##### *A. Participants*

Thirty-eight Cantonese-speakers participated in the study. They are learners of English as a non-native language<sup>3</sup> in a university in Hong Kong. They represent the whole population of Year 1 English majors. They were randomly assigned to two writing classes<sup>4</sup> as part of their course of study. Their English proficiency may be described as intermediate.

##### *B. Procedure*

The writing class concerned lasted 14 weeks. In Week 13, they wrote on an expository topic for 60 minutes<sup>5</sup>. Their scripts were randomly assigned to four groups, receiving, respectively: (1) no feedback; (2) grammar feedback; (3) content feedback; and (4) grammar and content feedback.

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<sup>3</sup> In Hong Kong, English is co-official with the Chinese language, and English is a medium of instruction in some local secondary schools and tertiary institutions. It therefore cannot be defined as a foreign language. English, however, is rarely functional outside the domains of government, education, trade and commerce, and some professions. Its use is severely limited in daily activities, and the language cannot be adequately considered a full second language, i.e., as in a bilingual situation. Its compartmentalized functions in the territory are characteristic of, and its status is appropriately described as, an auxiliary language, as Luke and Richards (1982) define the term. Li (1999) does not regard Luke and Richards' description as any longer appropriate. Rather, he describes English as a value-added language. The authors of this paper prefer a value-free description of "non-native" language, which applies to the participants whose mother tongue is Chinese.

<sup>4</sup> One of the investigators was the instructor of the writing classes.

<sup>5</sup> In Weeks 1-12, students wrote and re-wrote on four topics - descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive. All received grammar feedback in the form of error location and content feedback in the form of text-specific comments on content and organization before the re-write. The feedback was like the type received by the fourth feedback group in the present study, that is, focusing concurrently on content and grammar, which was preferred by both the teacher and the students in the writing classes concerned.



Grammar feedback took the form of error location only. Errors, those affecting underlying meaning and those not, were underlined, but they were not classified or corrected. As Robb et al. (1986) suggested, direct correction might not benefit students' writing. Corrections at the sentence level and rule-reminders were not given since these might not improve students' level of written accuracy (Kepner, 1991).

Content feedback was written on the margin or as endnotes, depending on the space available. It was text-specific, and varied in nature and length. Some comments were short, general, and positive, e.g. "good point", "clear fact", "well thought out"; most were specific, signaling, or even making suggestions for improvement. While some comments may be as short as "How?" to request additional details, some comments may read as long as "Meaning what - there is a negative side to achievement, OR their achievement is misleading in the sense that it is bad behaviour in disguise, OR something else?".

Positive comments were usually short. Negative ones were both short and long, signaling different kinds of action for the writer. The comment "unclear meaning" simply urged the writer to clarify. "Unrelated" suggested re-think or re-write. "Big jump" indicated a need for improved transition. "Redundant" and "repetition" recommended deletion. An example of negative comment accompanied by a specific suggestion for improvement is "Misplaced. Should go under the previous paragraph 'modeling' or may be left out (repetitious and redundant here!)", providing the writer with details for further action. Neutral or negative comments may find expression in disagreement, hence, hinting on re-thinking or re-writing a certain part of the text, e.g. "Youngsters may not do what they 'should'. Parents' modeling may be more important than telling". Of the 179 comments made, 61 were positive (almost one-third); about two-thirds were a mixture of detailed suggestions for re-writes and disagreement or disapproval of the content or organization of the text. Criticisms, even in the absence of specific alternatives for re-writing, encouraged re-considering the text, thus, activating a critical stage of re-writing.

Although there is variability in the content feedback given within any text in groups (3) and (4), content feedback was "equivalent" across texts in the two groups in the sense that all texts concerned received a combination of short and long, general and specific, and negative and positive comments. That the same instructor provided all feedback ensured consistent treatment in the study.

The scripts from the four groups were then returned to the students in Week 14 (a week later) for re-writing. The students were given 60 minutes to complete their revisions in class, twice the amount of time given to the students in Fathman and Whalley's (1990) study. Originals and re-writes were scored in two ways. First, to ensure blind rating and inter-rater reliability, the essays were randomized and

graded by two independent raters<sup>6</sup> experienced in marking written work of the type of students participating in this research. The paradigm used was Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey's (1981) ESL Composition Profile with a total score ranging between 34 and 100 points on 5 analytic scales - content, organization, vocabulary, language use, mechanics. The raters were trained immediately prior to the rating. Inter-rater reliability as defined as a difference total score equal to or smaller than 10 points was achieved in the training without any prior discussion or adjustments. The scores of the two raters during the actual rating were averaged. A content score was arrived at by adding the content and organization scores (20-50 points); grammar score was obtained by adding the vocabulary, language use, and mechanics scores given by the raters (14-50 points); a total score resulted from adding the five analytic scores (34-100 points). The content, grammar, and total scores were entered for statistical analyses.

Secondly, the scripts were objectively assessed in error counts and word counts. An error ratio was obtained by dividing the total number of errors by the total number of words written in a composition. Length of writing was measured by the number of words written.

## 5. RESULTS

### *A. The three research questions*

An inter-rater reliability estimate of 0.9 was calculated for the total scores in terms of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. To determine whether a particular kind of feedback brings about significant improvement in students' re-writes, Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank tests were employed to analyze within-group performance. To find out which particular kind of feedback causes the most significant improvement, across-group comparisons were made using Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the difference scores on grammar, content, total, error ratios, and number of words as a dependent variable, and with the different kinds of feedback received as an independent variable. The alpha level for all statistical decisions is set at 0.05, as this level of significance is seen as neither overly liberal nor overly conservative in such an exploratory investigation.

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<sup>6</sup> Rater 1 graduated with a BA and a teacher's certificate in English from a university in Hong Kong, and had taught English for 12 years at secondary level locally and served as a marker of composition for the Hong Kong Examinations Authority by the time of rating. Rater 2 graduated with a BA and a teacher's certificate in Britain. Like Rater 1, Rater 2 had taught English locally for 10 years at secondary and tertiary levels by the time of rating.

