

**The Educational and Cultural Impact of the Medium of  
Instruction Policy on Secondary Education In Hong Kong**

**Joanna Chi-Yan Lee**

**For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of York**

**Department of Educational Studies**

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## ABSTRACT

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The chief aim of the research is to look into the perceptions on the impact of the 1998 medium of instruction policy on the educational and cultural dimensions of the secondary education sector in Hong Kong. The core of the whole study is divided into two parts with issues related to the educational and cultural dimensions.

This study investigates people's views on the linguistic interdependence hypothesis and the threshold hypothesis, which form the bases of the 1998 medium of instruction policy. The majority of teachers raised doubts about the linguistic interdependence hypothesis as many have pointed out the issue of language-relatedness and contextual variants that affect positive transfer between languages. The threshold hypothesis was also questioned with regard to the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment criteria and also the age of assessment. The necessity of readjustments of western educational or linguistic theories before adapting them to the local context has been established from the data. As for second language learning, the concept of *quality of exposure* marks an interesting point that we should be aware of. Apart from this, the discussion of mixed code as an alternative form of bilingual education also opens up possible directions for future research because of its general popularity among respondents.

The second half of the study involves the cultural dimension with reference to language attitudes. This analysis is based on the assumption that language is of eminent importance to the formation of cultural construct. It has been found that English still maintains a prestigious status in relation to the other two rivals—Cantonese and Mandarin—because of pragmatic reasons. Cantonese is the demotic language, while Mandarin does not enjoy a high popularity. Language orientation has not changed much because of the change of teaching medium. It is also speculated from the data that mixed code has emerged as a symbol of Hong Kong's cultural identity.

Interviews with secondary school teachers, policy-makers and teacher trainers were conducted, while questionnaires were distributed to students during the process of data collection.

The educational and cultural dimensions are brought together under the spotlight in this research. A tentative model of bilingual education is proposed for Hong Kong at the end of the thesis.

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Appendix XIX: Newspaper cutting C

Appendix XX: Eight strategies regarding skilful use of L1 in L2 classroom

Appendix XXI: Population aged five and over by usual language, 1991, 1996 and 2001 [in Hong Kong].

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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**BICS:** Basic Interpersonal Conversation Skills. “Student is able to speak English very well on a conversational level...[However, the] student is unable to understand academic terms, has difficulty reading and writing, and has not yet developed the cognitive skills necessary to succeed in the regular classroom.” English language learners: Difference or a Disability? (Harrison District School Two 2001)

**CALP:** “Cognitive academic language proficiency [CALP] is the language of academic subjects...abstract vocabulary and concepts...Once [CALP] developed, student is able to read, write and perform academically on a level with peers.”(Harrison District School Two 2001)

**CMI:** Chinese medium of instruction. CMI education refers to the use of Cantonese as the teaching medium in the case of Hong Kong.

**CUP:** Common Underlying Proficiency. A concept invented by Cummins. According to Rodriguez (1995), “A person only needs to learn to read and write once. The literacy skills they learn in their native language transfer to other languages. Literacy skills and thinking strategies transfer to a second language unconsciously. Students who are literate in their own native language have strong word recognition skills to bring to the reading of English.”

**EC:** According to the Hong Kong Annual Report (1999), “The Education Commission (EC) is responsible for advising the Government on the overall educational objectives and policies, and the priorities for implementation. It also coordinates the work of all other education-related advisory bodies on the planning and development of education at all levels...The EC is conducting an overall, three-stage review of the education system in Hong Kong to examine how it should develop into the 21<sup>st</sup> century...The EC expects to complete the whole review and submit recommendations to the Chief Executive in 2000.”

**EM1 stream:** In Singapore, students who are streamed to EM1 language learn English and the mother-tongue at a higher level.

**EM2 stream:** In Singapore, The EM2 stream is divided into two streams, EM2(E) and EM2(MT). Additional support has to be given to the learning of English in EM2(E), and the mother tongue is learned at a higher level; while additional support has to be given to mother-tongue in EM2(MT) and English is learned at a higher level.

**EM3 stream:** In Singapore, “For pupils less able to cope with Languages and Mathematics. Pupils will learn foundation English language and Mother-tongue at basic proficiency level. Teaching of mother-tongue will emphasise oral/aural skills, reading and listening comprehension as well as conversation.” (Ministry of Education, Singapore undated)

**EMI:** English medium of instruction. In EMI schools, English is used as the teaching medium for all the subjects apart from Chinese-related subjects.

**EMS:** English-medium schools

**FEMS:** Former English-medium schools

**GATT:** General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade

**GCSE:** General Certificate of Secondary Education. “The traditional entry route to UK HE [Higher Education] from schools and colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has been via the General Certificate of Secondary Education...” (University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) 2001) It is taken when students have completed the fifth form in secondary education, usually at the age of 16.

**GDP:** “The gross domestic product (GDP) is the most important economic indicator. It represents a broad measure of economic activity and signals the direction of overall aggregate economic activity.” (Nouriel & David 1998)

**HKCEE:** Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. This is the public examination that every student has to take when finishing secondary education. Whether one is qualified for entry to the A-levels is determined by the results in the HKCEE.

**HKEA:** Hong Kong Examination Authority.

**HKSAR:** Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

**L1:** First language, which is also the mother-tongue of the learner.

**L2:** Second language, which is another language learned in addition to L1.

**ME3:** “Pupils recommended for EM3 stream in P5 will also be able to opt for ME3

stream. Schools will provide ME3 classes if there is a sufficient demand. Pupils will learn Mother Tongue at higher level (Higher Malay, Higher Chinese or Higher Tamil) and Basic English Language. Teaching of English Language will emphasize oral/aural skills, reading and listening comprehension as well as conversation. The language of instruction for all subjects will be in Mother Tongue.” (Ministry of Education, Singapore undated)

**MIGA:** Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment. This is the assessment system through which primary school leavers are grouped into 3 different language ability groups, according to which their medium of learning in secondary education is based.

**MOI:** Medium of Instruction

**MSWC:** Modern Standard Written Chinese. This is the standard and official language of China, and is the written form of Mandarin.

**NET:** Native English Teachers

**PRC:** People’s Republic of China

**PSLE:** “The Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) is a national examination which your child takes at the end of Primary 6, no matter which stream he is in. Its purpose is to assess your child’s suitable secondary education and place him in the right secondary school course, one that matches pace, ability and inclinations.” (Ministry of Education, Singapore undated)

**SCOLAR:** Standing Committee Of Language And Research. According to the Hong Kong Annual Report (1999), “[The SCOLAR] was set up in 1996 to advise the Government on language education issues in general and, in particular, to set goals for language learning at different levels of education and to identify research and development projects which are necessary for the enhancement of language proficiency and language in education.”

**SUP:** Separate Underlying Proficiency. As opposed to Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP), the SUP model suggests that linguistic transfer between L1 and L2 is not possible because the L1 and L2 proficiencies lie separately in the brain and are not interdependent.

**TESOL:** Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

**The Working Group on Medium of Instruction:** “The Working Group was set up in 1998 to review and recommend to the Government the arrangements on medium of instruction for secondary schools in and after the 2001/02 school year, as well as on other issues relevant to the mother-tongue teaching policy. Members of the Working Group are from the Board of Education and the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).” (Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau 2000)

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**WTO:** World Trade Organization



## MAP OF HONG KONG



(Central Intelligence Agency undated a)

Notes: Areas within the dotted line belonged to the UK from 1841-1997. From the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was formed after the change of sovereignty to China.

## INTRODUCTION

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Controversy over language issues regarding the language policy and the medium of instruction in schools during the decolonization period has long been a matter of concern. The 'teaching medium issue' became prominent with the change of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China in 1997. It was proposed in the 'Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools' which was released in 1997 that mother-tongue education should be enforced in those schools that were unable to prove themselves to be eligible for English-medium education. The impact was striking in the way that the majority of English-medium schools were forced to make the switch to Chinese-medium because they failed to meet the criteria for EMI education set up by the Hong Kong Education Department.

The change led to demonstrations and protests by the mass public. The origin of the problem lies in the fact that the guidelines regarding the benefits of mother-tongue education published by the government have led to confusion among the general public and the teaching profession, and also severe protests from parents. Further complication has resulted because of the ambiguity and mismatch between the mother-tongue of Hong Kong people, Cantonese, and the official language of the mother country, Mandarin, as the spoken form; and Modern Standard Written Chinese as the written form.

### **Researcher's interest and background**

The question of the 'medium of instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools after 1997' is very interesting to me because it can be regarded as the biggest educational issue related to language in the educational history of Hong Kong. I finished my undergraduate study at the University of Hong Kong in 1997 and started my MA immediately after my graduation. Then I carried on with a similar topic to my MA for my PhD research. I was born and educated in Hong Kong and I am one of the

products of the past education system. Looking back at all the changes with regard to the teaching medium policy after the political handover made me wonder if these changes occur solely because of educational considerations or whether, to a large extent, they are results of the political transition in 1997. In fact, educational changes cannot take place in isolation from other social changes. After the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed in 1984, China agreed to adopt the policy of 'One country, two systems', which allows Hong Kong a great degree of autonomy and freedom. Everyone is watchful of this promise made by the Chinese government, and so people are likely to speculate about the political connotations of every policy after the retrocession. This topic is worth researching not only because it is new and heated, but also because it involves several dimensions of the society, including political, cultural, educational and social. The complexity and interaction of all these factors make the question more challenging.

The main aim of the present research is to explore the impact of the new language policy imposed in Hong Kong in 1998. The main research question is: **What is the impact of the 1998 Medium of Instruction policy on the educational and cultural dimensions in secondary education in Hong Kong?** It sets off to find out the impact of the new medium of instruction policy on the educational and cultural dimensions with reference to language attitudes of the people involved in the secondary education sector. The new language policy brought about a change in the medium of instruction in the majority of secondary schools in the way that mother-tongue has replaced English as the teaching medium. The particular area that I focus on is the impact on educational and cultural dimensions with the implementation of the policy. Does the policy improve language proficiencies and enhance the learning of academic subjects in the view of the respondents? In addition to the question of improved language proficiencies, what are respondents' perspectives on their preferable model of bilingual education? It is also hoped that the views of respondents will draw a sketch of the particular model of teaching medium of instruction that might best suit Hong Kong classrooms. Regarding the cultural dimension, a relationship between the change of language attitude after the new language policy and the change of the cultural constructs is going to be established, with language attitude as the chief focus.

### **Need for research**

A huge amount of literature has been produced on the present topic about the effectiveness of mother-tongue education. This topic came to particular attention in the 1970s, during which time some research studies were conducted to check if Chinese was a more appropriate medium of instruction than English as can be found in Cheng *et al* (1973), which will be subject to further elaboration in the literature review chapter. More contributions related to this topic were published within the past decade: for instance, a number of articles by local linguists in Hong Kong, like Ho (1992), Lin (1997, 2000), Poon (2000) and Evans (2002) with specific focus and interests on the teaching medium of Hong Kong secondary schools, were published during the past five years. Although a lot has been done to evaluate the impact of Chinese medium of instruction and Chinese does prove to be more effective (Hong Kong Education Department 1994a, 1998), however, not much has been done to deal with another side of the question, which involves the impact on cultural dimension. The present study is distinctive in the ways that it further investigates:

- The correlation between the Chinese medium of teaching and the English standards of students. Is the interdependence theory of Cummins, which has a strong Canadian overtone, justified in the Hong Kong context i.e. strengthening the learning of L1 (Chinese) as a resource of learning L2 (English)?
- Literature like Ho (1992) focuses mainly on the pros and cons of using Chinese or English as the medium of instruction and how the issue of teaching medium has aroused the different issues of concern in the society. My research study makes an attempt to search for another tentative alternative for the Hong Kong schools regarding the medium of instruction in the classroom. It is hoped that it might be able to shed light on the current topic, instead of putting the focus merely on criticisms.
- Does the change of teaching medium involve a change in cultural construct? In addition to the impact on the educational dimension, this study attempts to explore the cultural and identity issues with regard to language attitudes.

### **Synopsis of the Study**

The research starts with a brief introduction of the teaching medium issue—how the language policy for secondary education has changed from English to mother-tongue with the political handover, how it has emerged as an issue of concern and controversy, and how my personal background engaged me in the topic.

*Chapter one* presents the context against which the study was carried out. It outlines the landscape of the linguistic environment of Hong Kong, looks into the relative status of Chinese and English in the ex-colony, and provides reasons that account for the present condition. It introduces the habits of language use in the context of Hong Kong, and also brings out the complexity of the existence of three languages under two language systems (with English and Chinese being two distinct language varieties and Cantonese and Mandarin belonging to the Chinese language group), which further complicates the issue of medium of instruction. A section in chapter one explains the linguistic mismatch between Mandarin and Cantonese, trying to clear the doubts and misunderstandings of the differences between Mandarin and Cantonese in the following chapters.

*Chapter two* is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the unique culture of Hong Kong, and how the culture has emerged and is manifested. The influence of Hong Kong culture on the language issue is profound because the culture distinguishes itself from the culture of the motherland. This section displays how the contradiction between the main culture and sub-culture leads to debate over ‘mother-tongue education’, as the ‘mother-tongue’ of Hong Kong people symbolises identity, and the well-consolidated local identity faces challenges with the emergence of Mandarin as the potential competitor. Hence there are controversies over what kind of ‘Chinese’ is the most appropriate in Hong Kong schools.

The second section explains bilingual experiences in Hong Kong. Different sources with reference to the impact of mother-tongue education, with most of them about the pros of using Chinese as the teaching medium, are discussed. The four main types of bilingualism and the bilingual models in general in the special context of Hong Kong,

which varies from the bilingual model within the lessons and bilingual model within the schools, are also more fully elaborated. The section also outlines the theoretical hypotheses that support bilingual education, the linguistic interdependence model and the threshold model upon which the new policy is based. It also tries to explain why bilingual education does not seem to work effectively in Hong Kong.

The third section deals with the MOI issue. This section looks more specifically into the details of the new medium of instruction policy which was passed in 1998, including the criteria of qualifying for English-medium teaching. It paints a picture of the linguistic environment in the majority of secondary schools in Hong Kong, moving the focus from the society as a whole to the field of secondary education.

*Chapter three* looks at the linguistic environment in a comparative Asian city–Singapore. The linguistic characteristics of its education policy will be discussed. My choice of Singapore as a case for comparison is due to the fact that many people tend to make comparisons between Singapore and Hong Kong as they share similar economic and historical backgrounds. I will identify points in common and general differences between the two places, and explain why the standards of English in Hong Kong could not attain the same level as those in Singapore. The aim is to shed light on the case of Hong Kong.

*Chapter four* concerns the methodological issues of the whole research. It states the main research aim, main research question and subsidiary research questions that the present research is trying to explore. The reasons for adopting different methodological approaches, and the ways I use to offset the limitations and constraints inherent in the approaches will be described. The difficulties encountered throughout the research process which directly shaped the sample will be mentioned. The last part of the chapter summarises different stages involved in the data analysis process in a diagram, from the stage of organizing raw data to the final stage of writing up the research reports.

*Chapters five* and *six* present and discuss the data after organization. *Chapter five* provides answers to the first three research questions: the impact of mother-tongue

education on language standard, teaching and learning of academic subjects and views on the bilingual model. The data are analysed with an attempt to answer the queries by looking at what different groups of the education sector think. Possible consequences like the declining English standards due to the use of mother-tongue will be considered.

The chapter goes on to report the findings of the views on bilingual education in Hong Kong. It states the present condition of classroom practice, and provides a contrast by projecting the opinions of teachers, students and teacher trainers, stating what they, the group that is most actively involved in the practical phase of education, think. It also attempts to examine the problems with the present model of bilingual education, and to work out a model in the concluding chapter that would meet the needs of the society without putting the academic and language standards of students at stake.

*Chapter six* examines another aspect involved with the language issue: the change in language attitudes and accordingly the possible changes in the cultural construct. It deals with the identity question and the forces that hinder the implementation of mother-tongue because of the attitudinal prejudice against the Mainland Chinese identity, and the self-conflicting nature of English as both the international and ex-colonial language. It aims at providing the readers with answers to issues like cultural awareness by looking at language attitudes.

*Chapter seven* summarises the findings in chapter five and six. It is basically a summary of the answers to the research questions raised in the thesis in relation to the literature review. I look at the educational and cultural impact of the newly implemented policy, the current trend, and devise possible scenarios for future trends. I also try to suggest an experimental alternative MOI (medium of instruction) model based on the speculations deriving from the review of literature and the findings.

It is hoped that this piece of research will be able to provide direction for further research into the area, so that more practical alternatives, tailor-made for the education environment in Hong Kong, will be available for the education sector.

## CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

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### 1.0 Introduction

It is essential to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the historical background of Hong Kong because the language issue pertains to many different dimensions of the social sector, including the economic, educational, political and cultural dimensions. I will first begin with a brief history of Hong Kong, which accounts for the differences and contradictions with the motherland, the People's Republic of China, and further complicates the language and educational policy picture after the retrocession.

### 1.1 Historical background of Hong Kong

#### 1.1.1 Political context

Hong Kong had been the colony of Britain for over a century, and was returned to China in 1997. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in the year of 1841, as a consequence of the Opium War and subsequently the Treaty of Nanjing. During the rule by Britain, administration, policy-making and the legal system had been determined largely by the colonizer. Despite the fact that the seats in the government and people who made decisions were mainly dominated by officials sent from Britain and only until about a decade before the handover were more local-born Chinese selected to fill in the posts, Britain adopted a rather lenient colonial policy towards Hong Kong. Hong Kong still maintained its traditional Chinese culture. All kinds of religious worship or practices related to Chinese culture were allowed.