Table 1 below summarizes group performance by content score, grammar score, total score, and error ratio.

Table 1: Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank tests for grammar scores, content scores, total scores, and error ratios on original compositions and re-writes

Groups	Content: score rank sums				Grammar: score rank sums			
	Negative rank sum	Cases	Positive rank sum	Cases	Negative rank sum	Cases	Positive rank sum	Cases
No feedback	10.0	4	0.0*	0	30.0	6	6.0	2
Grammar feedback	5.5	2	4.5	2	33.5	7	11.5	2
Content feedback	21.0	6	0.0*	0	21.0	6	0.0*	0
Grammar & Content feedback	36.0	8	0.0*	0	36.0	8	0.0*	0

Groups	Total: score rank sums				Error ratio: score rank sums			
	Negative rank sum	Cases	Positive rank sum	Cases	Negative rank sum	Cases	Positive rank sum	Cases
No feedback	25.5	6	2.5*	1	10.0	3	35.0	6
Grammar feedback	26.5	6	9.5	2	0.0**	0	55.0	10
Content feedback	28.0	7	0.0*	0	11.0	2	34.0	7
Grammar & Content feedback	36.0	8	0.0*	0	0.0**	0	55.0	10

\*Scores of re-writes are significantly higher than those for original compositions at 5% significance level.

\*\*Error ratios in re-writes are significantly lower than those in original compositions at 5% significance level.

For content scores, significant improvements were found with the groups of no feedback, content feedback only, and both grammar and content feedback. For grammar scores, significant improvements were found with the groups of content feedback only and both grammar and content feedback. For total scores, significant improvements were found with the groups of no feedback, content feedback only, and both grammar and content feedback. As for error ratios, significant reductions were found with the groups receiving grammar feedback only and both grammar and content feedback.

Table 2 below compares the performance of the four feedback groups by content score, grammar score, total score, and error ratio.

In all cases, except for error ratio, the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group scored the highest in mean ranking. According to the level of significance, differences between groups were found in content scores and error ratios only.

By multiple comparisons, significant differences in content scores were found between the grammar-feedback group and the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group. The grammar-feedback group did not improve content score. The concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group was the most effective of all groups; though statistically, it was not different from the no-feedback group or the content-feedback group.

Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA for grammar scores, content scores, total scores, and error ratios differences on original compositions and re-writes

Content scores difference			Grammar scores difference		
Groups	Mean rank		Groups	Mean rank	
No feedback	18.83		No feedback	17.78	
Grammar feedback	12.15		Grammar feedback	18.10	
Content feedback	21.06		Content feedback	15.83	
Grammar & Content feedback	26.05		Grammar & Content feedback	25.75	
Chi-Square	D.F.	Significance	Chi-Square	D.F.	Significance
8.0569	3	0.0449	4.5176	3	0.2107

Total scores difference			Error ratios difference		
Groups	Mean rank		Groups	Mean rank	
No feedback	17.61		No feedback	10.00	
Grammar feedback	15.40		Grammar feedback	29.10	
Content feedback	18.22		Content feedback	9.00	
Grammar & Content feedback	26.45		Grammar & Content feedback	27.90	
Chi-Square	D.F.	Significance	Chi-Square	D.F.	Significance
5.6513	3	0.1299	25.7177	3	0.0000

Where error ratios are concerned, significant differences were found between (1) the no-feedback group and the grammar-feedback group; (2) the no-feedback group and the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group; (3) the content-feedback group and the grammar-feedback group; (4) the content-feedback group and the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group. In other words, neither the no-feedback group nor the content-feedback group reduced error ratios; there were not any statistical differences between the two groups. The grammar-feedback group and the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group were both effective in reducing error ratios; yet the two groups did not differ significantly from each other.

### B. Length of writing

Table 3 below lists the results of Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank tests on the mean number of words in the originals and the re-writes for comparisons within groups.

Table 3: Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-rank tests for numbers of words in original compositions and re-writes

Groups	Negative rank sum	Cases	Positive rank sum	Cases
No feedback	45	9	0*	0
Grammar feedback	40	5	15	5
Content feedback	31	5	14	4
Grammar & Content feedback	44	8	11	3

\*Numbers of words in re-writes are significantly greater than those in original compositions at 5% significance level.

While the grammar-feedback group increased in length in the re-writes more than the content-feedback group, the concurrent-grammar-and-content-feedback group increased the least among the four groups. The only significant increase in length was found with the no-feedback group.

Table 4 below lists results of Krushal-Wallis one-way ANOVA on the length of writing for comparisons across groups.

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA for Number of Words Difference in Original Compositions and Re-writes

Groups		Mean rank
No feedback		13.17
Grammar feedback		21.45
Content feedback		21.00
Grammar & Content feedback		21.90
Chi-Square	D.F.	Significance
3.8613	3	0.2768

As there was no significant difference across groups, the increase in length produced by the no-feedback group was only marginally significant.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### A. The three research questions

The three research questions are re-stated below with major findings:

1. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the content of writing?  
No feedback (only re-writing), content feedback only, and concurrent grammar and content feedback are more or less effective in improving content. As in the study by Fathiman and Whalley (1990), focus on grammar in addition to content does not have a significant effect on content itself.
2. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the grammar of writing?  
Content feedback only, and concurrent grammar and content feedback are more or less effective in improving grammar score (vocabulary, language use, mechanics). Grammar feedback alone does not have a significant effect on grammar. Where reduction of error ratios is concerned, grammar feedback only, and concurrent grammar and content feedback are comparably effective. Content feedback alone does not reduce error ratios.
3. Which kind of feedback is most effective in improving the overall impression of writing?

No feedback (only re-writing), content feedback only, and concurrent grammar and content feedback are more or less effective in improving the overall impression (total score) of writing.

In fact, it seems easier to improve content score and total score by receiving feedback on content or simply by writing and re-writing. The process of re-writing, even without feedback, naturally encourages revision for better ideas, structure, or otherwise. However, it seems less easy to improve grammar. To improve grammar score (vocabulary, language use, mechanics), content feedback is necessary. Text-specific comments on content and organization "forces" re-thinking and re-writing, and hence revising language through which revising content takes place. To reduce error ratio, grammar feedback is necessary. Locating errors draws attention to grammar accuracy and thus helps eliminate errors.

### *B. Other issues arising from the findings*

Grammar feedback alone produces a significant reduction in error ratio without producing a significant increase in grammar score. Content feedback alone, on the contrary, produces a significant increase in grammar score without reducing error ratio significantly. What, then, is the relationship between grammar score and error ratio? Any possible explanation may have to take account of the nature of "grammar score" and "error ratio" as two categories for rating the scripts. "Grammar score" is a composite of vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, each of which is an analytic scale and takes account of effectiveness and sophistication etc. of the mastery of language form. It may take a longer time for improvement to show up, and such kind of improvement is less tangible. "Grammar score" is thus a high-inference criterion. "Error ratio", in contrast, is low-inference. It is tangible (tallying of errors and number of words written) and tends to take a shorter time for improvement to be brought to the surface. Another reason for the apparently inconclusive results in grammar may be the small sample size, which is a major limitation of the study.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Where the value of teacher feedback on students' writing is concerned, the present study tends to strike a resonant note with Chaudron's (1984) remark on the provision of feedback as an important component in the revision process of writing. Although the re-writing process itself, even without the aid of feedback, proves to be effective in improving content and overall impression of writing, grammar feedback is essential to reduce the number of errors in relation to the total length of writing, a finding which appears to differ from Truscott's (1996) claim that grammar correction does not work.

The present findings may suggest the relative strengths and weaknesses of different types of feedback. First, locating errors may focus the writer's attention on the correctness of language form only and thus reduces the number of mistakes (error ratio) without necessarily facilitating the effectiveness or sophistication of form (grammar score), or improving content and organization (content score), or overall impression of writing (total score). Had the grammar feedback been of a different type, the results might have been different. Text-specific comments on content and organization urge re-writing and, logically, changing language forms (grammar score) in order to mediate better content and organization (content score). This, in turn, contributes towards improved overall impression of writing (total score). As content feedback alone may improve both content and grammar, and grammar feedback alone further improves the accuracy of form, content feedback may precede grammar feedback in the process of writing. The first round of feedback may focus on content and the second on grammar to aim at rounded improvement in writing eventually (cf. Krashen, 1984). The present researchers therefore suggest that teachers focus on content prior to form.

Secondly, to gain in all aspects of writing as measured by content score, grammar score, total score, and error ratio, concurrent grammar and content feedback seems necessary. This implication corroborates Fathman and Whalley's (1990) and Ferris' (1997) studies. Thirdly, where there is a time constraint over marking, the process of re-writing a composition itself, in the absence of feedback, tends to improve the content and overall impression of writing. Although higher-level grammar concerns of language forms require content feedback and accuracy of language forms requires grammar feedback, the process of writing and re-writing may be an expedient alternative to facilitate effective writing.

Apart from the above pedagogical implications, the present findings lend support to the process approach to writing. The process of re-writing (no feedback) has its value, as the present study indicates re-writing alone may bring improvement in the content as well as overall impression of writing. De-emphasizing grammar accuracy in the initial stages of writing in the process approach is consistent with the phenomenon in this study that focusing on content would logically bring about some improvement in grammar, in addition to improved content.

While drawing implications, one has to take caution in that the study has a small sample. Additionally, because of the exploratory nature of this study, the present investigators did not aim at making generalizations, but rather at offering possible directions in the provision of teacher feedback on students' writing through examining the effectiveness of different types of teacher feedback focusing on grammar and content.

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# Form-focused Negative Feedback: Toward a Pedagogically Sound Model of Remedial Instruction

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## ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a model of remedial instruction which is characterized by an algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps. Inspired and informed by recent SLA research on consciousness raising and form-focused negative feedback, this model stresses that remedial instruction input should be broken down into a sequence of cognitively manageable steps, such that the cognitive load required of learners to progress from one step to the next is minimal. Common errors singled out for consciousness-raising treatment should be morphosyntactically well-defined and amenable to explicit correction, while the degree of correctability of a given error must be established through continual experimentation. The correction procedure of two common errors, namely the confusion between *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives, and the misuse of the *too + Adj + to VP* structure, will be discussed for illustration. The ultimate objective of this remedial instruction model is to help ESL teachers carry out remedial instruction more effectively in a user-friendly manner, and to facilitate students' understanding of the correction procedure as a prelude to progressively approximating the target language norms through developing self-monitoring and editing skills in their own language output.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From time to time, allegations may be heard in the public media echoing the local business sector's grave concern about Hong Kong students' declining English standards, plus all the adverse consequences that such a deplorable state of affairs may bring about, especially a concern that Hong Kong will soon lose its edge as a regional financial center – an edge that it apparently enjoyed vis-à-vis other metropolitan cities in the Asia-Pacific region during the colonial era. A frequently

cited example of the disappointing English standards of Hong Kong students, university graduates included, is their inability to write grammatically correct sentences with appropriate choice of vocabulary in job application letters. This suggests, among other things, that grammatical accuracy together with the 'grammar of vocabulary' (Gairns and Redman 1986) is one area in which action research, both theoretical and practical, is urgently needed.

It is well-known that the workload of local secondary school teachers of English (and Chinese) is among the heaviest compared with their colleagues teaching other subjects. At the same time, teachers of English are under tremendous pressure, especially from the school management, to correct their students' errors in compositions (Leung 2000, Ting 2000). However, due to a lack of time, teachers do not often give remedial instruction to students. In a recent interview survey conducted by the authors with about 20 English teachers in three different schools, it was found that while some teachers will alert students to their errors by asking them to study the correct forms of common errors listed in handbooks such as Bunton (1989) and testing them on their memory, many teachers do not consider it a high-priority teaching goal to correct students' errors through giving remedial input in class. More 'popular' problems such as subject-verb agreement receives a little more attention, but other lexico-grammatical errors are typically ignored. What teachers normally do is, in addition to giving red-pen corrections in compositions, to show the erroneous sentences on the blackboard or on paper and ask students themselves to correct the sentences. When correct versions of similar structures are encountered, such as in the newspaper or textbook, some teachers may use these opportunities to remind students of the correct forms taught to them earlier. All this suggests that remedial instruction in Hong Kong ESL classrooms occupies a relatively unimportant position.