Hong Kong owes the name 'The Pearl of the Orient' to its flourishing economy and its status as a world metropolis. Its success in terms of finance owes much to its political and social stability. Apart from the riots arising from extreme patriotism during the 1960s and the 1970s, and the mass demonstration that came in the aftermath of the



Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, Hong Kong has been a politically stable place to live in. Hong Kong managed to remain unaffected during the political upheavals of the Cultural Revolution which lasted from 1966 to 1976 in China. The economy of Hong Kong took off during the time when the Mainland Chinese economy was frozen.

#### **1.1.1.1 Development of political and civic education in Hong Kong**

The syllabi and teaching materials in schools interweave with the political context, as what to teach and what should not to be taught depend to a large extent on the social and economic demands, as well as the political environment. Education plays a vital role in shaping the cultural and social awareness of individuals, and that is why it is worth exploring the development of civic education in Hong Kong.

Morris & Morris (1999) has divided the development of political (or civic) education into three phases: the period from 1945 to 1965 as phase I, 1965 to 1984 as phase II, and 1984 to 1997 and beyond as phase III. Moral and civic education has developed through the transition of depolitization to gradual immersion and strengthening of Chinese values and the sense of belonging to the mother country.

During the two decades from the 1940s onwards, the Hong Kong Education Department exercised control over the syllabi and textbook materials used by secondary schools. The main concern was that politics and sensitive topics such as the modern history of China and the Communist party were avoided. As Morris & Morris (1999) put it,

**...schools were provided with syllabi for permitted subjects, textbooks that had been approved by officials, recommended teaching guides, and official examinations...The effect was that pupils were provided with a curriculum in which they studied the history, geography, and literature of other cultures or distant time periods: in other words, a decontextualized and remote curriculum.**

(p.5)

In 1965, a subject called Economics and Public Affairs (EPA) was introduced into the

curriculum of local secondary schools. It covers the study of local government, the roles and duties of different governmental departments and organisations, social and welfare issues, as well as the economic affairs of Hong Kong. Issues such as the responsibilities of citizens were also taught. However, it should be noted that it has not been treated as a core subject and is always substituted by the study of economics in secondary four, due to the practical reason that economics is one of the competitive courses to apply for at the tertiary level.

The development of civic education in secondary schools has been slow, and students' interests and awareness in issues that touch politics such as the nature of the government and culture are generally low because of the long history of the depoliticized curriculum as well as the fact that civics has been introduced as a cross-thematic interest instead of a core subject in most secondary schools in Hong Kong.

The history syllabus was amended in 1988 with the extension of coverage up to 1970 (Morris & Morris 1999 p.7), which includes the history of modern China before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution, instead of up till 1949, the year when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established. Two new subjects, government and public affairs and liberal studies, were introduced into the curriculum. Liberal studies drew students' attention to political issues that used to be avoided during 1945 to 1965. However, these subjects have never gained popularity in schools. According to Morris & Morris (1999),

**...liberal studies is offered in about 10 percent of schools. Among the small number of schools that have adopted liberal studies, the most popular modules are those, such as science and technology and environmental studies, that do not address the local sociopolitical context.**

(p.9)

The inculcation of moral and traditional Chinese values may be inevitable, especially with the change of political atmosphere in Hong Kong after 1997. However, civic education has probably not been viewed as a core issue in schools, and the decision as to whether civic education should be introduced as an independent subject or be

learned as a cross-curriculum theme is left to the schools themselves. What can be predicted in terms of lifting people's cultural and national awareness is that the tight schedules and competitive nature of secondary schools as well as the long-term political apathy ingrained in the mass public would more or less slow down the development of civic education in Hong Kong.

### 1.1.2 Economic context

Under the British rule, the economy of Hong Kong flourished because of the non-intervention policy in terms of trade and also the good geographical location of Hong Kong. Hong Kong has changed from a poor fishing port to one of the world's biggest economies. Hong Kong has developed a very close link with China in terms of economic and cultural life, and it was only in 1949, when the Korean Civil War broke out, that an end was drawn to the close economic relationship between Hong Kong and China due to conflicting political interests and standpoints. As Choi (1990) puts it,

**...Hong Kong became a major stronghold for the western bloc in southeast Asia, right at the doorstep of a recently established Chinese communist state...For the first time in history, Hong Kong was forced to suspend its entrepôt trade with China, and previously uninhibited social and economic interactions between Hong Kong and the Mainland were stopped. In the coming decades, Hong Kong was to build up an export-led manufacturing and later international financial economy along western capitalistic lines, while China underwent waves of socialist and communist transformations.**

(p.85)

The internal upheavals in China gave a boost to the development of the manufacturing industry in Hong Kong, since a large number of people in Mainland China fled to Hong Kong during the time of political unrest in China, who at the same time brought with them labour and capital, which the local Hong Kong market lacked. As Bowring (1997) suggests,

**This commercial infrastructure was the key to Hong Kong's astonishing development as a manufacturing center post-1949. The shipping, banking, and**

**trading firms were already in place to serve the manufacturers fleeing Shanghai with their machinery, know-how, and capital. A flood of refugees, which continued in periodic waves until the mid-1960s, provided an abundant supply of cheap labour and the combination of low expectations and strong ambition typical of migrants....Hong Kong quickly learned new skills in merchandizing, enabling manufacturers to move into new products, such as plastic flowers or toys, which were not capital intensive but required adaptability and quick response time and could exploit a flexible labor force and frequent, reliable shipping services. By the early 1970s, manufacturing constituted nearly 30% of Hong Kong's employment.**

(p.11)

It was not until the 1970s when China adopted an open-door policy in terms of trade and commerce, and opened herself to the outside world, that Hong Kong's contact with China increased.

It should be noted that the reunification of capitalist and generally free society of Hong Kong with her communist motherland, China, appears to be inherently contradictory. After a series of negotiations and the signing of the 'Sino-British Joint Declaration' with Britain in 1984, the promises made by the former PRC president Deng Xiao Ping guaranteed that things would remain unchanged for the fifty years following the change of sovereignty in 1997. The slogan of 'One country, two systems' proposed by Deng in order to smoothen the integration of Hong Kong with China has been interpreted as

**...the coexistence of socialism in China with capitalism in Hong Kong under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty. The capitalist system in Hong Kong is to persist for fifty years and the territory, as a Special Administrative Region (SAR), is to enjoy "a high degree of autonomy" in most matters except defense and foreign affairs.**

(Scott 1995 p.193)

The trend of globalisation and the move towards capitalism have somehow restructured the economic infrastructure of China in the 1990s and broken down the

political and economic wall between China and the rest of the world. Hong Kong obviously acts as the economic stronghold and broker mediating between China and other countries and the strong economic background of Hong Kong has also increased the bargaining power of Hong Kong for the quest of greater autonomy from China. After all, granting autonomy to Hong Kong on the economic aspect is mutually beneficial, especially as China is in the process of economic transformation, and the interests of Hong Kong business people who are able to exert great influence on the financial stability of Hong Kong are protected.

## **1.2 The linguistic landscape of Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is well-known for its role as an international city, with prosperous trade and flourishing commerce. However, its fame is also the result of its complicated linguistic situation, which deals with three languages at the same time—Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Hong Kong has a population of seven million people. It is a multinational society with people of different races. Cantonese-speaking Chinese form the majority, with a composition of minority groups that include western Europeans, Americans, Indians and Filipinos who come to Hong Kong for job hunting or business purposes. Hong Kong cannot be regarded as a multilingual society because over 98% of its population speak Cantonese. As Wright (1997) comments, Hong Kong's multilingualism, or plurilingualism, exists only on the superficial level, and it is not an accurate reflection of the linguistic landscape in Hong Kong. The number of the major minority groups in Hong Kong: the western European, the Filipino and the Indian, will probably decline due to different political and cultural reasons after the end of the colonial period. The government officials have been replaced by locally born Chinese. The Filipinos are mostly employed either as maids or they belong to the lower working class. Their community and speech do not do much to alter the local linguistic situation; besides, their medium of communication is mainly English, or even Cantonese, when they are talking to their bosses or bargaining in the markets. Vietnamese used to be one of the main minority groups in Hong Kong and they arrived in Hong Kong as asylum seekers. However, the number of this minority group had decreased since 1998, when the Hong Kong government decided to put a stop to the 'Port of first asylum policy'. (Hong Kong Home Affairs Bureau undated)

After the return of sovereignty, Hong Kong has become part of China, though it still enjoys a high degree of autonomy regarding speech, press, media and legal administration, as the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 stated. Nevertheless, Hong Kong has many characteristics which are totally distinctive from her motherland. China consists of people speaking hundreds of dialects, but people from different provinces or with different mother-tongues share one language in common: Mandarin. There is no doubt that the tendency for Hong Kong people to learn Mandarin is conspicuous, but still, the majority of Hong Kong-born Chinese, especially the younger generation who are in their early 20s, are not able to speak Mandarin. The lack of its promotion by the colonial government may be one of the reasons accounting for its unpopularity in the past. Other reasons might be that there is a strong sense of loyalty of Hong Kong people to the former colony; the unwillingness of her people to be assimilated by the Mainland Chinese; and the emergence of Cantonese or Hong Kong culture.

Political, social, economic and cultural forces interact with one another when creating a particular identity. With such a unique historical background, Hong Kong is to be classified as a mixture of mainly 'Chinese', with the dilution by western influences due to the impact of colonization, as well as Hong Kong's own globalization, and integration with the world economy. The British government adopted a laissez-faire attitude and minimal intervention policy when it came to trade and commerce. Hong Kong was given a great degree of autonomy and freedom. Although there are claims that Hong Kong people were suppressed by the colonizer in a subconscious way, which was to keep the political interest of the majority of the people of Hong Kong to the lowest point; however, most of them welcomed, or at least they did not resist colonial rule, as long as their economic interests and wealth-seeking opportunities were not threatened. The British government paid respect to the local Chinese cultural practices and religions, though riots did break out occasionally, especially during the 60s when the pro-communist wing demonstrated against the colonial government (Cable News Network LP, LLLP (CNN) 2002), and the 70s when there were a series of protests organised by students in search for an identity (Choi 1990). Hong Kong has been a very stable and safe place which facilitates the development of trade. Although there has been an increase in the economic links between Hong Kong and

Mainland China, their political paths diverge to two totally different poles. The Hong Kong culture is on its way to maturity and it will be discussed in the section on 'Hong Kong culture' in chapter two.

### **1.2.1 Juxtaposition of Chinese and English**

As mentioned in the previous part of the chapter, the population in Hong Kong mainly consists of local-born Chinese and immigrants from Mainland China. The population had increased by six times between 1948 and 1983. Cantonese remains the dominant vernacular language in Hong Kong, but Chinese has never been granted the same status in the official, administrative, business or education domains as English has. The language problem of Hong Kong and the 'diglossic/triglossic phenomenon' has existed for quite a long time, but the language issues have never been given equal attention as political and financial matters. Although certain matters regarding language problems had been addressed before, the colonial government had always wisely avoided this sensitive question, or had not given certain and definite answers to relevant matters.

#### **1.2.1.1 Status of Chinese language in Hong Kong**

The 1960s was a period of revolts and rebellions in the western world, and Hong Kong was going through an era of upheavals in the 60s as well. Anti-colonial feelings in Hong Kong reached a climax in the late 1960s, and raised the delicate question of 'nationalism' and 'national identity', which led to the situation that further attention was paid to the question of the 'official language' in Hong Kong. People started to ask: "Why do we still have to use English as the sole official language in Hong Kong where the vast majority are Chinese?" A fad of 'root-hunting' made Hong Kong people hesitant about their unquestionable obedience to the colonial government. We should note that this anti-colonial climate did not do much to threaten colonial rule, but soon after this the 'All Hong Kong Working Party to Promote Chinese as an Official Language' was established and it demanded the need to recognise the status of the Chinese language. As a consequence, the government made Chinese an official language in 1974.

Another attempt by the government to promote Chinese was in 1973 when the Green Paper was passed and the choice of the medium of instruction was brought into attention. It recommended that the teaching medium in lower forms for secondary education should be Chinese, instead of English, which was the more usual and popular choice of teaching medium. The White Paper was passed in 1974, the same year as Chinese language was given official status, but it stated that the choice of medium of instruction was left to the schools themselves.

With the passing of time, the status of Chinese in Hong Kong has gone further up the ladder. The change of political environment after 1997, and China's adoption of an open-door policy and her effort to adapt herself, or to open herself, to international trade and business had armed this communist country with more power and capital. Status of a country usually goes hand in hand with her national wealth. The China Internet Information Center (2002) illustrates that:

**According to preliminary estimation, in the first quarter of this year, the gross domestic product [GDP] reached 2102 billion yuan, up 7.6% over the same period last year at comparable prices. It was 0.3 percentage points higher than that in the last quarter of the previous year. Of which, the value-added of the primary industry was 159.2 billion yuan, up by 3.3% over the same period of last year, that of the secondary industry reached 1155.2 billion yuan, up 9.3%, and that of the tertiary industry was 787.7, up 6.2% over the same period of last year.**

China bade farewell to her weaknesses and poverty in the past, and is moving in the direction of capitalism and trade development. Chinese has also begun to gain respect. All these factors have contributed to the rise of the status of Chinese language. One thing that we should notice is that Cantonese, instead of Mandarin, still remains the language used by the majority in Hong Kong despite the fact that they are different in terms of status. Cantonese is also subdivided into the high and low variety in the Hong Kong context. The former means the formal use of Cantonese in the legal system, administration, meetings of the governmental bodies; whereas the low variety refers to the type used by the general public in the domains which show intimacy, and close ties within the community.



The higher status that Chinese now enjoys is illustrated by the extensive use of Mandarin in the business world. Companies usually require fluency in Mandarin as one of the pre-requisites in addition to fluency in English when they recruit new blood. The most remarkable change was the implementation of the reassessment of English language proficiency in all secondary schools in Hong Kong. It was a very large-scale policy. The impact was significant in the way that three quarters of all secondary schools were forced to switch from being English-medium schools to becoming Chinese-medium schools. The details of the whole policy will be left to more in-depth analysis later in section 2.9 in the next chapter.

The attitude of Hong Kong people to Mandarin is generally positive. According to two surveys done in different years, it is surprising to find that the majority of the subjects from two different surveys about the study of language attitudes in Hong Kong indicate that their feeling of the need and motivation of learning Mandarin is based on the grounds of socio-cultural reasons (26% as shown in table 1.1).

**Table 1.1**

**Attitudes towards Putonghua [Mandarin]**

	Area	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Communicative	77	20
2	Political	92	24
3	Socio-cultural	99	26
4	Instrumental	51	14
5	Educational/linguistic	58	15

(Pierson 1992 p.195)

As Pierson (1998) quotes from a questionnaire survey done by Wai (1993), the motivation of 34% of the respondents for learning Putonghua (Mandarin) arises from their sense of belonging to the Chinese culture and patriotism or pride, as shown in table 1.2

**Table 1.2****Motivation for language learning [for Putonghua]**

	Area	Percentage (%)
1	Patriotism	34
2	Communication	27
3	Emigration	12
4	Higher Earning Power	19
5	Better job prospects	15
6	Government Post	6

(Pierson 1998 p.106)

**1.2.1.2 Status of English in Hong Kong**

When we talk about the status of the English language in Hong Kong, it is always compounded by the conflicting roles inherent in English language—its status as the *lingua franca* in the world on the one hand because of British conquests and her colonies all around the world, which helped the spread of the colonial language; and its economic power on the other. Its domination over fields of science, technology and education is also widely recognised. As Crystal (1998) summarises,

**A 1981 study of the use of English in scientific periodical showed that 85 per cent of papers in biology and physics were being written in English at that time, whereas medical papers were some way behind (73 per cent), and papers in mathematics and chemistry further behind still (69 per cent and 67 per cent respectively). However, all these areas had shown a significant increase in their use of English during the preceding fifteen years—over 30 per cent, in the case of chemistry, and over 40 per cent, in the case of medicine, and the figures fifteen years further on would certainly be much higher...Another widely quoted statistic is that about 80 per cent of the world's electronically stored information is currently in English.**

(pp.102-105)

With the beginning of the new era, the possibility for any other languages to replace English as the *lingua franca* is low, and the same situation is likely to remain for at least a decade or so. English is also the colonial language in Hong Kong. Hong Kong had been under British rule for more than 150 years; English had changed from a

language privileged to the British people or the elite class, to a language that the majority of the population has a command of. As Lord (1987) suggests,

**In Hong Kong, over the past two decades, English has changed from being a purely colonial language whose use was largely restricted to government circles, the law, high-level business, and a few other sectors, to becoming an indispensable language of wider communication, for a growingly large range of people, all the way down from top brass to clerks, from taipans to secretaries.**

(p.11)

Although historical influence on the spread of English could definitely not be neglected, economic reasons are the most vital impetus driving Hong Kong people to acquire knowledge of the language. According to a survey done by Richards in 1998 about the motives of learning English in Hong Kong, we are not surprised to see that students mostly regard one of the aims for learning English is to perform better in public examinations, which will automatically guarantee a place for further studies. The instrumental value of English is stressed and rated as one of the major motives—that English is useful in the work place.