On the other hand, where remedial instruction is provided, the conscientious teacher tends to operate with an unsubstantiated belief that written feedback on various lexico-grammatical anomalies in students' compositions will be noticed by them and will lead to improvement in their English proficiency. Research in second language acquisition (SLA), however, has shown that this may not be the case, for the teacher's written comments on students' errors in free writing may or may not be noticed, while some errors are easier to correct than others. Consider, for example, the task of guiding students to master the correct use of the system of articles (or, from the point of view of functional grammar, the subsystem of 'referring' using *a*, *an*, *the* and 'zero' article) in English. This subsystem is so complex that it is not immediately clear how students may be guided to acquire it through form-focused remedial instruction. In an acquisition-poor ESL environment such as Hong Kong (Li 1999, 2000), teachers' feedback in the form of explicit remedial instruction is probably a necessary condition for converting input into intake. For the teacher's error-correction efforts to pay off, however, we think it is important to first analyze and assess the cognitive complexity of the lexico-grammatical anomaly in question before deciding how to help learners

notice the anomalies and gradually approximate the target language norms, taking into account their mother tongue and proficiency level.

## 2. EXPERIMENTING WITH AN ALGORITHMIC MODEL OF REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

Unlike Chinese Singaporeans, Hong Kong Chinese are under tremendous social pressure not to switch entirely to English when communicating among themselves in speech (Li 2000). In the face of such strong social norms disapproving the use of English (except in Cantonese-English mixed code) for intra-ethnic communication, delivering remedial instruction in class – if done successfully – is arguably a cost-effective and promising way to help students quicken the ESL learning process. Recent research in SLA has shown that explicit instruction does facilitate learners' noticing and understanding of various lexico-grammatical anomalies, and helps them progressively approximate the target language norms by developing their self-monitoring and editing skills when producing output in the target language (see, e.g. Carroll and Swain 1993, Doughty and Varela 1998, Zhou 1992). Consider, for example, the connective *on the contrary*. Many advanced ESL students in Hong Kong are not aware of its correct usage and often treat it as equivalent to *in contrast* or *by contrast*, which is used to show a difference between two people or things. Some learners appear to recognize its correct usage, but somehow produce erroneous output in controlled situations. In a recent study carried out by the authors regarding university students' mastery of this connective, for example, a student who correctly rejected the erroneous sentence:

*\* Hong Kong is now part of China. On the contrary, Taiwan is not.*

and corrected it to:

*Hong Kong is now part of China, but Tuiwan is not.*

constructed erroneous sentences in the free sentence-construction section of the test paper such as:

*\* Hong Kong people are hardworking. On the contrary, they are selfish and short-sighted.*

Another student, who also seemingly knew the correct usage of the connective, rejected:

*\* John is not the representative of our class. On the contrary, Mary is.*

and corrected it to:

*John is not the representative of our class. Instead, Mary is.*

But then in the free sentence construction section of the test paper, the same student produced an erroneous sentence:

\* *My grandfather is very tall. On the contrary, my father is short.*

Such variable performance shows that even for advanced ESL learners (i.e. university students), their grasp of the connective *on the contrary* is less than solid. This is probably because in the absence of negative evidence (coupled with insufficient positive evidence) in the target language input, it is difficult for them to notice their own errors and to acquire the target language norms through mere exposure (White 1987). The connective *on the contrary* is but one of many grammar points for which effective remedial instruction is clearly desirable and urgently needed (for a detailed description of the correction procedure for *on the contrary*, see Li and Chan forthcoming).

The goal of this paper is a modest one: We will outline, and illustrate with examples, a model of remedial instruction which is currently being experimented with in an ongoing project (cf. Li and Chan 1999, forthcoming). This model, inspired by SLA research on consciousness raising (Sharwood Smith 1981, Rutherford 1988, Rutherford and Sharwood Smith 1988, Schmidt 1990, Ellis 1995, Long 1996, James 1998), is characterized above all by structuring remedial instruction in the form of an algorithmic<sup>1</sup> sequence of proceduralized steps (cf. Sharwood Smith 1981), such that the cognitive effort required of students to progress from one step to the next is minimal (Li and Chan 1999).

In sum, we strongly recommend that, when giving form-focused remedial input in class, ESL teachers should adhere to one important principle, namely, that the correction procedure should be "broken down algorithmically into easy, highly structured stages giving the relevant differentiations and decisions that the learner must make in order to use the particular pattern or rule correctly" (Sharwood Smith 1981: 163). Below, we will illustrate this principle with the help of the correction of two common errors: the confusion between *-ed* and *-ing* adjectives, and the misuse of the '*too* ADJ *to* VP' structure. Since the correction procedures of these two common errors have not yet been tested empirically, our main purpose here is to illustrate what we mean by 'correctable' common errors, and to demonstrate how the proposed remedial instruction model works in terms of the main design feature – an algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps toward error correction.

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<sup>1</sup> An algorithm has been compared to a 'decision-tree' by James (1998), in that the learner has to make intermediate decisions in the process of working out the correct form or structure (p. 264).

### 3. CORRECTING TWO COMMON ERRORS

#### 3.1 *-ed* AND *-ing* ADJECTIVES

To give an example of how remedial instruction may be structured in an algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps to facilitate students' acquisition, consider the teaching of the semantic difference between *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives, which is part of the English language syllabus in junior Forms. The fact that many university students continue to be confused about the meanings and usage of contrastive word pairs such as *interesting* and *interested*, and *boring* and *bored* (e.g. 'I'm very *boring*', said by a student who feels *bored*), suggests that their fine semantic difference has not been very effectively taught and acquired. When asked how they remembered the functional distinction between such contrastive word pairs, many students would come up with a rule which maps form onto meaning, albeit lacking rigor and counter-productive relative to the goal of acquisition: *-ing* adjectives for describing things (e.g. *the film was interesting*); *-ed* adjectives for describing persons (e.g. *John was excited*). Such a rule, instilled into students' mind through rote learning, may seriously hamper subsequent correction efforts, either by oneself upon seeing counter-examples (e.g. *a fascinating film-director, a finished product*), or by other teachers eager to redress the student's misconception.

There is some indication that such a simplistic rule is fairly widespread: For several years now, when students on the BA in Teaching English as a Second Language (BA TESL) program at City University of Hong Kong were asked in a contrastive grammar course about their understanding of the functional difference between *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives, there were invariably some students affirming that they either heard about the rule, or believed that the rule was adequate.

To help students acquire the fine semantic difference between the morphologically related pairs of adjectives, we first analyzed the linguistic meanings of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives with the help of dictionaries or linguistics handbooks. We found that they may be subcategorized into three groups: (a) derived from transitive verbs (e.g. *a charming air-hostess, a charmed passenger, the boring lecture, the bored students*); (b) derived from intransitive verbs (e.g. *a retired civil servant, a sleeping beauty, existing conditions, booming business*); and (c) derived from nouns, probably by analogy with other *-ed* adjectives (e.g. *a king-sized T-shirt, a U-shaped valley, skilled labor, the salaried class, a winged chariot*). In terms of meaning, category (c) is non-productive, so the items may be bracketed off and learned separately as and when they occur. The linguistic meanings (or functions) of categories (a) and (b), on the other hand, may be summarized as in Table 1:

Table 1: The linguistic meanings of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives derived from verbs

Derived from Transitive Verb		Derived from Intransitive Verb	
<i>-ing</i>	<i>-ed</i>	<i>-ing</i>	<i>-ed</i>
'causative/agentive' ● an <i>exciting</i> film ● a <i>charming</i> air-hostess	'affected' ● an <i>excited</i> audience ● a <i>charmed</i> passenger	'action in progress' ● a <i>falling</i> leaf ● a <i>retiring</i> officer	'action completed' ● a <i>fallen</i> leaf ● a <i>retired</i> officer

The linguistic characterizations given in Table 1 are very consistent. We tested them against many *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives derived from transitive or intransitive verbs, be they lexicalized dictionary entries or otherwise, and found the characterizations very robust. Such a consistent generalization is definitely beneficial to the correctability of the item (cf. 'teachability', Pienemann 1984, 1998; see also Li and Chan 1999, forthcoming; Chan and Li forthcoming) – in that the characterizations can be 'packaged' in a pedagogically friendly and viable way, and be made cognitively accessible in jargon-free teacher instruction. After experimenting with several groups of students, we found a helpful mnemonic in *reviewing* (i.e. rather than *presenting*) the meanings of *-ing* or *-ed* adjectives with minimal metalinguistic explanation. This mnemonic takes the form of a 'patterned' analytical definition, where the subject consists of a noun group containing the *-ing* or *-ed* adjective, while the predicate gives a gloss of the meaning of the subject<sup>2</sup>. For example:

**Group I: *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives derived from transitive verbs**

- (1) An *exciting* film is a film *which excites viewers*.
- (2) An *interesting* book is a book *which interests readers*.
- (3) A *boring* lecturer is a lecturer *who bores students*.
- (4) A *charming* air-hostess is an air-hostess *who charms passengers*.

<sup>2</sup> Since an analytical definition consists of a predicate which gives a gloss of the meaning of the subject, there is inevitably some circularity in the definition, in that the subject (or part of it) may be used again in the predicate for the explanation. Such circularity is, nevertheless, conducive to the understanding of the structure of the subject constituent.



- (5) *An excited viewer is a viewer who is excited by a film.*
- (6) *An interested reader is a reader who is interested by (in) a book.*
- (7) *A bored student is a student who is bored by his/her teacher.*
- (8) *A charmed passenger is a passenger who is charmed by an air-hostess.*

With the exception of *charming* and *charmed*, the other adjectives (*interesting*, *interested*, *exciting*, *excited*) are among the earliest introduced in the syllabus concerning the functional difference between *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives. In the highlighted word groups are embedded the meanings of the *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives: 'causative/agentive' vs. 'being affected', as well as the implicit voices of the transitive verbs from which the adjectives are derived: 'active' vs. 'passive'. So long as the word choices and meanings of the patterned analytical definitions are based on a coherent context, the meanings of the *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives as highlighted in the sample sentences should be reasonably clear.

Likewise, the *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives derived from intransitive verbs may be introduced as follows:

#### Group II: *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives derived from intransitive verbs

- (9) *A remaining problem is a problem that remains.*
- (10) *A sleeping baby is a baby who is sleeping (or is asleep).*
- (11) *A retiring officer is an officer who is retiring (very soon).*
- (12) *A fallen pine tree is a pine tree that has fallen.*
- (13) *An escaped prisoner is a prisoner who has escaped.*
- (14) *A retired officer is an officer who has retired.*

As can be seen from these examples, the grammatical meanings 'action in progress' and 'completed action' are similarly embedded in the defining relative clauses.

Up to now, we may have given the reader an impression that the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs is always clear-cut. This is not true. First, in English there is a subgroup of transitive verbs which may be used intransitively depending on context (e.g., 'She is eating noodles' or 'She is eating' in response to the question 'What is she doing?'). Second, there is another finite group of verbs generally known as 'ergative verbs', which are verbs that "allow the object of a transitive clause to become the subject of an intransitive clause, without any change in the voice of the verb" (Lock 1996: 90; cf. Lyons 1969: 352). Consider, for example, the two verbs *melt* and *develop* in the following examples:

- (15) They *melted* the butter. [ Trans. ]
- (16) The butter *melted*. [ Intrans. ]



property of the corresponding ergative verbs, without the teacher having to make use of an excessive dose of metalanguage.