**Table 1.3**

**Motives for learning English**

MOTIVES	Mean
It will likely be useful for the public examinations	3.7
It will likely be useful when you are working.	3.6
It will likely be useful if you continue your studies.	3.5
It can be used when talking to people who speak English as a mother tongue.	3.3
It can help you when you are travelling overseas.	3.3
It makes you feel good when you succeed.	3.2
It is related to other subjects you are studying.	3.2
It can be used in daily life.	3.2
It can allow you to increase your knowledge.	3.1
It can help you express yourself more accurately and effectively.	3.1
It can help you better understand English stories.	3.0
It is related to your personal interests.	2.8
It is challenging.	2.8
It can help you better understand Western culture.	2.7
It can be used when talking to people who speak English as a second language.	2.6
It is interesting.	2.6
It can let you know more about cultural differences.	2.2

1= not important      2= somewhat important      3=important      4=very important

(Richards 1998 p.311)

What we can find out from the result of the current research is that English is of very low use value in the society, as English itself is not widely spoken in the streets or in everyday life. Nevertheless, it has a very high exchange value—in exchange for a place in one of the highly competitive tertiary institutions, for a job with a better prospect, for upward and outward mobility. According to Richards (1998), other reasons or motives such as ‘learning more about western culture’ and ‘learning for the sake of learning’ rate lowest on the list of priority.

The attitude of Hong Kong students towards English has not undergone any drastic change since the 1990s. When we compare the result of Richards (1998) with similar surveys conducted by Pennington and Yue’s research in 1994, they are quite consistent. As Richards (1998) states,

**In Hong Kong, it is generally believed that English skills and/or qualifications are vital to one’s future employment prospects. This sentiment, also noted by Patric and Lin and Detaramani, may have its roots in the community’s colonial heritage. However, the shift in the local economy towards international finance and trade, combined with the growing importance of English as an international language, has ensured a continued strong demand for English skills: Hong Kong people learn English because of the historical factor, the economic ties with other countries, and the migration to the western world. These factors give English language extraordinary status in the Chinese society in Hong Kong.**

(p. 310)

Whether English would have flourished and played such an important role in Hong Kong without her colonial background is questionable. Nevertheless, there are several other aspects that have contributed to the apparently high status of English and they will be discussed further in chapter six.

### **1.2.1.3 Status of Mandarin in the field of education**

If language is the symbol of one’s ethnicity and national identity, then Mandarin

should be claimed to be the national language of Hong Kong Chinese as well. However, Mandarin has proved to be equally as foreign as English is to Hong Kong Chinese. English has been offered as a core subject from primary schools to secondary education and English was also the medium of instruction for more than 300 (3/4) secondary schools in Hong Kong. The question of 1997 as well as the increasing trade links between Hong Kong and China did arouse the government's and the public attention to the value of Mandarin. Schools have been given grants to arrange Mandarin lessons to students who are willing to study it, and teachers also receive some training in Mandarin so as to cater for the future needs of the education field.

Despite all these efforts by the Education Department to promote Mandarin in schools, it is clear that Mandarin has been given a lower priority than English or other core subjects in the whole curriculum. Policy-makers held an indifferent attitude toward this subject, and students did not pay as much attention in studying this subject as they think it would not affect their overall grades for meeting the entry requirements of universities. Mandarin had been underrated in the curriculum and its inclusion had not been well planned.

Mandarin experienced a revival in the 1960s with the coming of immigrants from China and also because of the popularity of songs and movies in Mandarin. However, the enthusiasm and patriotism were short-lived and the fad did not last long. The government did try to promote the teaching of Mandarin in schools in the 1980s, however, whether it has been seriously taken and carried out by schools is another question.

The table below shows a comparison between the three languages (under two language systems, as Cantonese and Mandarin belong to the family of Chinese language). The relative status of each of the three languages is drawn according to the political, educational, cultural and economic aspects within the Hong Kong context.

**Table 1.4****Relative status of the three languages in Hong Kong in relation to different dimensions**

Aspects	English	Mandarin	Cantonese
Political	It is the coloniser's language. Politically speaking, it was the only official language in Hong Kong until 1974, and is still widely used in court and administrative affairs.	It is the national language of China. Spoken Mandarin, together with the higher form of Cantonese, are the official spoken languages in Hong Kong .	Its written form is not recognized or granted official status in the political field, though its spoken form is widely used by politicians.
Educational	It was the medium of instruction in most of the secondary schools in Hong Kong. However, only ¼ of the schools remain English-medium schools after 1997 because of the new medium of instruction policy.	It was introduced as a subject in schools since the 1970s, but it was never taken seriously until after the handover. It has become one of the core subjects in schools and students have to learn this language since primary one now.	The written form of Cantonese is never recognised in schools. However, the spoken form has been used as the teaching medium in all the Chinese-medium schools.
Cultural	The majority of the Hong Kong population is Cantonese-speaking Chinese (around 90%), and therefore people do not feel the English language as their cultural heritage despite the fact that it enjoys a very high status in Hong Kong. According to a survey done by the government in 1995, there was a tremendous rise in the number of people who claimed to understand English during the past decade. The percentage has increased from 44% to 70%. (Education Commission 1995 p.10	Although the majority of Hong Kong Chinese cannot speak/are not fluent speakers of Mandarin, still they might find it less foreign than English. The survey carried out by the government in 1995 regarding language attitude reveals that the percentage of people who claimed to understand Mandarin has risen from 39% to 63% during the past decade. (Education Commission 1995 p.10)	The majority of Hong Kong people define themselves as Cantonese born in Hong Kong, and so they are more emotionally attached to Cantonese as their mother-tongue. The same survey regarding language attitude indicates that only 1% of people in Hong Kong claimed that they did not understand Cantonese. (Education Commission 1995 p.10)

Economic	It has a very high exchange value as it is the <i>lingua franca</i> in the world. People are still required to possess high proficiency in the language despite the return of the sovereignty to China.	Its importance in the economic field is increasing with the increase in China trade. One has to have a good command of Mandarin if he/she wants to explore the Chinese economic market.	Its exchange value (for business purpose) is confined mainly to local trade or business in the Cantonese province, though it is also quite widely used in the South-east Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia.
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### 1.3 Diglossia transforming to triglossia in Hong Kong

The return of Hong Kong sovereignty to China in 1997 seemed to have marked a new beginning to the linguistic scene in Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, the linguistic scene had been changing long before 1997, but the changes were even more drastic and obvious with the approach of 1997. The most significant change was the emergence of Mandarin in the arena, as seen by its increasing importance in the legal system, in the government as well as in the business world since Chinese was made one of the two official languages in Hong Kong in 1974. There are also some speculations about Mandarin taking the place of English as the leading language in terms of prestige and importance as the rise of Mandarin has been reinforced by the economic take-off in Mainland China and the trend of politics, which foresees Hong Kong's political assimilation with the motherland. The situation is also compounded by the fact that Cantonese has also emerged as a symbol of the Hong Kong ethnic culture, not simply as a dialect of Chinese language. Therefore, the linguistic arena contains not only the rivalry between Mandarin and English, but also among Mandarin, English and Cantonese. The former diglossic situation (two languages performing different functions in the society) has transformed to triglossia, with three languages co-existing in one society. This phenomenon is manifested by the fact that there is an immense demand for applicants in the job market to be able to exercise English, Cantonese as well as Mandarin. Apart from this, the addition of the Mandarin section in the news reports and information broadcast in nearly all major means of transportation obviously relate highly to the rise of Mandarin as one of the languages with significant importance in the society.

The sections above offer the general background of Hong Kong history. The political separation of Hong Kong from Mainland China in 1841 had paved the way for the forthcoming economic and social diversification in Hong Kong during the era of British rule. Political, economic and social currents all play a part in shaping the linguistic landscape in Hong Kong. Section 1.2 contributes to the language situation in Hong Kong by citing the general status of the three prevailing languages in context—English, Cantonese and Mandarin. The following section, 1.4, provides a more comprehensive description about the linguistic mismatch between the written form of Mandarin, Modern Standard Written Chinese, and Cantonese. It is vital to note the linguistic differentiation between Cantonese and Mandarin before going into deeper discussion about the new medium of instruction policy in chapter five.

#### **1.4 The mismatch of Modern Standard Written Chinese and Cantonese**

##### **1.4.1 Distinction between Mandarin and Cantonese**

###### **1.4.1.1 Difference in terms of role and status**

Linguistic distinction between Mandarin and Cantonese has raised confusion. The source of the problem arises from the fact that the differences between the two not only lie in the phonetics (i.e. it is not only a matter of accents) but also the syntax and lexis. The choice of Northern Mandarin as the standard and official language in China has gone through political and also linguistic considerations. One of the goals of the New Culture Movement in 1919 was to reach uniformity in languages and Northern Mandarin, as the only major dialect in China which has a standardised and established writing system, has logically been chosen. Linguistics debates on the choice of *wenyan* (classical Chinese) or *baihua* (modern spoken Chinese, that is Mandarin) had been going on for some time as the pro-*wenyan* group objected to the use of *baihua* with the reason that it would pose a linguistic disadvantage to southerners, whose dialects do not resemble much linguistic traits from Northern Mandarin. They proposed that *wenyan* should be adopted as it is equally remote and difficult to be acquired by people all over the country. Nonetheless, the need for a standard written language for uniformity and for modernising the country has turned out to be the most important concern (Chen 1999 p.114). *Wenyan* is now only learned in academic syllabuses as a means to appreciate Chinese classical literature.



Before going into further details about the teaching medium question, it is essential to clarify the term 'Chinese'. As Pierson (1992) contends,

**In relying on the term "Chinese", there is an inherent ambiguity and imprecision. Chinese can refer to Cantonese, the dialect of Canton (Guangzhou) and the prosperous Canton delta, and the mother tongue of most Hong Kong Chinese. It can also refer to Putonghua, the national language of China, or modern standard Chinese, the written language. In addition, it can refer to the dozens of regional and village varieties of Chinese that are spoken in Hong Kong.**

(p.185)

Chinese is a collective term of all the dialects in Mainland China. The ambiguity of the definition of Chinese has further led to unsolved language problems in the educational field, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Putonghua (Mandarin) means *common speech*, a language which can make the majority of Chinese population from different provinces with different dialects intelligible to one another as it is spoken by 72% of the population of 1.26 billion. It is the speech that unites the whole community, and it is also the language of many cities in the northern part of China. As for the case of Cantonese, it is the dialect for people in the southern part of China, including Guangzhou and Hong Kong. It is the spoken language of those regions which are the most important economic zones in China. Although it does not enjoy the same status which Mandarin, the national and official language in China, does in terms of external matters, legal and administration purposes, and also for education, Cantonese has nevertheless risen to be a very influential dialect due to its economic purposes. There are even language schools in Shanghai and Beijing offering Cantonese courses because Cantonese is quite frequently used for business in south China. As Harrison & So (1997) point out,

**Cantonese is widespread in cities such as KL (Kuala Lumpur) and Vancouver and has over 1000 speakers in 65 countries (Wang-Gungwu 1994) and Hong Kong people are free, affluent and numerous enough to travel to many of them and help make their city the principal focus of overseas Cantonese.**

(pp. 12-13)

Despite the fact that Cantonese has never gained equal weight with Mandarin in terms

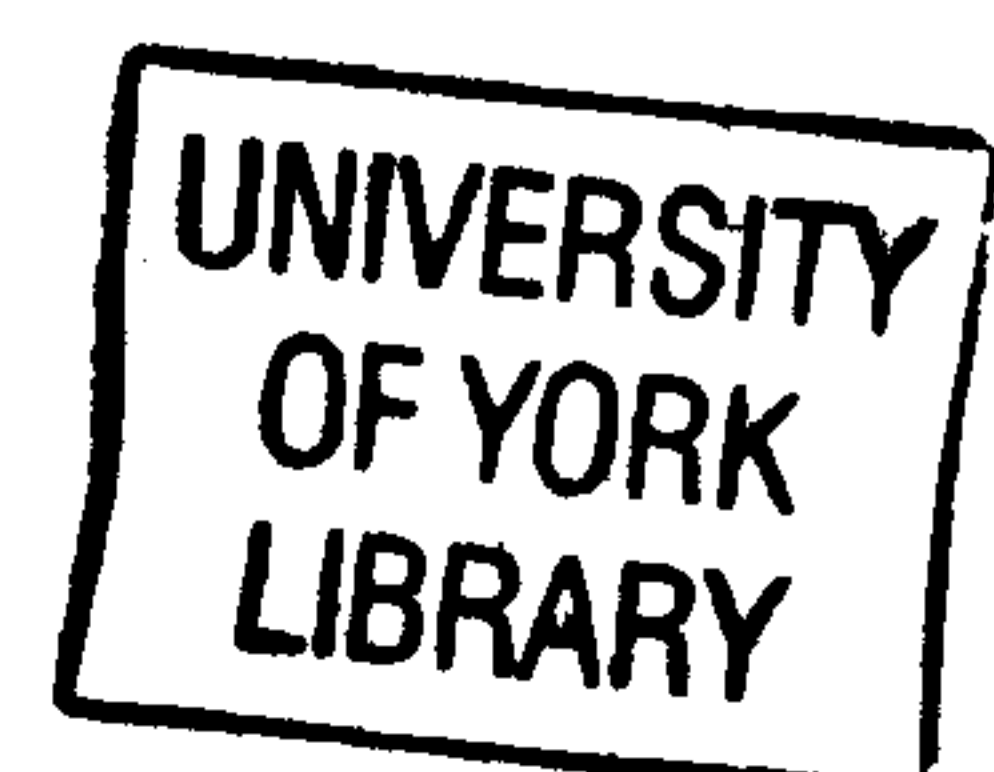
of political, social and academic status, Cantonese has got a slightly higher status than the rest of the Chinese dialects as Cantonese has remained the most commonly used language in the areas where trade in China prospers most rapidly. Apart from this, as Chen (1999) puts it, “ In comparison with the other Southern dialects, Cantonese has a form that is more conventionalized, and, theoretically at least, is capable of fulfilling all of the functions expected of a written medium.” (p. 115) The unique properties of Cantonese are root factors contributing to the formation of Chinese regional identity, and explain why the Cantonese culture is particularly strong. In fact, the use of Cantonese was so widespread that it was regarded as a threat to the status of Mandarin. The Guangdong government (Guangdong is one of the major cities in the Canton Province, where the majority of people have Cantonese as their mother-tongue) issued a directive in 1992 to control the use of Cantonese and stressed that Mandarin should be the only standard language in the Canton region (Chen 1999). A draft law was proposed in 2000 to the National People Congress to standardize language use in China. According to People’s Daily (2000),

**In accordance with the draft law, the Mandarin Chinese and standardized writing characters should be used throughout the country. Meanwhile, minority language can be used in the areas heavily populated by ethnic groups.**

Although the draft law with regard to language use in China suggests that people have the freedom to talk in their dialects within their dialectal communities, it stipulates that Mandarin and Modern Standard Written Chinese remain the only language that can be used in public and official functions.

#### **1.4.1.2 Difference in terms of linguistic features**

As mentioned earlier, Chinese is just a collective word for more than two hundred spoken dialects in China. Cantonese is only one of the dialects. The Cantonese language itself does not have corresponding characters in Modern Standard Written Chinese. It is true that written Cantonese can always be found in newspapers, comics, songs; nonetheless, Cantonese does not have a standardized format as Mandarin does. As Tse (undated) defines,



**Modern standard written Chinese is the written form of spoken Putonghua. (Cheung, 1984; Bauer, 1984) Although it is possible to argue that Modern Standard Written Chinese and Putonghua are not entirely congruent, Putonghua has high correspondence in terms of syntax and lexis to Modern Standard Written Chinese and serves as a common means of communication and way of sharing common cultural and literary values within the wider Chinese community.**

(p.2)

As noted earlier, Modern Standard Written Chinese (MSWC) is the written form of Mandarin. That is why native Mandarin speakers do not have as much difficulty with writing MSWC when compared to their Cantonese counterparts.

**...the spoken form of MSWC is Putonghua, whereas the spoken language used by the pupils is Cantonese. Hence, Hong Kong primary pupils learn MSWC with Cantonese pronunciation. Furthermore, they learn how to write using texts and readers written in MSWC, when the oral medium of instruction in the classroom is Cantonese. Students thus use one language for listening and speaking, and presumably thinking, and another for writing and reading.**

(Tse undated p.4)

The usual practice for Hong Kong pupils to learn MSWC is, "...first to accept the need to change discourse mode from the spoken mode (Cantonese) to the written mode (MSWC)" (Tse undated p.4). Due to historical reasons and the difference of the paths of evolution between Chinese in Hong Kong and Chinese in Mainland China, standard Chinese in Hong Kong is slightly different from that of Mainland China. As Chen (1999) suggests,

**Given the role of Cantonese as the *lingua franca* among the local Chinese [in Hong Kong], and also given the fact that English has long been the language for high-level administrative, commercial, legal, an educational purposes, Modern Standard Written Chinese norms in Hong Kong inevitably deviate somewhat from those in mainland China. Although the most remarkable differences lie in the vocabulary, there are also some variations in grammatical norms.**

(p. 99)

Chen (1999) reports that in terms of syntax, Cantonese differs from Mandarin (MSWC) in the way that the adverb precedes the verb in Mandarin, but follows it in Cantonese as shown in the following example:

**[Cantonese version]**

- a. Ta hui zai zher zhu duo ji tian.  
 He will in here live more several days.  
 “He will live here for a few more days”.

**[Mandarin version]**

- b. Ta hui zai zher duo zhu ji tian.  
 He will in here more live several days.  
 “He will live here for a few more days.”

(p.99)

Apart from syntactical structure, Cantonese also differs from Mandarin/Modern Standard Written Chinese in terms of lexis and phonology. The following table displays the lexical variations of Chinese terms used in Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore:

**Table 1.5**

**Lexical variations [of Chinese] among mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore**

[Terms]	Mainland China	Taiwan	Hong Kong	Singapore
‘taxi’	chūzū qìchē	jìchéngchē	díshì	déshì
‘petrol’	qìyóu	qìyóu	diànyóu	diànyóu
‘folk-dance’	mínjiānwǔ	tǔfēngwǔ	tǔfēngwǔ	tǔfēngwǔ or mínjiānwǔ
‘film’	jiāojiǎn	jiāojiǎn	fēilín	jiāojiǎn or fēilín
‘motorcycle’	mótuōchē	jīchē	diàndānchē	mótuōxīkǎ or any of the other three
‘disabled’	cánjí	cánzhàng	shāngcán	cánquē or any of the other three

(Chen 1999 p.106)

Lexical variations occur because of various reasons, namely, historical background of

the place (as in the case of Hong Kong, it had been ceded to the United Kingdom for 156 years) and linguistic varieties that exist within the place (as in Singapore where there are four official languages, as will be mentioned in chapter three). Chen (1999) clarifies that “The distinctive characteristics of Modern [Standard] Written Chinese in Hong Kong mainly result from the strong influence of English and Cantonese. The vocabulary of written Chinese in Hong Kong contains a larger number of borrowings from English than in either mainland China or Taiwan...”. (p.107) Regarding phonetic variation between Mandarin and Cantonese, So (1989) states that

**...Cantonese is a tonal language with nine tones. It has 20 ‘initials’ and 53 ‘finals’, i.e. it has 73 distinctive sound segments. Putonghua [Mandarin] is also a tonal language. However, it has only four tones; two of them can be found in Cantonese. It has 22 ‘initials’ and 38 ‘finals’, i.e. it has sixty distinctive sound segments. These two languages share only twelve and five cognates respectively in their ‘initials’ and ‘finals’.**

(p.38)

It should be noted that if Cummins’s linguistic interdependence theory (this will be covered in section 2.5.1 in the next chapter) functions, in order to move a step forward to transfer the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) from modern standard Chinese to English, it is necessary to consolidate students’ linguistic foundation in modern standard Chinese first. As Shi (2000) states, “it is not easy for our [Hong Kong] students to learn modern standard Chinese and Chinese teachers have a crucial role to play. It is 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 main task of our Chinese teachers is to help students recognise features unique to Hong Kong Cantonese and learn their modern standard Chinese equivalents...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.” (p.212)

The mismatch between MSWC and Cantonese also explains why the standards of Chinese of Hong Kong students are lower than their Mainland counterparts, because it

involves one more level of transformational process from the spoken form to the written form, and local students might find it hard to conform to the standard Chinese rules when they are writing. Provided that the marking system of Hong Kong is based on error-elimination and is grammatically-based, students are inclined to avoid making mistakes instead of learning from them, which poses an obstacle to students' creative thinking and writing.

**The effect is that students are encouraged to pay attention to grammar and discouraged from expressing themselves freely and creatively in writing. Rose (1984) warns that writing is hampered when writers are too concerned with rhetorical concerns (how-to-say-it) rather than with substantive concerns (what-to-say).**

(Tse undated p.33)

The fact that local students focus more on the grammatical structure of language instead of the content and expressions might account for the declining creativity level of writing and, in general, the standards of Chinese of Hong Kong students in the recent decade. For many of the Hong Kong students, ensuring what they have written in their Chinese compositions is structurally and grammatically accurate is considered to be more crucial in gaining higher scores. Having got this psychological burden in mind, their creative and innovative levels may probably be undermined to a certain degree.

### **1.5 Summary**

The present chapter outlines the linguistic landscape of Hong Kong by looking at the relative status of Mandarin, Cantonese and English according to attitude surveys, the pattern of their use and the political context of Hong Kong. It also elaborates the mismatch between Modern Standard Written Chinese and Cantonese, ranging from the differences in relation to their grammar, phonetics, to the power status, which are going to be of much relevance to the issue of medium of instruction in the following chapters.

The next chapter is divided into three sections, which deal with 1. the literature on

cultural and identity issues in Hong Kong, 2. the theoretical issues with regard to the 1998 MOI policy and bilingual education in Hong Kong and 3. the details of the 1998 MOI policy and mixed-code teaching in the context of the present study. Chapter two is also going to introduce the development of the local medium of instruction policy and the political implications of the mother-tongue hypothesis. It is hoped that the next chapter might offer a more informative and relevant background for the educational and cultural issues that will be discussed in chapters five and six.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.0 Issues of culture and identity: Hong Kong culture

This section of literature review is going to discuss the identity complex of Hong Kong people by referring to the various factors that contribute to the emergence of Hong Kong identity, and its characteristics as shown by mass media and linguistic difference. This section offers a general idea of the cultural construct of local Hong Kong people, which has in a way complicated the language issue in Hong Kong.

### 2.1 The evolution of Hong Kong identity

The rise or the emergence of the Hong Kong identity dated back to the 1960s, which has undergone a series of transformation throughout the decades since then. The population in Hong Kong in the pre-50s mainly consisted of migrants from China, who came from their motherland to establish more stable and secure lives in Hong Kong. It is not surprising that the two generations, the early immigrants from China, and their offspring, who were born in Hong Kong, uphold different cultural values and attitudes towards China. For the older generation, they tend to be more emotionally attached and nostalgic to their hometowns in China. As Johnson (1997) comments,

**The older generation was often silent as to the reasons for out-migration, and critical cultural knowledge about ancestral localities was not always transmitted. The links with the ancestral homeland were re-established in the 1980s. For the younger generation, however, the emotional impact was blunted by the unwillingness of senior generations to be fully open about the past. The younger generation, which came to maturity in the 1970s and 1980s, did not carry the emotional baggage of their elders. A sense of Hong Kong identity was established by the young Hong Kong born population, which saw a growing cultural gulf between the experience of growing up in an affluent and largely apolitical Hong Kong, with its increasing links to the international system, and the China**



**alternative.**

(p.131)

Johnson (1997) explains the mentality distinction between the older immigrant population of Hong Kong and their more internationalised off-spring as the fundamental reason for the evolution of a particular Hong Kong identity. The following section is going to offer a more detailed account for the formation of a unique Hong Kong culture.

### **2.1.1 Reasons for the formation of Hong Kong culture**

The gap and differences between Hong Kong and China have widened because of cultural as well as linguistic distinction. As I mentioned earlier, the colonial government adopted a laissez-faire attitude when it came to trade and commerce, and Hong Kong was given a large extent of autonomy and freedom. Since the post-war period in the 1950s and during the course of internal political conflicts in China in the 1960s, there was an influx of political refugees from China, which directly facilitated the flourishing of manufacturing and light industries in Hong Kong because of the influx of human capital and resources. The impact of the Proletariat Cultural Revolution in China in the 60s was far-reaching, since it not only resulted in destruction of historical Chinese intellectual heritage, but also brought about poverty over China because economic progress and related developments had been slowed down tremendously. As Wang (1997) notes,

**These alarming developments [impact of the Cultural Revolution] served to sharpen the distinctiveness of Heungkong yan [Hong Kong people] and, for the first time ever, made them feel superior and even more civilized than the Chinese to their north. It challenged the Heungkong yan to question the relevance of the Chinese heritage to themselves and even the quality of their own Chineseness. It shook them out of their bearings and opened them to external and international influences in new and disturbing ways.**

(p.160)

### 2.1.1.1 Economic reasons

During the seventies, Hong Kong's transformation into an international financial and commercial centre started to take shape, and from the eighties onwards it has been recognized as one of the worlds' biggest financial markets, particularly sound in terms of banking. Hong Kong is one of the members of international economic organizations like the GATT and WTO. Koh (1997) gives a very precise summary of the economic achievements of Hong Kong today in his inaugural speech in the University of Hong Kong,

**Seventy-nine of the world's 100 largest banks are located in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's stock exchange ranks No.7 in the world by market capitalization. Measured by the number of listed companies, Hong Kong ranks No.3 in East Asia, after Tokyo and Sydney. Using the volume of trade in foreign exchange as the criterion, Hong Kong also ranks No.3 after Tokyo and Singapore.**

(p.5)

The hybridized<sup>1</sup> cultural outlook of Hong Kong society is largely attributed to the economic transformation mentioned above. However, the interesting point is that this unique hybridized culture originated from Chinese and western culture has turned out to become a symbol, or trademark, of Hong Kong society. As Chan (1997) explains,

**The cultural make-up of Hong Kong is widely regarded as the hybridized product of Chinese and Western legacies. Further questions can be raised, however, regarding both the shifting magnitudes and interplay of these legacies, as well as their manner of penetration into the local society. In a nutshell, the main currents during the seventies conjuncture, one may suggest, were that while the horizon of outside cultural influences did greatly expand, what was even more momentous and indicative was the active, conscientious manner whereby extrinsic influences were internalized to become an integral part of cultural Hong Kong. The impetus of foreign impacts in the seventies, in other**

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<sup>1</sup> According to the hybridization theory, hybridization in biology means " ...two items are genetically crossed to produce a new system that has some of the characteristics of the original systems, but also has created additional characteristics that will be unique to it." BCPL.net Service (2001) In the context of this study, it refers to the combination of eastern and western elements in the composite culture of Hong Kong.

**words, ironically provided one of the key motive forces in the formation of local culture.**

(p. 177)

The interplay of economic and cultural differences has undoubtedly widened the gulf between Hong Kong and China as the latter had run into a totally different path since their temporary split after 1949. With the strong potential and forces of the economies in the Canton Province, a sub-culture that represents the southern part of China was generated. A series of questions with regard to the identity of Hong Kong Chinese have been raised, for instance, the conflict of identity question grounded on the basis of languages. As Joseph (2000) states,

**The two principal candidates are usually a Chinese identity grounded in Putonghua (Mandarin), the standard spoken language of mainland China, and a Hong Kong identity grounded in Cantonese. Secondary to these two but rarely absent from the picture is an international identity grounded in English...Others assume that a Hong Kong identity grounded in Cantonese will dominate, with Putonghua and English serving merely as auxiliary languages for dealing with the central government and the international business community respectively.**

(p.17)

The characteristics of Hong Kong culture will be discussed later in the chapter. The following sub-sections are going to elaborate on the two other main reasons for the formation of the Hong Kong culture.

#### **2.1.1.2 Historical reasons**

The population of Hong Kong largely comprises political refugees from China, or offspring of the refugees. They were reluctant to get involved in politics, and were not interested in doing things without economic rewards. Most of the people who fled to Hong Kong in the 1960s did not have much optimism in the future economy of the city, and most of them treated Hong Kong as a temporary haven without thinking about planting their roots there. Political events such as the Proletariat Cultural Revolution from year 1966 to 1976 which many of the refugees in Hong Kong have

suffered further created a sense of 'political phobia' among the Hong Kong population. Due to the reason that Hong Kong was not a political entity, the residents did not have any nation to identify with. The identity of Hong Kong people is very much distorted and contradictory.

### **2.1.1.3 Geographical reasons**

As we can see from the map on page xxiv, the geographical location of Hong Kong is also a reason of alienation between Hong Kong and China. Hong Kong is located in the south of China inside the Canton Province, a place with very strong sense of regional culture, where the majority of the population speaks Cantonese. As stated earlier, Chinese is a collective term of all the dialects in China, and Mandarin is the dialect of Beijing. It is the official language in China and is widely spoken by 72% of the population. However, due to different historical backgrounds and educational systems between Hong Kong and China, Mandarin was not introduced formally into the curriculum in Hong Kong until very recently and therefore only a minority of the population can master Mandarin to a fair level. The linguistic landscape in Hong Kong is very different from Mainland China, because around 90% of its population speaks Cantonese as the usual language. It is the demotic language in all walks of life in the society (in the family, in the school playground and in the streets).

### **2.1.2 Development of the cultural construct of Hong Kong people**

The cultural construct of Hong Kong people is problematic, because Hong Kong is like a homeless child abandoned by the motherland for a considerable period of time. Being ruled by a foreign government, Hong Kong people have been notorious for their political apathy. For them, neither could they gain wealth from political participation nor they could obtain a sense of belonging to the colonial government. The only thing they cared about was that they did not want any trouble or upheavals that would challenge or ruin their economic interests. As Postiglione *et al* (1997) suggest,

**It is hardly surprising that developing a sense of belonging to a place ruled by foreigners proved to be difficult, and thus they [Hong Kong people] did little to**

challenge colonial rule. Deprived of national identity Hong Kong's main attractions were political stability, economic prosperity, and social and cultural freedom... in general Hong Kong people developed a positive attitude toward the honesty and efficiency of the Hong Kong government, and saw the function of government in an instrumental and pragmatic light. In a society where Chinese nationalism was not politically charged, Hong Kong people operated with flexible identities and integrated more easily with those from other parts of the world... Without a strong sense of national identity, Hong Kong people were left with a sense of political impotence, and disbelief in rewards for political actions. Their views toward the territory's links with the outside world were dominated by pragmatic consideration with a focus on economic rather than political relations.

(pp.6-7)

'Flexible identities' that Hong Kong people possess, as suggested by Postiglione *et al* (1997), originates from the sense of rootlessness of the former generations (those who went to Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s) and the colonial nature of the government. Local people are generally self-contained. Their 'flexible identities' allow them to identify with whatever country they can obtain security from, and they are less likely to be influenced by nationalistic or anti-foreign feelings.

#### 2.1.2.1 Before the 1970s

The cultural identity question has posed a lot of contradictions in the community, and contributed to the outbursts of protests in the 60s against the colonial rule, and the student movement in the 70s in search of the identity. The segregation of Hong Kong from China in the 1950s due to political and economic reasons created a loss of identity. The older generation (immigrants from China) kept silent about their lives in Mainland China, and the post-war generation, bred under the unique hybrid culture in Hong Kong, felt lost and uncertain as they did not have a nation state to identify with. The characteristics of Hong Kong people were best identified by Chan (1986), who describes the people of the ex-colony as "Marginal Man who lacks a spiritual place which he can stand upon and can identify with as his own. He is a constant drifter in a no-man's land. The feeling of rootlessness is the ultimate source of his alienation. He

simply does not belong at all. He is an alien and a foreigner, even in his own country. He is a stranger in a strange land!" (p.211) The university students, who were the main organisers for the protests in the 70s, were in a hurry to solve the identity crisis. Looking back at all these protests, it is very clear that the shallowness and the oversimplification of the identity question account for their final failure. Choi (1990) identifies the lack of identity and the feeling of emptiness as the source for the deep discontent about the colonial government. The development of the attitude with regard to the cultural identity question from the 70s to the 90s will be briefly discussed in the following sections 2.1.2.2 and 2.1.2.3.

#### **2.1.2.2 In the 1970s**

With the belief that a total identification with communist China provides an answer to the identity crisis, an anti-colonial feeling was stirred and the activist group also rose into power. The general atmosphere, as quoted by Choi (1990) from the Xueyun Chunqiu (1982), was that

**As a result, any call for commitment to Hong Kong itself was considered to be either naive or a conspiracy on the part of the colonial government to detract local Chinese from identifying and ultimately re-uniting with their homeland...meanwhile, the predominant mood was that China was the ultimate concern, and its official policies should be faithfully complied to by the people in Hong Kong.**

(pp.100-1)

The unquestioning obedience and patriotism towards communist China soon proved to be a manifestation of extreme behaviour and mentality. These patriotic ideas could not be consolidated due to the fact that they were two extremely diverse paths which Hong Kong and China followed after 1949, with Hong Kong becoming more international and capitalist, while China was undergoing political unrest like the cultural revolution in the following decades. The incompatibility between Hong Kong and China was getting more obvious with the birth of the new generation. As Choi (1990) further comments

**China and Hong Kong had followed such diverse paths after 1950 that, despite a strong desire for establishing national identity, the incompatibilities between capitalist Hong Kong and socialist China simply could not be wished away...the ultra-leftist rhetoric of putting the collectivity above the individual, and its emphasis on austerity of life style, was not acceptable to this generation who, born and bred in Hong Kong, had already developed their own patterns of work and leisure...And indigenous identity has emerged.**

(pp.105-6)

The quest for identity of the second generation of the refugees from China acted as a contributing factor that sped up the formation of a unique Hong Kong identity. As noted by Crowell and Cheung (1997),

**Since the end of World War II, a whole generation has grown to maturity in the territory. Unlike the sojourners and refugees that made up previous ones, its members consider Hong Kong their home. They have a stock of shared experiences and take considerable pride in the territory's achievements. These building blocks of a unique identity often remain with them even after they emigrate.**

### **2.1.2.3 In the 1990s and after—wave of emigration**

Through the evolution of identity and also the passage of time, the 'localness' of Hong Kong culture is reflected by the popularity of its local films, TV programmes, and pop songs. If we compare the culture of Canton Province and Hong Kong culture, we could see that lots of cultural characteristics like tradition, cuisine and language of Hong Kong that are embedded within the context of Hong Kong culture are very much in common with the general Cantonese culture (the Southeast coastal regions of China). However, if we look closely, we could see that throughout the years Hong Kong has developed a unique and distinctive culture. The reason is closely linked to historical developments like centralization of power of the Mainland Chinese government for the 30 decades after the liberation in 1949, which had prohibited regional cultures from taking shape. Johnson (1997) has made a very clear explanation about the separate developmental paths which Hong Kong and the rest of the south-

eastern regions of China have taken, regardless of how close they are in terms of geographical location,

**The cultural dominance (of the southeastern part of China over Hong Kong) receded after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This was in part a consequence of the tight central control that was maintained over all of China's provinces after 1949. This control was especially marked when it came to the complicated provinces of the coastal southeast. Regional cultures were in general overwhelmed by an effort to create national cultural forms with a "socialist" character...Equally, its potency as a cultural influence was severely limited by national initiatives. Hong Kong was therefore able to create a distinctive version of local culture significantly independent of forces from China itself.**

(p.132)

The political phobia and feeling of unrest that come with the reintegration with China has led to a wave of emigration to countries like Canada, the USA, Australia and the UK in the late 1980s till the mid 1990s. People who succeeded in applications for emigration were likely to be professionals. The issue of emigration has consequently caused the alarm of 'brain drain' in Hong Kong in the 1990s.