It should be noted that as the range of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives has broadened when learners progress to senior forms (say, Form 4 or above), they should be told that not all *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives lend themselves to the formation of analytical definitions. In particular, if the function or meaning of a pre-modifying adjective is a 'classifier' (rather than a 'describer') which serves to classify a noun (Lock 1996: 50), then the analytical definition thus formed would be qualitatively different. For example:

- (27) A *booking* form is a form that is used for booking.
- (28) A *sleeping* arrangement is an arrangement that concerns sleeping.
- (29) A *classified* ad is an ad that appears in the classified section of a news paper.
- (30) *Registered* mail is mail sent by a special postal service at an extra cost.  
Etc.

It is clear that metalinguistic judgment is involved when the learners are engaged in a task of unpacking the meaning of a pre-modifying *-ing* or *-ed* adjective embedded in a noun group, or asked to consciously reflect on the grammatical acceptability of an analytical definition. This is of course possible only if the learners are in a position to produce sound judgments themselves. It may not be the case that all learners with different language abilities will be able to benefit equally from the consciousness-raising approach to error correction advanced here. Nevertheless, as the judgment of acceptability of a given word group (e.g. collocation) engages the learner in active thinking, we believe that over time, the technique of forming analytical definitions has good potential for developing learners' metalinguistic awareness as well as sensitivity to grammatical acceptability of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives in English.

In the process of 'discovering' the grammatical meaning of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives, there is only one grammatical concept which is essential and presupposed: the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs<sup>3</sup>. The transitivity pattern of a verb – including those which exhibit both transitive and intransitive patterns – is usually indicated in dictionaries, and so the teacher may encourage students to look it up in a reliable dictionary in case of uncertainty. If necessary, some prior training through demonstration and follow-up exercises regarding how lexical information is encoded in dictionaries may be appropriate. This will have the additional merit of developing learner autonomy.

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<sup>3</sup> The term 'ergative', on the other hand, need not concern them unless the teacher is dealing with students studying linguistics or applied linguistics.

After the technique of unpacking the meanings of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives by forming analytical definitions has been introduced, it is important for the teacher to encourage students to generate similar analytical definitions when other new *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives are encountered. The rationale behind this technique is that, once students have understood the examples, they should be in a position to apply the technique to unpack the underlying grammatical meanings of other *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives. In so doing, we believe, students would be more likely to acquire the fine semantic distinctions and usage differences between the Group I and Group II adjectives.

One of the advantages of the technique of analytical definition is that students can use it to monitor their own language output. When in doubt, as for example a new *-ing* or *-ed* adjective is encountered, the student can generate an analytical sentence which models on the patterned analytical sentences above. In this way, the student may progressively approximate and eventually acquire the grammatical meaning of the vocabulary item. Suppose the student has come across the word *exhilarating* in the following advertising slogan in a newspaper:

Flying with Cathay Pacific can be extremely exhilarating.  
[*South China Morning Post* 00/08/16/05]

The student may go through the following steps:

- Step 1: Check the word *exhilarating* in the dictionary; the related verb *exhilarate* is transitive, i.e. 'V + O'.
- Step 2: Note that the word *experience* is listed in the dictionary as a collocation of *exhilarating* (or some other collocation, e.g. in the context where this vocabulary item was found).
- Step 3: Form an analytical sentence: "an *exhilarating* experience is an experience which *exhilarates* someone."
- Step 4: The sentence in Step 3 confirms that the adjective *exhilarating* has active, causative meaning, like *exciting* and *interesting*.
- Step 5: Group the adjective *exhilarating* together with *exciting* and *interesting*.

A similar procedure may be followed when students encounter another new adjective, say, *booming*, which is derived from the intransitive verb *boom*.

- Step 1: Check the word *booming* in the dictionary; the related verb *boom* is intransitive, i.e. 'V' only.

- Step 2: Note that the word *business* is listed in the dictionary as a collocation of *booming* (or some other collocation, e.g. in the context where this vocabulary item was found).
- Step 3: Form an analytical sentence: "a *booming* business is a business which *booms*."
- Step 4: The sentence in Step 3 confirms that the adjective *booming* has the meaning that the action is in progress.
- Step 5: Group the adjective *booming* together with *falling* and *retiring*.

Step 5 is important for three main reasons. First, it requires the learner to think about the grammatical meaning of the new vocabulary item before deciding which group of *-ing* or *-ed* adjectives it should belong to. This will encourage or oblige the learner to reflect on the usage similarities and differences between the learned and the newly encountered *-ing* or *-ed* adjectives. Second, as is well-known, the grouping of vocabulary words with similar lexico-grammatical patterns together helps deepen the learner's memory of the vocabulary items in question (Gairns and Redman 1986). Third, a systematic grouping of vocabulary items – be it in a notebook or on flash cards – will facilitate retrieval, which in turn may help develop the learner's self-monitoring and editing skills when producing target language output, especially in free writing.

Finally, to ensure that the meanings of the two groups of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives will not be confused, it is advisable that they are introduced in separate stages one after the other: When the teacher is convinced that the majority of the students have grasped the form-function relationship of one group, then the second group can be introduced. A sure sign of acquisition is an ability to generate grammatically and semantically well-formed analytical definitions which can differentiate the *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives clearly<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.2 THE *too* + *ADJ* + *to VP* STRUCTURE

Another common lexico-grammatical problem may be illustrated by a jumbo-sized slogan advertised on wall posters of a recent musical called *Chicago* everywhere in town: *too much fun to miss*. As no attempt was made to render this message in Chinese, it is doubtful whether Cantonese-speaking teenagers are among the target audiences and implied readers of the poster – readers who are

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that *-ing* participles derived from verbs do not necessarily have an *-ed* participle counterpart, and vice versa (e.g. *booming business* is acceptable but *boomed business* is not). Such kind of negative evidence, however, should not be a problem to ESL teachers, given that students are asked to form analytical definitions using *-ing* or *-ed* adjectives which they have actually encountered in their reading.