The previous sections from 2.1 to 2.1.1.3 focus on the different reasons that account for the formation of the Hong Kong identity. Section 2.1.2 draws the attention to the development of the cultural identity of Hong Kong people, tracing back to the period of late 1960s to 70s which is the watershed of the local identity question after the breakout of the riot in 1967 and the student movement that followed in the 1970s, to the 1990s which has brought about another time of rethinking of the identity question due to the emigration fad. The following sections are going to focus on the current state of Hong Kong identity, which involves the various features of the local culture and identity that distinguish local Chinese from their mainland counterparts.

## **2.2 Manifestation of Hong Kong culture through the mass media**

As mentioned earlier, Cantonese is the *demotic* language of the Chinese population in Hong Kong. Cultural matters usually go with language. In Hong Kong, Cantonese is



the dominant language of the street, the mass media and entertainment. As Leung and Wong (1997) point out,

**This Cantonese variety not only enables Chinese people in Hong Kong to identify with their group in society, but also reflects the development and the blending of the east-west cultures of Hong Kong. It is expected that people who use the language in their daily interaction will inevitably develop a deep attachment to it. (Eastman, 1983)....although Putonghua is seen to be more prestigious than Cantonese, the majority of overseas Cantonese-speaking parents send their children to Cantonese-medium Chinese supplementary schools to learn the Chinese language.**

(p.41)

### **2.2.1 Through mass media and pop culture**

The lyrics of the mainstream pop songs in Hong Kong are mostly in Cantonese. Alongside with songs, Cantonese newspapers are indicative of the mainstream culture as well. Standard Chinese is no longer used in many columns in the whole newspaper, and there is a trend for the newspapers and magazines to become more 'colloquial' and 'local'. As a matter of fact, Cantonese has replaced standard written Chinese in most of the columns in the newspaper, and it is usually these newspapers that sell more and are more popular in the market. As Harrison and So (1997) note,

**Standard written Chinese is taught in Hong Kong schools and used in academic settings but lacks characters for many Cantonese words and idioms. In informal writing, like newspaper gossip columns or novels and advertisement, written Cantonese, with its own characters, is often used and it can be impenetrable to non-Cantonese Chinese.**

(p.13)

Due to the dramatic rise in the popularity of written Cantonese, some high-brow newspapers and magazines have to put their old-fashioned and conservative way of writing styles aside, and undergo breakthrough and reforms by using Cantonese characters.

### 2.2.2 Through language

After the liberation in 1949 in Mainland China, the Chinese government has made attempts to promote Mandarin (Putonghua) all over the country. Its attempts met with little success in the southern part of China. For example, in Guangzhou, the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction is limited. Its use only lies within a few elite schools, and Cantonese is used in all other schools. Despite the decades of effort put by the government, Cantonese still remains the dominant language in the domains of family, friendship, social situations and work. Apart from this, the Cantonese used by Hong Kong people is not totally the same as that used in the rest of the Canton Province. The pronunciation of words is exactly the same in Hong Kong and Canton Province, the difference usually lies within the choice of words and the insertion of English words within an utterance. In other words, more code-mixing and code-switching are found in Hong Kong Cantonese.

**...the language changes in Cantonese show, the language, like the Hong Kong culture it so eloquently expresses, is in a state of flux. It is no longer based upon and is different from the Cantonese spoken in Guangzhou. It has borrowed extensively from English, not least in those 'high' areas necessary for educational functions. Few if any discourses within academic, professional or economic/business domains are conducted without mixing, potentially the first step to further borrowing. This mixing, as in the classroom generally, involves the insertion of English technical terms into a Cantonese discourse...**

(Johnson 1998 p.272)

Due to the distinctive cultural features in Hong Kong, it is not surprising that the promotion of Mandarin in the local context after the retrocession would be very difficult, and would take a long time.

### 2.2.3 Consolidation of the Hong Kong identity

Hong Kong people could be regarded as possessing conflicting identities, with traditional *Chineseness* on the one hand, and western characteristics on the other. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Hong Kong people would be more likely to identify

themselves with the local Hong Kong culture and heritage, produced by its special values and interaction between two distinct cultures—Chinese and western. In addition to the freedom of speech and press, the role that Hong Kong is playing in the international financial market has also strengthened the image of a more globalised outlook of Hong Kong identity. As the former Vice-chancellor of the University of Hong Kong Wang Gungwu pointed out in the Hong Kong Lecture Series, “Looking out in any direction, Hong Kong Chinese would find it more difficult today to limit themselves to any single region. The open international trading system is truly global, and Hong Kong has shown it can cope with the greater part of the global outreach.” (Wang 1997 p. 165)

**Table 2.1**

**People’s perception of their identity in a decade’s time frame**

YEAR	People who identify themselves as Hong Kongers	People who identify themselves as Chinese
1985	60%	36%
1988	63.6%	28.8%
1995	53.7%	34.2%

(Postiglione *et al* 1997 p.6)

The above table was drawn according to a survey, which indicates the proportion of Hong Kong people who drew a clear cut between Hong Konger and Chinese, and the proportion of those who identified themselves as simply Chinese. We can see that the degree of the sense of Hong Kong identity was the greatest in 1988, one year before the outburst of the Tiananmen Square Incident (the June Fourth Incident). Hong Kong people tended to be more proud of their Hong Kong identity in 1988. It is true that the proportion was declining when it got closer to 1997, nevertheless, the percentage far exceeds the number who identified themselves as simply Chinese (53.7% vs 34.2%). Perhaps the following quotation is a typical portrait of the traits of typical ‘Cantonese’ Chinese.

**Throughout history, the Cantonese have considered themselves a distinctive Chinese subgroup, a factor reinforced by their relative geographic isolation within China. In the past, Chinese from other provinces who were acquainted with Cantonese distinctiveness have described these people in unflattering**

**terms—for example, “uncommonly bellicose” and “bizarre and uncouth” in their habits and customs. (Wakeman, 1966, p. 57)The Cantonese have reacted to such criticism by pointing out that their language is closer to ancient Chinese than Putonghua, proudly asserting that they are “purer representatives of Chinese culture....”There is a suggestion that although the Cantonese are naturally proud of being Chinese, they are equally proud of just being Cantonese.**

(Pierson 1998 p.94)

The percentage of people who identified themselves merely as ‘Hong Kongers’ was ascending, and it was only until recently that more local Hong Kongers regard themselves as ‘Chinese’, as it has been a common phenomenon that Hong Kong people have been making a deliberate effort to draw a clear distinction between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong people. Such a distinction mainly lies in the totally extreme economic directions Hong Kong and China have, or had been heading towards during the period of colonization. Chin (1997) offers a very appropriate explanation for such a difference:

**With the economic boom of the 1980s and cultural exportation of mass entertainment products to mainland China, people in Hong Kong have tended to take pride in their cultural identity as the model city for the mainland. The economy and ideology of mainland China have failed to impose their cultural orthodoxy on Hong Kong people. On the other hand, Cantonese has gained status as a dialect typical to Hong Kong.**

(p.79)

### **2.3 Future trends of the Hong Kong identity**

The fate of ‘Hong Kong identity’ has obviously met the crisis of assimilation after the political handover in 1997. Should Hong Kong people integrate themselves with Mainland Chinese, and let the unique ‘Hong Kong identity’ merge into the collective whole of ‘Chinese identity’, ‘Hong Kong identity’ will disappear as time goes by. As I mentioned earlier with regard to the relation between language and one’s cultural

construct, the maintenance of Cantonese language in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is in direct relation with the question of 'Hong Kong identity'. Should Chinese be used as the medium of instruction in schools? The vagueness of the term 'Chinese' still leaves many language problems unanswered. Apparently, cultural perspectives could not be altered just because of the change of flags after 1997. The number of Hong Kong people who find more affiliation with Hong Kong, not the motherland, is still the majority. The HKSAR government is making obvious steps to reinforce the national identity and sense of belonging of Hong Kong people to Mainland China, through the cultivation of 'patriotic' and 'loyal' ideas, by introducing civic education and a new AS (Advanced Supplementary) level subject in the Hong Kong Advanced Level of Education Examination curriculum in 1992—Chinese language and culture, and also the emphasis of citizenship and our responsibilities to the whole community through civic education. These ideas seem to be foreign to Hong Kong people, who used to stay away from politics in the past. What appears to be the case is that, having learned from the lessons of the patriots in the 60s and 70s, the solution to the identity crisis could not be made in rush and haste, or else it is bound to fail. What the HKSAR government is doing at the moment is inculcating the nationalistic ideas into the minds of the Hong Kong people step by step; the day when the unique Hong Kong culture will be re-affiliated and reunified remains to be seen.

The point of incorporating this 'Hong Kong culture' section in chapter two originates from the need of providing a general idea of the cultural and identity background of Hong Kong people. Educational policy rarely builds on pure educational considerations, especially for language policies as political, economic and cultural issues usually inflict certain influences on the drafting of language policies. The strong tie between culture, identity and language makes the discussion of cultural issues indispensable if the research is to deal with language problems.

The next section is going to move on to discuss the issue of bilingualism and bilingual education in Hong Kong, and also the two linguistic theories—the 'linguistic interdependence hypothesis' and the 'threshold hypothesis' that are relevant to the 1998 MOI policy. This chapter will finish with the medium of instruction (MOI) issue

and a description of its development.

## **2.4 Bilingualism in Hong Kong**

The previous sections 2.0 to 2.3 attempt to explore the nature of the Hong Kong identity. It is hoped that the information can provide the basis for further research on the identity question and the ideology of cultural constructs in chapter six. Sections 2.4 to 2.6 will cover the issue of bilingualism in Hong Kong, which includes the types of bilingualism and bilingual education that are specific to the context of Hong Kong. Literature on the linguistic theories that the medium of instruction policy is drawn upon will also be discussed.

### **2.4.1 Literature of mother-tongue education in Hong Kong**

#### **2.4.1.1. Educational benefits of mother-tongue education**

The possible consideration behind the implementation of mother-tongue education could be nationalistic and political rather than purely educational (Baker and Jones 1998). Suspicion of the value of such a move was expressed and raised from different sectors of the society, mainly from the people concerned, including parents, students, teachers and school principals. People queried that its formation was due very much to political considerations (Tsui *et al* 1999).

The question of teaching medium will be much simpler if political and economic factors are not taken into account. Several studies were conducted regarding the effectiveness of using Cantonese/Chinese as the medium of instruction. The findings of the government reports in 1994 and 1998 justify the promotion of mother-tongue education for the sake of students' motivation of learning and their understanding of the subject matter (please refer to appendices XV and XVI). Here are some of the examples of research studies carried out in the past decade:

- The Hong Kong government launched the research in 1987/88, which involved 4543 subjects whose academic performances were tracked from secondary one to secondary three. The subjects were enrolled in Anglo-Chinese schools with

more than half of them switching to Chinese-medium as the experimental group. Eleven schools were chosen as the control group to act as a comparative frame of reference.

The research shows a positive correlation between mother-tongue education and academic performance of students, except that English might best be learnt in an English environment. Performances in other content-matter/analytical subjects are more superior in the experimental group than in the control group.

Mother-tongue education shows equally effective impact on students in terms of motivation to learn. As quoted from the study,

**They [CMI group] also tended to maximize their understanding by using various high level cognitive strategies to handle their school tasks. Their counterparts in the English medium schools who were not competent in English, however, tended to learn by rote memorizing, focusing only on selected details.**

(Hong Kong Education Department 1994a p.2)

- It was followed by another piece of research carried out by the Education Department with an aim of assessing the impact of the change of teaching medium. The study tracked down students in 287 classes of 56 schools from secondary one to secondary three so as to ensure a 3-year-effect. It suggests that there is not necessarily a relationship between EMI education and students' English proficiency. Instead, students enrolled in 'non-complying EMI schools' suffer in the respect of academic learning because of the use of mixed code which is typical in the majority of EMI schools (Hong Kong Education Department 1998).

Cheng (1993) conducted a similar research to compare the effectiveness of learning through English and the mother-tongue. As she describes,

- **The subjects were 36 Form 4 female students from an Anglo-Chinese school. This class was selected since they take both English History and Chinese History,**

**and study two subjects of similar teaching contents and nature, but differing in the teaching medium employed...The present results support previous research findings that learning is more effective if taught in the mother tongue. The students do express their feelings that learning tends to be easier and facts are more easily remembered in the first language. They also indicate a great interest in reading and learning as they enjoy the study process without any translation process or vocabulary problem. On the other hand, there is evidence that using English as the medium of instruction encourages a deeper approach to learning and is thus beneficial; however, for those with low competence in the language, that is little help.**

(p.109)

Many other case studies are still continuing, but looking back at all these samples, the results are very obvious, and they do not seem to be much different from the results of more recent studies. They indicate that students can learn much better if they are taught through the mother-tongue as they can develop higher cognitive strategies without language barriers. According to an opinion survey conducted by the MOI Working Group in 1999, 11000 teachers, students and parents, 250 secondary school principals claimed that "...mother-tongue teaching enabled classroom teaching to be more diversified and made it easier for teachers to lead students into in-depth discussions of the subject matter. Students in general participated actively in classroom discussions and teachers tended to have better relationships with them. These phenomena were also very common even in schools with mostly academically low achievers." (Hong Kong Government undated c) The 1998 report quoted above also suggests that there is no causal relationship between EMI teaching and English standard and indicates that the students will suffer linguistically if they learn through mixed code. Cheng's (1993) study shares similar views that students learn better through the mother-tongue. Nevertheless, she also states that students of high English competence can also benefit from English-medium teaching as learning through EMI does not inhibit them from using deeper cognitive learning approach.

The education system in Hong Kong has been condemned for being able to educate and equip only those who are ranked highest in a large pyramid, leaving the majority at the bottom behind who wear the implicit labels of 'losers of the competition'. One



might put forward the saying that competition should exist so that improvements could be made. However, the ratio of those who survive to those who lose is very alarming, since it apparently turns out that too many losers have been the result of such a game.

The claim that teaching medium and the performances of students has a direct cause-effect relationship is supported by researchers who favour the use of mother-tongue in classrooms. This includes Cheng *et al* (1973), who are the very first advocates of mother-tongue education in Hong Kong. Their article "At What Cost?" maintains a very strong tone against the use of English as the teaching medium in the secondary classrooms. They believe that F.1 students suffer a drastic change from Chinese medium (in primary schools) to English medium (secondary schools) at the age of 12 or 13, which is the time when children's language ability in mother-tongue begins to take shape. As they go on,

**...when thinking faculties and curiosity begin to ripen, when children begin to relate language with the reality around them, a student's switch of instruction medium occurs. Instead of reinforcing the stronger language at this stage which is very important if the intellect is to develop, instruction in the stronger language is deliberately slackened and children have to put all their effort and energy into the learning of a foreign language...That means children have to cope with completely new information through a foreign language when their skills in that language are still very far from being adequate.**

(Cheng *et al* 1973 p. 45)

These studies were done totally from the educational point of view, which take heed mainly of the pure value of mother-tongue education. The question of whether mother-tongue education is beneficial to students is clearly answered. However, Ho (1992) raises another aspect of the question, which is: will the standard of English remain the same if the medium of instruction has changed to Chinese? Ho (1992) did not give any answer to this question and his suggestion of postponing the learning of English until junior secondary level was only one of the possibilities recommended by some bilinguals. He was in fact trying to raise the question for the further attention of research, instead of making any recommendations to solve the problem.

A review of the academic impact on school subjects of mother-tongue education has been completed in section 2.4.1. According to the literature, using mother-tongue as the medium of teaching could be beneficial to some students on particular subjects, while it may not confer any impact at all on academic performances within high ability groups. However, the variation of results might be attributed to the sample involved and the particular subjects that have been looked into. The following section will switch the focus to bilingualism and bilingual education, and also the type of bilingual education that is typical to Hong Kong.