accustomed to saying ?*I am too happy to see you* to mean *I am so/very happy to see you*. To many Chinese learners of English, the negative implication of the *too ADJ to VP* structure, i.e. *so ADJ that ... cannot /should not /do not VP* (e.g. *Chicago is so much fun that you should not miss it*) is opaque, due to the semantico-syntactic complexity of the structure itself and the functional difference between the English intensifier *too* and its Chinese counterpart 太 (Putonghua *tai*, Cantonese *taai3*). The Chinese intensifier 太, rather than giving a negative interpretation of an unwanted excessive degree of whatever meaning conveyed by the adjective that follows (such as 高興, Putonghua *gaoxing*, Cantonese *gou/hing4*), suggests a positive and high degree of meaning conveyed by the adjective. Being unaware of the negative meaning implicitly stated in the structure *too ADJ to VP* to account for why the speaker *cannot/should not/does not* do the action denoted by the verb in the infinitive clause, most Chinese learners would use the intensifier as a substitute for 'very, very'. Table 2 shows the similarity in meaning between the structure *too ADJ to VP* and its semantic equivalent *so ADJ that ... cannot*.

The fact that a lot of students produce inappropriate sentences such as ?*I am too happy to see you* (with the intended meaning 'I am very, very happy to see you') suggests that they have not mastered the proper meaning of the structure *too ADJ to VP* well enough. Since the sentences are not grammatically incorrect, but only semantically deviant in that they express exactly the opposite of what the speaker really wants to say, the correction of the structure has to cater for the root of the problems – students should be made clear about the semantic implication of the intensifier *too*, and substitute other intensifiers for it, as in Table 3.

Table 2: Semantic equivalence between *too + ADJ + to VP* and *so + ADJ + that-clause containing a negator*

<i>too + ADJ + to + VP</i>	<i>so + ADJ + that-clause containing a negator</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I am <i>too</i> tired <i>to walk</i>.</li> <li>● John is <i>too</i> angry <i>to speak</i>.</li> <li>● Mary is <i>too</i> busy <i>to talk to you now</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I am <i>so</i> tired <i>that I cannot walk</i>.</li> <li>● John is <i>so</i> angry <i>that he cannot speak</i>.</li> <li>● Mary is <i>so</i> busy <i>that she cannot talk to you now</i>.</li> </ul>

Table 3: Inappropriate use of *too* and its correct substitutes

Inappropriate use of <i>too</i>	Substituting <i>so/very</i> for <i>too</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ?I am <i>too</i> happy to see you.</li> <li>● ?He is <i>too</i> excited to have a chance to meet the Chief Executive.</li> <li>● ?Peter is <i>too</i> interesting to talk to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I am <i>so/very</i> happy to see you.</li> <li>● He is <i>so/very</i> excited to have a chance to meet the Chief Executive.</li> <li>● Peter is <i>so/very</i> interesting to talk to.</li> </ul>

The following steps may be used to raise students' awareness of the root of the problem:

Step 1: Underline [*to* VP] after the adjective.

Step 2: Circle the verb.

Step 3: Ask the question "Can *Subject* [Verb]?/ OR  
"Is *Subject* going to [Verb]?"

Step 4a: If the answer to the question is **No**, keep the sentence.

Step 4b: If the answer to the question is **Yes**, rewrite the sentence by changing the intensifier to *so*, or *very*.

Equipped with this algorithm after practice and teacher feedback, students can analyze their own output, such as *Mary is too tired to speak* by following the steps suggested:

Step 1: Underline [*to* VP] after the adjective, e.g.: *to speak*.

Step 2: Circle the verb *speak*.

Step 3: Ask the question "Can Mary speak?"

Step 4: Since the answer to the question is **No**, the sentence is correctly produced and should be retained.

An apparently similar sentence such as *Peter is too happy to see you* may be analyzed likewise. That is, students can follow the same steps to analyze its appropriateness:

Step 1: Underline [*to VP*] after the adjective, e.g.: *to see you*.

Step 2: Circle the verb *see*.

Step 3: Ask the question "Is Peter going to see you?"

Step 4: Since the answer to the question is Yes, the sentence is inappropriate and should be rewritten to *Peter is so happy to see you*.

#### 4. PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND DEGREE OF CORRECTABILITY

We hope the correction procedure of two common errors – the misuse of the '*too ADJ to VP*' structure in section 3.2 and the confusion between *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives in section 3.1 – will help the reader understand what we mean by an algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps toward error correction, which is the main design feature of the remedial instruction model proposed in this paper. Underlying this model are a few important pedagogical principles:

- The tasks given to students should be meaning-oriented.
- The correction of the errors should be broken down into a sequence of small steps, with a teacher- and learner-friendly algorithm guiding students to recognize the anomaly of the sentence structure or word usage, and to gradually approximate the target language norms.
- The cognitive load required of learners in each step should be minimal.
- Input between steps must be clear and manageable, such that a given step must be mastered before proceeding to the next.

In addition, where possible, typical errors for display should be adapted from students' own interlanguage output, and that the teacher should walk students through the steps during the demonstration of the correction procedure by eliciting answers to intermediate questions, preferably using a question-answer mode. In addition, suitable reinforcement exercises should be provided, either as class work or homework, after the remedial instruction session. The answers to reinforcement exercises should subsequently be checked for accuracy (e.g. through peer correction in class). In longer terms, the teacher's remedial instruction efforts will be optimized if two other conditions are met: (a) that students are reminded to file the remedial instruction materials properly and to revise and review them periodically<sup>5</sup>; and (b) that the students' grasp of the error correction

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<sup>5</sup> This would presuppose that similar materials will be used in future to help them overcome other resilient, yet 'correctable' common errors.



procedure demonstrated in remedial instruction sessions is spot-checked or tested and, if necessary, the teacher should aid the weaker students by providing them with more follow-up practice, either individually or collectively. Through a combination of spot-check and systematic recycling and review of the remedial instruction input, especially refreshing students' memory of the correction procedure, we believe that students will have a better chance of overcoming the errors singled out for correction treatment and, in this sense, acquisition is more likely to take place – when students have developed self-monitoring and editing skills after internalizing the correction procedures of those common errors introduced.