#### **2.4.2 Bilingualism, bilingual education and the Hong Kong experience**

Bilingualism is a term subject to multiple interpretations and definitions since it involves several aspects of consideration. Whether a person can be called 'bilingual' varies from one definition to another. It largely depends on the extent to which a person is capable of mastering two different languages (the level of proficiency) and the scale that is used to measure proficiency. Several linguists like Bloomfield (1935) and Weinreich (1964) have tried to offer definitions for the term but have come up with quite contrasting understandings of the same word. Bloomfield (1935) believes that an individual should be able to have near perfect mastery of two different languages if he/she is to be called a true 'bilingual' and states that "...where...perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages." (p.55-56) However, Weinreich (1964) states that "The practice of alternatively using two languages will be called here BILINGUALISM, and the persons involved BILINGUAL." (p.1)

The two statements mentioned above reveal the inherent ambiguity and contradictions of the term 'bilingualism'. Knowing that similar problems would come up no matter how hard one tries to define the term, contemporary linguists like Baetens-Beardsmore (1982) would rather approach the term by suggesting different typologies/kinds of bilingualism existing in the world.

### 2.4.2.1 Types of bilingualism in Hong Kong

Different types of bilingualism arise because of the roles the two different languages play in the individual and societal levels, and also because of the various levels of proficiency in relation to the two languages attained by every individual person or group. For example, people who are able to understand the spoken and written form of the L2 but could not speak and write it fall into the group of passive bilinguals, since they could only master the receptive skills of the language but fail to produce outputs with that language (Baetens-Beardsmore 1982 p.13). People who are able to manage to write and speak the L2 are called 'productive bilinguals' (Baetens-Beardsmore 1982 p.16). However, the problem occurs again as to how well a person should achieve in the L2 in order to be defined as a productive bilingual.

In the context of Hong Kong, 'bilingualism' generally falls into four different categories according to the level of proficiency in both the native language (Chinese) and the L2 (English) attained by the students. According to Morris (1993), they are additive bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism, replacive bilingualism and preparatory bilingualism. Different forms of bilingual education existed in Hong Kong (which will be discussed in detail in section 2.4.2.2) before the new language policy was implemented. All kinds of bilingual education, though they might exist in different forms, aim at providing a wider linguistic diversity for students so that they will be armed with two languages when they leave schools. The level of bilingual ability varies according to individuals, as lots of variables exist and affect the outcomes of the results.

#### *Additive bilingualism*

Additive bilingualism refers to the ability to manage both L1 and L2 well and that excellent proficiencies on the mother-tongue and L2 could be achieved. Morris (1993) defines this kind of bilingualism with reference to the context of Hong Kong,

**-A high level of proficiency is obtained in the L2, though not native speaker proficiency.**

**-Achievement in the L1 is as high as it would be if the L1 had been the medium of instruction.**

**-Intellectual or cognitive development benefits from working at a high level in two languages.**

(p. 8)

In a word, it is the most ideal type of productive bilingualism one could attain, and the characteristics match exactly with the requirements for students who could be qualified for having English as the medium of instruction as suggested by the 'Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools' (i.e. the 30% who could benefit equally well from either CMI or EMI teaching).

### ***Subtractive bilingualism***

Students who are subtractive bilinguals are those who fail to learn through L2, while concepts and knowledge fail to undergo the process of transfer, and their L1 skills do not develop to the level that they would have achieved if they were taught through L1. In this case the student cannot cope with either of the languages and therefore their academic performances suffer as well. As Baetens-Beardsmore (1982) states,

**[Subtractive bilingualism is the situation]...where the second language is acquired at the expense of the aptitudes already acquired in the first language and where, instead of producing complementarity between two linguistic and cultural systems, there is competition.**

(p.19)

As opposed to additive bilingualism, subtractive bilingualism is the worst stage for a student, who struggles to survive in EMI education but ends up in failures. Mother-tongue education is implemented as a way to remedy those who were previously dropped out and left behind at the time when English was predominant in the system.

These two types of bilingualism are two opposing extremes. It was mentioned that 1/3 of the students in Hong Kong are classified as potential additive bilinguals. Nevertheless, it does not imply that the remaining 2/3 fall to the group of subtractive

bilinguals. Some students belong to the other two groups that flow between the scale of these two extremes.

### *Replacive bilingualism*

Replacive bilingualism, as can be indicated by its name, means that the intensive learning through L2 impedes the development of L1. Although cognitive skills and knowledge can be transferred according to the Common Underlying Proficiency model, and the language skills are interdependent (linguistic concepts will be discussed further in section 2.5.1), the skills of L1 suffer because of the lack of reinforcement and consolidation since too much time is devoted to the learning of L2. Besides, it is more likely to occur in cases where the two languages do not share much in common in terms of grammar and sentence structures which brings interference instead of positive transfer between the two competing languages. Li (1997) makes a comprehensive linguistic analysis of the negative transfer from English to Chinese on the lexical and syntactic levels.

The cases of replacive bilinguals are not uncommon in Hong Kong as much effort is put on both learning of and learning through L2. L1 (Chinese) is always regarded as the less important subject and the standard of it further suffers because it is Cantonese, not Mandarin, that is the mother-tongue of the majority of students, which means that they have to transform spoken Cantonese in the mind to standard Chinese in the written form, as has been discussed in section 1.4.1.2. It is not surprising that Chinese sentences with the grammar and syntactic structure of English written by students who are bright in English are found in some of the works, as they are too obsessed with the target language and therefore replacement to some extent could be noticed.

### *Preparatory bilingualism*

If a student is defined as preparatory bilingual, he/she attains a very high level of L1 through instruction of L1. His/her L1 level is as high as that of the additive bilingual, but the standard of L2 falls behind them. However, due to the good absorption of knowledge through L1, L2 can be enhanced and a very high level can be obtained if

the appropriate environment and reinforcement is provided and if intensive English training is undertaken. This is the basis/framework of the 1998 MOI policy: having L1 as the medium of instruction for those who would benefit more through L1 instruction, and once the cognitive concepts and knowledge are consolidated through L1, it is believed that L1 can act as a resource for the transfer to L2. The Education Department plans to strengthen the learning of L2 in the CMI schools, with the ultimate goal that additive bilingual ability can be achieved. What should be noted is that even if it is not achieved, at least students could do better in one language (L1) and would not end up being subtractive bilinguals.

#### **2.4.2.2 Types of bilingual education in Hong Kong**

Like the term 'bilingualism', 'bilingual education' is equally hard to define precisely. Baker (1988) suggests two main models of bilingual education: transitional bilingual education and maintenance bilingual education. The former aims at developing the majority language, even at the expense of the native tongue, while the latter aims at developing fluency in both the mother-tongue and the majority language. Bilingual education generally means that two languages are used in schools as the medium of instruction. However, this definition does not mention the variation that could exist e.g. to what extent and at what stage is the second language being introduced. Is the second language used in some classes while others are taught through the first language? Baker (1988) describes that the second language could be introduced through the immersion programme (the secondary language being immersed gradually into the curriculum) or the submersion programme (which implies that the learner is submersed in the pool of the second language only, and is not allowed to use the native language).

The literature of bilingual education is mainly based on the studies about the implementation of bilingual programmes for new immigrants in the USA or other multilingual countries, or the use of bilingual education to maintain the native tongue when it is on the edge of being phased out by the majority or more superior language, like the teaching of Welsh in Wales. Due to the undercurrents of historical, cultural and economic factors which interact in shaping the structure of the society, the nature

of the bilingual education in Hong Kong differs from bilingual programmes in other countries. The first basic difference lies in the motives of implementation of bilingual education. Bilingual education in other countries is put forward because of the diversity of races of immigrants, and also because of political and cultural concerns. The majority language is learned and acquired without risking the maintenance of the mother-tongue, which signifies the cultural identity of the minority groups. This kind of problem does not exist in Hong Kong as we could rarely find minority groups in the classroom, as over 90% of students in Hong Kong are locally born Chinese. Therefore, problems of minority groups having to adapt to the education system of the majority does not exist in Hong Kong. Even if it does, it is mainly concerned with immigrants from Mainland China and the number is too small to create problems of immediate concern. A unique kind of bilingual education that consists of the hybrid characteristics of the Hong Kong context emerges.

Before the new Medium of Instruction policy was officially put forward in 1998, more than three-quarters of secondary schools in Hong Kong claimed to be EMI schools i.e. the spoken medium of instruction as well as the written texts and learning materials were all in English except for Chinese-related subjects. Students were exposed to English when teachers were transmitting knowledge through this language, except for a few lessons that are related to Chinese language and Chinese history. They had not got another alternative language as the teaching medium (apart from those Chinese-related subjects). As Tsui (1992) defines it, the model which most secondary schools used to adopt was “supposed to be the late total immersion in which, except for Chinese as a subject, 100% English is used throughout Forms 1 to 7...In reality, however, most schools are adopting late total mixed-code immersion or the ‘mixing approach’ (McLaughlin 1978). Some schools have adopted late partial immersion.”(p.139)

Baker (1988) defines submersive bilingual education as “...the idea of a non-swimmer being thrown in at the deep end. A submersion programme means pupils being forbidden to use their home language, with all the curriculum being experienced in a second language...A child may be placed in a class with native speakers, and have to try to adopt their language.” (p. 47) Apart from defining the Hong Kong model as

'late mixed-code immersion', some of the characteristics of the submersion model could be applied to the case of Hong Kong as it is true that the whole curriculum, apart from the Chinese subjects, is being experienced in a second language; nevertheless, the students are not submersed in the language environment that facilitates and speeds up the acquisition of the second language. For example, a student is exposed to a whole curriculum in English, but at the same time the child is surrounded by peers who speak his/her own native tongue. Without the reinforcement of the second language and the appropriate environment of learning the second language, students would undoubtedly search for the easy way out and switch back to Cantonese outside classrooms, or even within classrooms if the use of mother-tongue is not forbidden by teachers.

#### *Variations within the lesson*

If teachers are serious and keen on keeping the target language in the lessons, then students would normally not be able to be exposed to Chinese in non Chinese-related subjects. However, because of the double dilemma of English being the second language of both the teachers and students, mixed-code teaching has emerged as another type of bilingual education typical in the context of Hong Kong. It refers to the use of both Chinese and English to teach within the same lesson, switching from one language to another. The extent to which the second language is used varies according to subjects. The usual phenomenon is that Cantonese is the main means of communication between teachers and students in the classroom, with the occasional insertion of technical terms in English.

Before the implementation of the mother-tongue policy in 1998, mixed-code teaching was the most prevalent form of bilingual education in Hong Kong. With the introduction of the new medium of instruction policy, after which more than three quarters of schools had to change to CMI teaching, its use has been largely reduced. However, the remaining one quarter which are qualified for EMI teaching are not firmly supervised with reference to their teaching medium. Therefore, whether mixed-code teaching survives in some of the EMI schools despite the promotion of language purism is still a question that is worth looking into.



*Variation within the school*

Unlike bilingual education within lessons, variation within schools means that different languages are adopted in different lessons or different classes. This kind of variation comes into existence mainly out of preference of individual teachers. With the great variety of teachers, there might be some who favour sticking to the rule of using only English when teaching in an EMI school, and there are some who prefer flexibility to consistency in terms of teaching medium. The chief determinants for the teaching medium are the teachers' and students' abilities. For example, some teachers will use purely English in brighter classes, where the understanding of the lessons through English medium could be guaranteed. For the weaker classes, teachers would switch to Cantonese or code-mixing, even in the EMI schools.

Hong Kong is currently in the situation where the supply of proficient bilingual speakers cannot meet the demands for it. The government has always oriented toward the purist hypothesis, which states that students would benefit most if they stick to one particular language, be it Chinese or English, as the medium of instruction.

Having learnt from the previous research studies about the advantages of mother-tongue education, and having been aware of the public criticisms and concerns of the reported decline in language standards<sup>2</sup>, the government put forward a policy which divides the students into three groups according to their language abilities measured by the MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment) which is going to be elaborated in section 2.9. The F.1 intake of students in each school is being assessed, and schools have to show that they have got adequate number of students who can learn effectively through English if they are to apply to be EMI schools. The outcome of such a policy was that more than 3/4 of the Anglo-Chinese schools in Hong Kong, most of which used to claim to be EMI schools, were forced to be labelled as CMI

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<sup>2</sup> Recent articles and reports relevant to the decline of English standards include the University Grants Committee (undated) and Chan (2002). The former report suggests that "Since 1991-92, UGC institutions have been required to submit annual assessment reports on the language ability of their first-degree entrants....The statistics thus obtained suggest two important points: (1) that the widening of access to degree level education in Hong Kong initially meant a decline in the average language attainment of entrants (the number of entrants with "A" or "B" in HKALE "use of English" stayed more or less the same, while the number with "D" or "E" greatly expanded)..."

schools.

The policy was tailor-made for students who have struggled hard to fight their ways up in the English-oriented stream. However, the fact is that the bilingual roles and positions in the society are more likely to be taken up by students from the English-medium schools, as it has to be proved that they have outstanding abilities in both Chinese and English if they are to be allocated to the EMI streams. It is believed that the competitive power of students from CMI schools has generally been greatly undermined.

In order to capture the nature of bilingual theories that underlie the 1998 MOI policy, the following section 2.5 will contribute to the arguments for bilingual education and relevant linguistic theories that shape the framework of the MOI policy that is under research.

### **2.5 Arguments for bilingual education**

Morris (1993) makes a simple distinction between the models for and against bilingual education by pointing out two very basic arguments these two models are built on. The 'Finite capacity model' defines human mind as a container that allows a certain amount of capacity for content, skills and memory. Excessive inputs would end up being redundant materials and could not be absorbed. Supporters of this model favour monolingual education as they believe that human minds cannot develop two languages effectively together. This model also proposes that bilingual education would bring detrimental effects to learners in terms of academic standards and cognitive developments. As Baker (1988) contends, "the brain has only so much room for language skills. If a second language comes to stay, it decreases the amount of living quarters for the first language. The consequence is lower proficiency in both languages, in thinking, reading, vocabulary and knowledge." (p.170)

The 'Infinite capacity model' is based on a totally different assumption. According to Morris (1993), "...the mind is infinitely expandable and, like muscles, the more it is used, the more it will develop." (p.13) Obviously the model supports bilingual

education, arguing that it is beneficial to the learner culturally, linguistically and cognitively. Seeing that language is part of culture, bilingual education enables the learner to get access to another culture during the acquisition process of the other language. In terms of the aspect of cognition, Morris (1993) comments by citing research evidence that,

**Bilinguals are more analytical in their approach to learning (not only in relation to language) and more 'field independent'; that is they are better able to see beyond the constraints of a particular frame of reference. This applies very obviously to language itself, where monolinguals find it more difficult to separate the symbol (or word) from the thing that is symbolised, and therefore to realise the constraints that language itself places upon meaning and understanding.**

(p.13)

Bilingual education has been opposed with the assumption that 'time of exposure' is the most crucial variable for the success in acquiring a language, and so early immersion will bring the best results as it is believed that younger children learn faster and better than older children. In this case, time and exposure on English must be strengthened if English is the target language. In response to the question raised in the debate on bilingualism regarding the best methodology for teaching English as a second language in 1985, Glazer stresses the importance of exposure to the second language through the course of second language learning:

**I don't think (probably) there is one "best" way [for second language learning]. But all our experiences shows that the most extended and steady exposure to the spoken language is the best way of learning any language.**

(Glazer & Cummins 1985 p.48)

Cummins, the advocate of bilingual education who has been trying to prove the educational and cultural benefits of bilingualism from the 1970s till recent years, refutes the 'time-on-task' theory, arguing that 'time' is not the only factor which correlates to the achievement of language proficiency. He criticizes that intensive instruction through the target language would only adversely affect students' acquisition of the target language. He proposes the 'linguistic interdependence theory'

by clarifying two contrasting conceptions regarding language proficiency—the Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) and Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) models (Cummins 1996 p.109).

The SUP model is based on the assumption that proficiency in L1 is separate from that of L2, and knowledge and skills acquired through L1 is non-transferable to L2, and vice versa. Cummins (1996), Baker (1988) and Baker & Hornberger (2001) indicate the language capacities of L1 and L2 by using two balloons, showing that L1 and L2 proficiencies lie separately in the brain.