For such a remedial instruction model to function effectively, however, there is one important methodological premise regarding the selection of errors for treatment: It is important that the lexico-grammatical errors selected for explicit remedial instruction treatment must be morphosyntactically well-defined, for this will ensure that the errors can lend themselves to the experimentation of processable and learnable correction procedures (Sharwood Smith 1981, Long 1996). The degree of correctability of a given error type is an empirical issue to be determined through continual experimentation. As a rule of thumb, the higher the degree of correctability of a given error type, the easier it will be for the teacher-researcher to formulate and proceduralize pedagogically sound error-correction instruction to help learners overcome that error, and vice versa<sup>6</sup>.

## 5. Implementation and dissemination

In terms of the efficient and effective implementation of the remedial instruction model advocated in this article, we are aware that, to fully exploit its potential, ESL teachers need to become familiar with it, and be comfortable using it directly with their own students. This brings us to two other important measures: (a) teacher-training workshops should be run to provide teachers with hands-on experience; and (b) the remedial instruction materials should be user-friendly such that minimal extra work is required of the teacher to use it in class.

Provided all the pedagogical design features of the remedial instruction described above are in place, it is conceivable that the algorithmically sequenced correction procedures of a subset of common errors would be disseminated to a much wider audience – the target users, that is, local teachers of English at large – through word of mouth and peer sharing or assistance. When this happens, another im-

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<sup>6</sup> For exemplars of the application of this model of remedial instruction, see Li and Chan, forthcoming, which discusses the correction procedures of three lexico-grammatical errors: pseudo-tough movement, e.g. *\*I am difficult to learn English*; concern vs. *be concerned about*, e.g. *\*Your father concerns your future*; and the misuse of *on the contrary*, as in *\*John is not the representative of the class; on the contrary, Mary is*.

portant objective will have been achieved: to familiarize ESL teachers with the correct usage patterns of a subset of erroneous lexico-grammatical anomalies – if they are not yet aware of them – as well as their correction procedures. To give an example, while it is well-known that the verbs *substitute* and *replace* are generally regarded as synonyms, their fine usage difference may elude teachers who were not subject-trained in TESL. Compare:

to *substitute* X for Y      vs.      to *replace* Y with/by X

The learning of these two verbs, therefore, would be incomplete without noting the correct word order and preposition. When students show signs of confusing the usage patterns of these two verbs, their usage difference may be explicitly taught and consolidated through a simple consciousness-raising exercise, such as drawing students' attention to the basic patterns as shown above, and to follow it up with practice in context (e.g. upon knowing that an important guest that one is expecting is a vegetarian when preparing dinner: 'Let us *substitute* salad for pork chop' / 'Let us *replace* pork chop with salad' / 'Let us *replace* pork chop by salad').

If we expect students to be able to master the usage difference between the two verbs *substitute* and *replace*, clearly teachers themselves must be informed of such a difference. Given that not all ESL teachers are subject-trained, however, it is possible that some of them are not aware of it. If this is in fact the case, then the consciousness-raising approach to remedial instruction proposed here will have the merit of killing two birds with one stone: The algorithmic sequence of cognitively manageable steps – to be introduced in teacher-training workshops – will inform teachers of the correct usage pattern of a particular 'correctable' common error as well as its correction procedure, before they use the correction procedure to help their own students to overcome that common error. Indeed, the more 'transparent' and pedagogically sound the correction procedure is, the more likely it is for *both* ESL teachers and students to benefit from it.

## 6. CODA

As mentioned, teachers of English in Hong Kong are under great pressure to correct students' errors, especially in compositions and other free-writing exercises, and yet, very often, little time could be devoted to that end owing to other higher-order educational priorities and teaching goals. Research on effective error-correction strategies and methods in the classroom, therefore, has considerable potential for alleviating the BLT teacher's workload and quickening, or even triggering, the students' learning process. In this connection, we are pleased to know that some encouraging results have been obtained through action research by in-service teachers on the MA TESL program at City University of Hong Kong (see Leung 2000 and Ting 2000 for more details). Looking to the future and working

toward a theoretically and pedagogically sound model of remedial instruction, however, we believe the following methodological and pedagogical issues should be addressed systematically:

1. What lexico-grammatical and structural problems are most common in the English output of Hong Kong ESL learners of different proficiency levels, especially in compositions and free-writing exercises?
2. Which of these identified lexico-grammatical and structural problems are amenable to explicit form-focused correction through the teacher's remedial instruction in class?
3. Can a pedagogically sound algorithmic sequence of proceduralized steps be designed, such that students may be led to recognize the lexico-grammatical anomaly, and gradually approximate the target language norm?
4. Are local teachers of English sufficiently informed as to why the common errors are so widespread among students of a particular proficiency level, and how they can be efficiently and effectively corrected through form-focused negative feedback?

We believe informed responses to the above questions, to be sought through empirical research, can help teachers of English do a better job when giving remedial instruction to their students. An informed response to question (1) would entail a taxonomy of errors classified ideally according to proficiency levels, say, lower-intermediate (junior Forms), upper-intermediate (senior Forms) and advanced (post-secondary). Questions (2) and (3) may be addressed by undertaking empirical research following a rigorously designed model for experimentation – a model which is driven first and foremost by the pedagogical principle of minimal cognitive load toward error correction (Li and Chan 1999, forthcoming). From the students' point of view, such materials may in turn serve the purpose of a prompt reminder when the problematic sentence structure or word usage pattern is called for in their free-writing activities. It is in this way that the objective of developing students' self-monitoring and editing skills may be achieved. Finally, question (4) concerns the dissemination of insights obtained from empirical research on effective remedial instruction methods. This may be done initially by organizing teacher training workshops in which demonstration and hands-on practice and sharing may be carried out. In longer terms, it would be a worthwhile goal to aim toward the development of a set of field-tested, pedagogically sound and user-friendly materials for teachers' use. When we get thus far, a natural sequel would be to have such materials included in the syllabuses and curricula of pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.

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