As for the CUP model, “literacy–related aspects of a bilingual’s proficiency in L1 and L2 are seen as common or interdependent across languages.” (Cummins 1996 p.110) This is also the assumption from which the famous ‘linguistic interdependence theory’ is built. It is stated thus:

**To the extent that instruction in L<sub>x</sub> is effective in promoting proficiency in L<sub>x</sub>, transfer of this proficiency to L<sub>y</sub> will occur provided there is adequate exposure of L<sub>y</sub> (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn L<sub>y</sub>.**

(Cummins 1996 p.111)

### **2.5.1 Interdependence theory**

Cummins and Swain (1986) and Cummins (1996, 2000) strongly believe that all languages share common underlying features, and underlying knowledge is transferable from one language to another. Cummins puts forward the concept of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and proposes that if certain knowledge or ideas are existent in one language (L<sub>x</sub>), given adequate exposure and contextual support to another language (L<sub>y</sub>), the acquisition of L<sub>y</sub> and also the absorption of knowledge through L<sub>y</sub> will further be strengthened. Krashen (1997a) reinstates his point on L1 as a facilitative tool for learning L2 by saying that:

**When students develop high levels of knowledge, subject matter knowledge and knowledge of the world, the English they read will be much more**

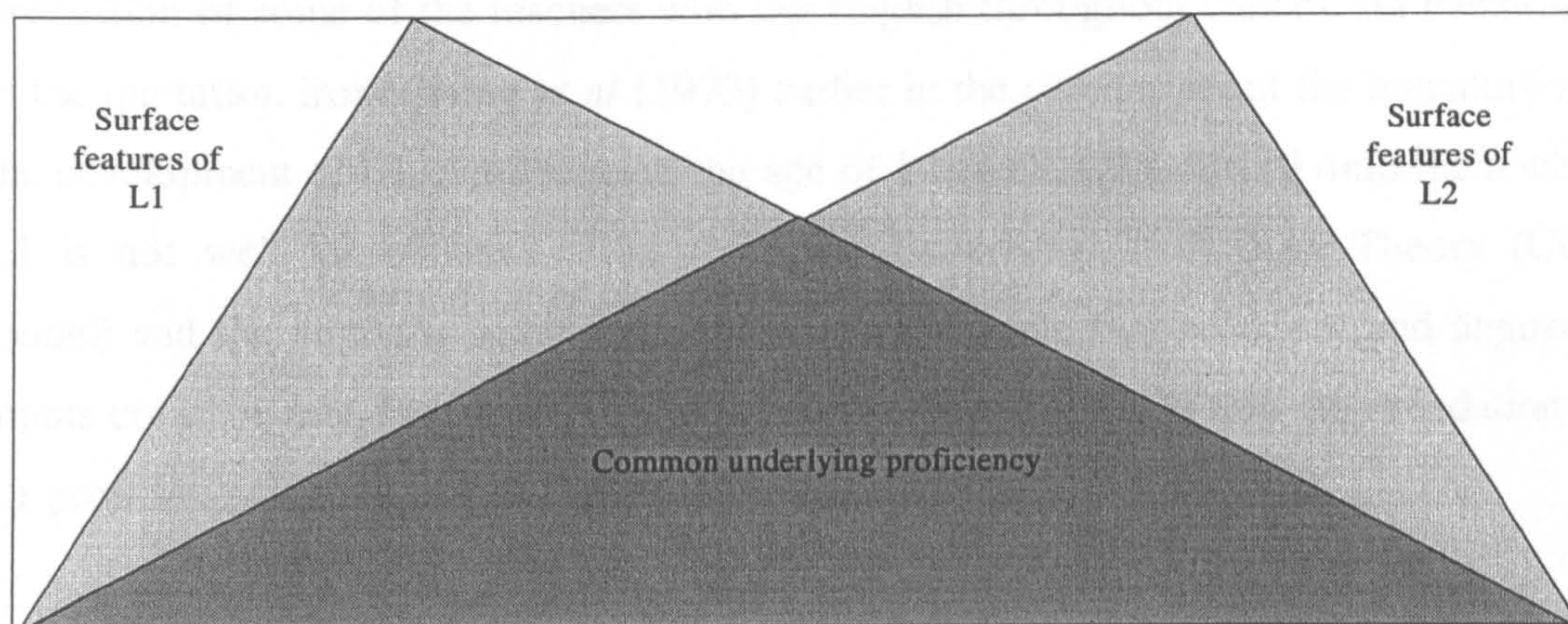
**comprehensible...If we develop literacy by understanding what we read (Goodman 1983; Smith 1994), it makes sense to hypothesize that it will be easier to learn to read if we already know the language...There is strong evidence that those who have developed literacy in one language find it much easier to develop literacy in another language, even when the writing systems are different (Krashen 1996).**

This argument validates the new MOI policy which puts great emphasis on the improvement of literacy in L1. Further elaboration on the aspect of the role of L1 in the learning of L2 could be found in Hakuta (1990), who suggests that “the structural patterns of the native language have minimal influence on the patterns of second language acquisition, especially at the syntactic level...Studies of errors made by students acquiring a second language (error analysis)... earlier studies reviewed in Hakuta and Cancino (1977), generally show a measurable but not overwhelming impact of native language structures in second language acquisition.” We should note that Hakuta (1990) does bring up the matter of ‘interference errors’ that occurs for bilingual children. However, it seems to be a problem that could be overcome with the provision of appropriate and effective bilingual education.

In addition to Krashen (1997a) and Hakuta (1990), Cummins (1996) continues by illustrating the relationship between L1 and L2 by the following diagram,

**...although the surface aspects (e.g. pronunciation, fluency etc) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is common across languages. This “common underlying proficiency” makes possible the transfer of cognitive or academic or literacy-related skills from one language to another.**

**The “dual iceberg” representation of bilingual proficiency**



(Cummins 1996 p.111)

**Diagram A**

As elaborated in section 2.4.2.1, additive bilingualism is the ideal form of bilingualism one can ever achieve. It means that native-like proficiencies in both L1 and L2 are attained by the learner. This is also the state achieved when bilingual programmes are carried out successfully. Nevertheless, the success of bilingual education often involves external factors such as parental encouragement and community support. In Baetens-Beardsmore's (1993) study of the European models of bilingual education, the concern of external variants was raised, "...they [the bilingual models being studied] fail to give sufficient emphasis to the social and psychological aspects of language acquisition contexts. These are felt to be of particular significance in a bilingual education system, since they may well be decisive in determining to what extent a learner makes use of the potential for Cummins' hypotheses [for instance, the linguistic interdependence and threshold hypotheses] to operate in cases where the programme takes his parameters into account." (p.146)

Insufficient contextual support and lack of parental encouragement on the learning of students' first language may explain why bilingual education is not successful in Hong Kong. With the emergence and popularity of the Hong Kong culture (details can be found in the previous sections 2.1 to 2.2), Cantonese is flooding all walks of life, as well as every domain. Standard Chinese (both written and spoken) could not find their ways to penetrate to the lives of Hong Kong people, except in formal and official occasions. Under such circumstances, Hong Kong students are highly exposed to

English language at schools, as it is the medium of textbooks as well as oral instruction of some of the teachers who use English throughout classes. As mentioned in the quotation from Cheng *et al* (1973) earlier in the chapter about the immaturity in the development of L1 of students at the age of 12 or 13, L2 is forced onto them when L1 is not well-consolidated. The Common Underlying Proficiency Theory (CUP model) and the linguistic interdependence theory indicate that academic and linguistic inputs could be transferred from L1 to L2 successfully, provided that the foundation of L1 proficiency is solid. As Hoffman (1991) explains,

**...Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis suggests that the level of second language competence a child acquires depends to some extent on the stage of development that has been reached in her first. This theory provides the rationale for the kind of bilingual education that advocates the use of the child's mother tongue during the early stages of education, adding the second language only when she has developed higher-order cognitive and linguistic skill in the first.**

(p.128)

If foundation in the first language is a prerequisite for successful transfer, the introduction of English in the curriculum since kindergarten might not be appropriate, as children are required to acquire a second language when their first language is still under the way of developing. The question of the optimal age for second language learning is subject to controversy. Delaying the age of learning the second language appears to have strong theoretical support because strengthening the basic foundation in the first language is beneficial to both first and second language learning. However, a survey carried out in 1994 by a research team commissioned by the Education and Manpower Bureau shows that the number of school heads and teaching staff who believe that primary one is the most appropriate class level to start learning English turns out to be the vast majority. According to the survey, it is speculated that the suggestion of delaying second language learning would not have gained much support from the educators if it were ever implemented.

**Table 2.2**

**Appropriate class-levels for students to start learning English and Putonghua  
[Mandarin] according to school heads**

Class level	Languages	
	English	Putonghua
K	0%	5.6%
P1	75.6%	34.6%
P2	2.0%	6.8%
P3	11.9%	20.6%
P4	6.1%	21.4%
P5	3.4%	0%
P6	1.0%	0%
S1	0%	10.9%

(Hong Kong Education Department 1994b p.36)

**Table 2.3**

**Appropriate class-levels for students to start learning English and Putonghua  
[Mandarin] according to teaching staff**

Class Level	Languages		
	English <sup>4</sup>	Putonghua <sup>5</sup>	Putonghua <sup>6</sup>
K	0%	6.4%	3.3%
P1	89.1%	28.3%	54.8%
P2	0%	23.3%	0%
P3	4.1%	3.9%	18.0%
P4	5.6%	38.1%	11.1%
P5	0%	0%	0%
P6	1.2%	0%	0%
S1	0%	0%	12.8%

(Hong Kong Education Department 1994b p.37)

The figures in the above tables appear to suggest that the majority of both the school heads and teaching staff agree that students should start learning English in primary one, which is around the age of six, while the perception on the appropriate level for learning Putonghua (Mandarin) leads to multiplicity. The proportion of respondents who support learning of Putonghua (Mandarin) at primary one is apparently much

<sup>4</sup> Views of sampled English panel heads.

<sup>5</sup> Views of sampled Primary Putonghua Teachers.

<sup>6</sup> Views of sampled Secondary Putonghua Teachers.



lower than those who support the learning of English at the same level.

Apart from the foundation of learner's first language, Cummins (2000) reiterates the concern that one should not presume language transfer will occur automatically. As he elaborates,

**'Automatic' transfer of academic skills across languages will not happen unless students are given opportunities to read and write extensively in English in addition to the minority language. In addition, *there is a significant role for formal explicit instruction in order to teach specific aspects of academic registers in both languages.* The potential benefits of developing literacy in both languages are much more likely to be realized if instruction gives the process a helping hand by promoting students' awareness of language and how it works (e.g. focusing on similarities and differences between the two languages)...The interdependence hypothesis posits that transfer of academic skills and knowledge will occur across languages under appropriate conditions of student motivation and exposure to both languages.**

(p.194)

More discussion on this aspect will be done in section 5.1.3. As the latter part of the above statement states the transfer of academic skills and knowledge occurs under appropriate circumstances i.e. with high students' motivation and positive exposure to both L1 and L2, 'family background' may relate to these conditional factors to a certain extent. The result of Yu & Atkinson (1988)'s research points out the relationship between subjects' social class background and their language proficiencies. As Lee (1997) notes from his summary of study regarding the social class of students and their language proficiencies, students of middle or upper-middle class background tend to perform better in the course of second language learning:

**First, for the majority of language learners who come from the lower-middle class, the social distance between them and the target language group is large, hence the learners see no immediate need to know the other's language. Second, learners from the lower social group have on the average fewer chances of getting into prestigious schools where a better quality programme is offered.**

(p.169)

Section 5.5.2.3 will look further into the causal relationship between social class and educational background of students' families and the stream of MOI that they belong to. The following section will continue to explain linguistic concepts of BICS and CALP, which are also relevant to the 1998 MOI policy.

#### 2.5.1.1 BICS and CALP

Obviously, the Hong Kong government has drawn reference to Cummins's CALP model to a large extent when drafting the medium of instruction policy because language (the medium of instruction in this specific context) has been hypothesized as an element that is highly related to academic learning. Bilingual experts like Krashen (1989) have reiterated that language skills could be separated into conversational dimension (BICS) and cognitive academic dimension (CALP). BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) contributes to the general conversational English in socio-linguistic situations. As Baker & Hornberger (2001) put it, "BICS refers to cognitively undemanding manifestations of language proficiency in interpersonal situations." (p.112) According to the University of Sydney (2001), BICS is distinct from CALP in the following way,

**BICS is everyday conversational English, the kind of English we use in familiar and shared contexts while CALP is more the specialised language of learning where unfamiliar concepts are encountered, and often, as in the case of reading and writing in school, where context is not shared.**

BICS is the surface linguistic skills that are context-embedded. CALP differs in the way that it refers to the ability to use the language as an effective tool to learn academic subjects because perfect mastery of the former does not necessarily lead to the latter. Krashen (1989) elaborates on CALP as:

**...the ability to use language in context-reduced situations, the ability to use language to learn and discuss abstractions. CALP is, in other words, closely related to literacy—the ability to use language as an intellectual tool, to read for meaning and for pleasure...to clarify our thoughts and come up with new thoughts. CALP, when developed in any one language, can be applied to any**

**other language a person acquires. In other words, once you are educated, you are educated. Once you join the literacy club, you are a member forever...**

**(p.73)**

The concept of CALP reinforces the input hypothesis as it stresses the importance of making linguistic inputs comprehensible and further explains why teaching and enrichment of the knowledge in the first language is essentially determining in bilingual education, because knowledge cannot be successfully transferred from the first language to the second language if the foundation of the L1 is not solid. In other words, the interdependence hypothesis suggests that the more comprehensible the inputs acquired by the learner are, the more he or she will benefit when learning through the second language.

Researchers like Cummins & Swain (1986) have carried out a number of studies that suggest that the maturity of the CALP in the first language leads to good performance in learning through the second language because of positive transfer of literacy and academic skills. One specific research study looks at the performance of Japanese immigrants in Canada. It snapshot students from highly well-educated background and came out with the result that late immersion students outperform their early immersion counterparts because the late immersion students have obviously been exposed more to Japanese, and hence have a more concrete foundation in their mother-tongue (Cummins & Swain 1986 p.79).

Nevertheless, Romaine (1995) refutes Cummins and Swain's (1986) argument by identifying several points of concern within their logic. First of all, she argues that the compartmentalization of language proficiency into BICS and CALP seems to be of little significance and is probably an oversimplification of the cognitive and thought processes. In addition to this, the hypothesis of the effect of literacy on the cognitive development for learning has not been proved to be universally true.

Although the research studies quoted by Cummins & Swain (1986) that favour the interdependence theory include an Asian country, Japan, which has provided evidence that it works for Japanese students, additional evidence is limited and also the

uncertainties about transferability still have not been resolved unless more linguistic experts work on this line and carry out more research on this aspect. Moreover, we should also note that the skills and academic ability of the learner are relevant only to academic studies, rather than to language proficiency which is another aspect; one being the learning of the language itself as a communicative tool and the other referring to using the language as a tool for academic learning. Even if the linguistic interdependence hypothesis does work, the type of transfer between the L1 (Cantonese) and L2 (English) in Hong Kong is also more unique and problematic than those between other languages because of the problem of linguistic mismatch and relatedness. Ringbom (1986) did a comparative study between Swedish learners of English and Finnish learners of English, with the assumption that second language learners would normally turn to their L1 when drawing similarities between lexical items at the beginning stage. It was found that the easier it is for the learners to establish lexical equivalents between the learners' L1 and L2, the faster it is for the learners to master the L2. This hypothesis reveals that possible variant such as 'perceived relatedness' is at play in L2 learning. One would not dispute the fact that the differences between Chinese and English that range from the levels of language cultures, forms, grammars, lexicons, syntax and phonology, have made Chinese an even more distant language from English than Finnish and Swedish in terms of perceived relatedness.

The hypothesis of linguistic distance in relation to transfer of languages is also supported by Gass & Selinker (1994), who suggest that:

**Languages that are closely related may influence learners in their beliefs about what is language-neutral and what is language-specific...What is crucial is that the degree of language closeness issue is based on a learner's perception of the distance between the languages and of the learner's perception of the organization of his or her NL [native language]...**

(p.102)

More discussion that covers this particular aspect of linguistic transfer will follow in chapter five.

### 2.5.2 Threshold theory

The threshold theory which Policy-Maker A refers to throughout the interview in my data collection reflects the lack of careful consideration and thoroughness in applying western ideas to the local context. Tung (1992) criticizes the ambiguity of the government's definition of 'threshold level'. As we can see from appendix V, the threshold model consists of two levels, each representing the different effects that would be resulted in academic learning in relation to the specific point of bilingual proficiency. Hoffman (1991) clarifies that "the lower threshold must be attained if negative cognitive effects are to be avoided, as limited linguistic skills will hinder academic progress and cognitive growth. If the child achieves a level of bilingualism somewhere between the lower and the higher threshold (i.e. if she can function effectively in at least one of her languages), there are likely to be neither positive nor negative effects on cognitive abilities. High attainment in both languages occurs beyond the upper threshold. Such linguistic competence may entail positive cognitive effects." (p.130)

The Hong Kong Education Department (1997a) suggest that the ideal percentage of students belonging to MIGA Group I and III (those who are able to learn effectively in both Chinese and English) would be around 30-40%. However, the contradiction between the theory and the real policy in practice proves that the figure (30%) proposed is problematic. As Tung (1992) observes,

**The problem is, it is unclear that the Education Department's Threshold coincides with either of the two thresholds described in Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis...If it is the higher threshold the Education Department is referring to, then the number of pupils who may qualify for English medium education will be very small...In any case, the figure would be very much lower than the 30% of primary pupils suggested by the Education Department's report...If the Education Department is referring to the lower threshold, that is, there is no reason to suspect that the majority of primary school children are not competent to study in Chinese and are not performing according to their academic expectation. This group of children clearly far exceeds the 30% of the primary school pupils referred to in the Education Department's report (1989). If the**

**figures of 30% is what the Education thinks is about right, it is obvious that it is referring to a “threshold” that is neither the higher nor the lower threshold postulated by Cummins’s Threshold Hypothesis on which the recommendation for grouping students is supposedly based.**

(pp.121-122)

The point that Tung (1992) has made in the above quotation raises the question of how the Education Department has made use of the threshold theory. Apparently, there is no clear definition of which threshold level is being referred to. Doubts on the percentage of students competent enough to be allocated to EMI schools were shared by some teacher interviewees, and will be subject to further elaboration in chapter five.

## **2.6 Monolingual or even less?**

Apart from the mistake with the choice of time in immersing students in English in schools, Hong Kong students are put at a further disadvantage when compared to their Mainland Chinese counterparts. I have pointed out the relationship between Modern Standard Written Chinese and Cantonese and drawn the differences between the spoken form of Mandarin (which resembles the form of Modern Standard Written Chinese) and Cantonese (a dialect which does not have any standardized format for the written form) in section 1.4. These differences increase the difficulty of acquiring the standard written format of Chinese language for Hong Kong students since the vast majority speaks only Cantonese. Lin (1997) raises a very interesting note regarding the language rights in relation to the medium of instruction issue by pointing out that students in Hong Kong suffer linguistically because Cantonese is just a vernacular language without being recognized by the school system and formal domains. Cantonese is not counted as a ‘whole language’, and the knowledge and mastery of Cantonese does not count as a language skill at all. Every person with a normal language development should at least be fluent in one language, and could at least be called ‘monolingual’. However, the case of Hong Kong is that people are only fluent in Cantonese, a dialect that is economically powerful but lacks political importance. Cantonese is not recognized as a standard form by the country and “is

often stripped of the status of a legitimate language in official and public discourses.”  
(Lin 1997 p. 29)

If the assumptions of the linguistic interdependence theory are held, and linguistic skills and common knowledge can be transferred from L1 to L2, Hong Kong students suffer a ‘deficit model’ (Lin 1997 p.29) as their mastery of L1 does not serve as a very useful resource base for the learning of L2 as L1 is not valued officially on the societal level. Even if the transferability could occur between standard Chinese and English, would the transferability be able to remain as smooth and as effective if the Chinese language involved in the process is Cantonese, a dialect, instead of the standard Chinese language? That is why it has become a common phenomenon that the students’ abilities in both Chinese and English languages suffer retardation and are declining. The linguistic handicap experienced by Hong Kong students is similar to the syndrome of ‘semilingualism’<sup>3</sup>. Bilingual promoters in Hong Kong would have oversimplified the complexity involved with the development of bilingual skills in students. They should be aware that students have to make an additional jump from a level which is lower than monolingualism to monolingualism before they could make a further step to bilingualism.

## **2.7 MOI issue in Hong Kong**

The question of the most appropriate medium of instruction in Hong Kong has aroused heated debates from different educational sectors since the 1980s. The complexity involves various aspects of concern including pedagogical, psychological, cultural, political and economic. Should secondary schools switch to CMI to benefit students’ understanding through mother-tongue education? The medium chosen by schools does pose psychological influence on students as it is directly related to their confidence to speak up and to articulate themselves in classes.

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<sup>3</sup> According to The Portsmouth Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS), the Portsmouth Education Authority (2002) states, “A semilingual person is one who is seen as having deficiencies in both languages when compared with monolinguals. They are considered to have a small vocabulary and incorrect grammar, consciously think about language production – be stilted and uncreative with both languages and find it difficult to think and express emotions in either language.”

When we take all these aspects into consideration, we would have to bear in mind that all these variants are inter-related to one another. English is more high-sounding in terms of social status. In the Llewellyn report (1982) which was written by the visiting panel commissioned by the government of Hong Kong, the issue of whether English was an appropriate medium of instruction for all the schools in Hong Kong was addressed. Llewellyn (1982) comments that:

**...No matter what strategies are used to improve language teaching in Hong Kong, the present lamentable situation concerning the use of English as a medium of instruction will remain because these measures do not confront the basic issue of whether it is possible to use a second language successfully as the vehicle for providing universal (compulsory) education in what is de facto, although not de jure, still a monolingual society as far as the vast majority of the population is concerned.**

The Education Commission (EC) was set up to evaluate the issue, and proposed to the government that mother-tongue would be the best teaching medium to students, which in fact is an extension of the investigation of unresolved language problems that were addressed in the early 1980s in the Llewellyn report (1982). The Llewellyn report did set an alarm for the government and the educational community, as the question of whether mother-tongue should be used was raised and brought to attention. Obviously what Llewellyn (1982) and his committee group perceived was too much simplification of the whole language issue in Hong Kong, and they were concerned more about the pedagogical environment, the academic standards, rather than the economic, political and parental considerations. Although the report was also aware of the need of changing employers' and parents' attitude towards Chinese as a teaching medium (Llewellyn 1982), however, to switch all the schools to CMI is a project of much larger-scale than anybody could have imagined. As I previously pointed out, the educational community interacts with other components of the society and seeing this possible change in schools, the business community expressed their fears of declining English standards of Hong Kong people by launching the 'Hong Kong Language Campaign' in 1989 to arouse people's awareness of the importance and exchange value of English (Pun 1997 p.86). This response of the business group in Hong Kong



is understandable and justified, because it is one of the sectors with the greatest demand of fluent English speakers to maintain the prosperity of the economy through international trade. In 1986, schools were requested to indicate their preferable time for adopting Chinese-medium instruction. The Hong Kong Education Department (1989) suggests that students should be streamed into different ability groups regarding their language proficiency, and schools should make subsequent allocation according to their language abilities. It was found out that around 30% of the students were able to study through English whereas the rest were suitable for the Chinese medium of teaching. This turns out to be the framework of streaming criteria used in the 'Guidance of the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools' published in 1997. The implementation of the streaming policy in the 80s did not receive enough serious attention and schools did not bother to follow the rule. There was even a proposal of postponing the age of acquiring English due to the belief that the first language should be strengthened to enhance the development of the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) before the introduction of the second language in order to attain the best result in academic achievements. Nevertheless, the implementation of CMI was delayed because of parental concern. English has always been the first choice of parents.

### **2.7.1 Aspects related to the MOI issue**

#### **2.7.1.1 Political implications of the mother-tongue hypothesis**

##### ***Linguistic purism in relation to political context***

A language policy cannot evolve without political consideration (Sweeting 1997). Political connotation is very apparent with the move to mother-tongue education. The policy of the medium of instruction was officially enforced in 1998, a year after the political handover. The complaints about the decline of language standards had in fact caused alarm to the government many years ago, so why did the government choose such a critical time to put forward the purist approach and to eradicate the code-mixing and code-switching approach after so many years? We might find some relevance in Baker and Jones (1998) to the Hong Kong case:

**Linguistic purism can be linked with aesthetic considerations. A "pure"**

**language, free from dissonant foreign elements may be perceived to be more beautiful to the ear and eye. Linguistic purism is often closely associated with nationalism. Nationalism seeks to emphasize the unique and unifying features of a group of people or a country and to differentiate it from other peoples or countries...linguistic purism aims to give a language status and prestige, often for nationalistic reasons.**

(p. 218)

The Director of Education in Hong Kong, Mrs. Fanny Law, highlighted and stressed once again that the new medium of instruction policy had nothing to do with the political handover when she was making a speech in the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement Plenary Session,

**Our objective is to educate our young people to be biliterate and trilingual...schools which have used Chinese as the medium of instruction have reported encouraging signs of more active discussions in class, a quicker pace of learning, and improved examination results...I wish to clarify what you may have read earlier in the year about the decision to require the majority of secondary schools to switch from the use of English to Chinese as the medium of instruction in junior secondary levels. In normal circumstances, this would not have raised an eyebrow. However, the decision was made soon after the transition, and given our colonial history, many parents still think that using English as the medium of instruction is the only way to master the English language...I can assure you that the decision was based purely on educational grounds and after careful assessment of the students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach effectively using English as the medium of instruction. There is no hidden agenda; no political motive.**

(Law 1999)

This clarification is apparently in line with the educational benefits which the Education Department believes would be enhanced with the use of mother-tongue education. As suggested by the Hong Kong Education Department (undated a), the educational benefits are outlined as follows:

- **Educational research worldwide and in Hong Kong has shown that**

**students learning through their mother-tongue generally perform better than those learning through another language**

- **With mother-tongue teaching, students will be better able to:**
  - acquire knowledge**
  - analyse problems**
  - express views effectively**
  - develop an enquiring mind**
  - cultivate critical thinking**

With the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC, the HKSAR government could not tolerate having English remaining in the higher status with Chinese comparatively lower in terms of prestige and status. Therefore, it has been making an effort to alter the situation. At the same time, we should be aware that it does not mean that the government does not recognize the importance and status of English after the retrocession, but its attempt was to reinstall the power and prestige of Chinese, at least to place it on a more equal footing with the former colonial language. The development of educational policy during the pre- and pro-colonial era has probably shown that whatever policy that has come into form, political influence has always been hidden and covered up by other forces that are not as sensitive in nature. As suggested by Tsui *et al* (1999),

**The history of medium of instruction policy in Hong Kong shows that underlying the policy formulation and its modifications there had always been the political agenda...It was only when the educational agenda and the political agenda converged that the former was attended to. This is not to suggest that the political agenda is the only force at work. Quite the contrary, it is precisely because there are often other forces at work that the government was able to present different agendas to the public to defend its policy at different times.**

(p.205-206)

Language is always an effective means of drumming in nationalistic feelings within a group. It is therefore often used as a political tool.

*Is the high status of English incidental or well-planned?*

Unlike the case of Singapore, where English is used as a language of national unity for binding diverse groups and to create a 'unique identity' (being 'Singaporean' in ethnicity even with the use of English language as the means of communication), Cantonese is the dominant language used in informal domains in Hong Kong. There is not any necessity for promoting another language for the sake of daily communication or national unity. Therefore, the question of whether English should be made the medium of instruction in Hong Kong was raised. Before going into further discussion of the MOI issue, it would perhaps be essential to look at the pattern of language choice of Hong Kong people.

**Table 2.4****Language Choices**

MSC	Cantonese	English		
	3.0	0.6	With children	And family
	3.0	0.2	With parents	
	3.0	1.0	With brothers and sisters	
	3.0	1.0	With neighbours	
2.5		2.8	Newspaper reading	
2.7		2.4	Other leisure reading	
0.4		1.3	TV	
2.0		3.0	Movie	
0.5		2.7	Personal correspondence	
8.1	19	16.2	Subtotal	
	1.0	3.0	Formal meeting with colleagues	Work
	3.0	1.1	Informal discussion with colleagues	
		3.0	Correspondence	
		3.0	Reports	
1.0		3.0	Reference material	
	0.7	3.0	Formal meeting with client	
	3.0	0.7	Informal meeting with client	
		3.0	Official visitors	
1.8		2.6	Notes to subordinate	
3.0			Notes to janitor/messenger	
5.8	8.2	22.4	Subtotal	
		3.0	Appearance in court	Others
	2.3	2.8	Telephone company	
		3.0	Tax office	
		3.0	Complaints to government depts [departments]	
	3.0		Police	

	3.0		Public transportation	
	3.0		Shopping	
	3.0		Restaurant	
2.1	1.1	2.8	Popular songs	
0.7	0.6	3.0	If and when going abroad	
2.8	16.0	17.6	Subtotal	
16.7	43.2	56.2	Total	

3 = very frequent use; 0 = not used

(Tsou 1997 p.31)

The survey is revealing as it is apparent that Cantonese is the prevailing language when only the home domain is counted. However, the scene is totally reversed when 'work' and 'others' join in. English suppresses Cantonese as the language of higher exchange value.

There could be a suspicion that the colonial government attempted to lead parents to prefer English-medium teaching. As Pun (1997) summarizes,

**Throng [1991] argued that it was the aim of the colonial government to create an environment that led parents to prefer English to Chinese as the MOI. To create such an environment, the government had to legislate in English, make English the only official language, and reward those civil servants who had better English proficiency. By doing this, Throng (1991) argued, the colonial government was able to make the indigenous people identify with the value and ideology of the British rule and thus to maintain its status and power.**

(p.82)

The point suggested in the above quotation regarding the status of English in Hong Kong as having been reinforced by the colonial government is reasonable. It was claimed that Hong Kong people are unconsciously under the influence of the colonizer, and it cultivated colonial values and monopolized the thinking of the people of the colony. It might reflect part of the fact, that Hong Kong people do appear more 'western' than the Mainland Chinese. However, it is unjustified and misleading to presume that human beings are electronic machines without sense and their own perceptions, and it might be an underestimation of human judgement. As Pun (1997) later points out in the same article,

**Though the colonial state was an ‘imposed’ traditional authority, it was able to establish the legitimacy of its administrative structure on legal-rational grounds...As the stage of a capitalist society under democratisation, the colonial government has been perceived, and indeed has been cultivated on its own contrivance to be perceived, to be more accountable to the public. (Scott. 1989) Given this perception, its hegemony is subject to challenge if its performance does not live up to public expectation.**

(p.84)

From the above statement we may have a clearer picture of the position of the colonial government of Hong Kong. It might be the fact that the colonial government did impose values on Hong Kong people, as a means of consolidating its power. However, it is up to the general public as to whether they will absorb the values of the hegemony.

#### **2.7.1.2 Cultural and psychological implications**

Even if the economic environment favours the use of English as the MOI, the question of cultural identity comes up. It sounds culturally and politically unjustified to continue with the use of English as the MOI in schools after the change of flags in 1997. Some academicians wonder if students would be culturally confused if too much attention and emphasis is put on English. The youngsters live in an environment with great influence from both East and West. An imbalance will likely occur with too much attention being paid to western values and culture. The case of locally-born Hong Kong people would not be as extreme as the cases for those people who are born in foreign countries, but cultural and identity conflict is inevitably a by-product of the globalization and internationalization of Hong Kong. As Fu (1987) concurs,

**Some commentators note a certain rootlessness among students in Hong Kong and wonder whether our schooling causes them to forget or neglect their own culture...An emotional conflict may underlie this choice [between English and Chinese] because, for many Chinese parents, what is considered modern in Hong Kong is usually also foreign and sometimes acquired (as in TV and movies)**

through the medium of English...A dilemma is thus posed, for while Anglo-Chinese schools may lead to broader vocational opportunities, there may be cultural implications and conflicts which distance the young person from older family members and contribute to feelings of social uneasiness and uncertainty. For language learners this means that the more proficient they become in the target language the more pressures they may encounter which affect self-awareness and sense of belonging.

(p.39)

Much research has been done to analyse the 'emotional conflict' derived from the bilingual environment in classrooms. A survey done by Chan *et al* in 1997 shows that teachers' and principals' attitudes are very much alike. I have extracted seven items here:

**Table 2.5**

**Teachers' and principals' attitudes towards the MOI issue**

Item	Description	Principals (n=62)	Teacher (n=570)
1	Most parents prefer EMI to CMI	3.4	3.2
2	EMI schools can attract students of higher banding	3.3	3.2
3	EMI hinders the progress of the weaker (band 4 and 5) students	3.2	3.1
4	EMI can only benefit the more able (band 1 and 2) students	3.0	3.1
5	Teachers prefer to use mixed-code	3.0	2.9
6	Students prefer teachers to use mixed-code	2.9	3.0
7	Students prefer teachers to use just English	2.1	2.0

1= Strongly disagree

4= Strongly agree

(Chan *et al* 1997 p.26)

As shown in table 2.5, both teachers and principals believe that parents prefer EMI more, and that EMI would attract students from higher bandings. However, they also strongly agree that EMI is only beneficial to the more competent ones at the expense of the weaker students who are at a disadvantage because of their inability to understand in the class. Using either language would be unfair to either side, a unique form of teaching medium—mixed code, was used in the majority of Hong Kong classrooms, until recently. In 1998 the language policy of streaming schools to

different types was implemented and schools were forced to stick to either one of the languages when teaching. It was hoped that it will put an end to the practice of code-mixing.

As seen from items 6 and 7 in table 2.5, it also indicates students' preference over mixed-code teaching instead of pure EMI medium. One of the reasons may be that they cannot be totally comprehensive of what the teachers are talking about; but another reason might be that they do not feel their teachers are as friendly and approachable when they are speaking in English. As illustrated by the research of Bond (1985) about students' attitudes towards people speaking in Chinese and English, the result reveals that "A Cantonese speaker was specifically rated as more humble, honest, and friendly than an English speaker regardless of the speaker's ethnicity...[and] that a speaker of British ethnicity was evaluated more positively when speaking Cantonese than English...the Chinese speaker was denigrated when speaking English rather than Cantonese." (pp.58-59) This result has been supported by the findings of Lyczak *et al* (1976) who carried out a similar research and found that "Chinese guises were rated significantly more kind, trustworthy, honest, considerate, serious of purpose, humble, and friendly...Chinese students rated English speakers more favourably on success-related traits." (pp. 430-434) Compounded by this psychological barrier, students might be even more reluctant to participate when teachers use English as the medium of instruction. According to a survey done by Evans (1997) about the use of English in a traditional classroom with teachers who are addicted to transmissive and spoon-feeding teaching methods, students' motivation to speak up and give feedback are generally low. As table 2.6 indicates, students seldom took the initiative to use English for learning activities in classrooms. It is also found that no more than 2% of students will 'always' use English in lessons for interactions.



**Table 2.6****Patterns of interaction in the classroom [Extract]**

Pattern of interaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD
Ask the teachers questions	6%	22%	34%	29%	8%	1%	3.14%	1.06%
Talk to teacher during pair/group work	9%	25%	27%	28%	10%	1%	3.08%	1.15%
Volunteer answer to the teacher's questions	8%	29%	24%	29%	9%	1%	3.05%	1.16%
Work in pairs	9%	29%	25%	25%	10%	2%	3.02%	1.21%
Work in groups	12%	27%	28%	12%	5%	1%	2.88%	1.12%

1=never; 2=seldom; 3=not very often; 4=sometimes; 5=often; 6=always.

(Evans 1997 p. 56)

I am not going to discuss student's lack of motivation to speak up in an English-speaking classroom in detail here, as I am going to look at it in chapter five. However, the problem of motivation explains why many teachers choose to speak in Cantonese occasionally within their English utterances, instead of using purely English in most classes other than English classes (sometimes even in English classes). This gives rise to a unique type of teaching medium in Hong Kong, and in many other bilingual countries—mixed-code teaching, which is going to be elaborated in the following section.

## **2.8 Mixed-code teaching**

### **2.8.1 Emergence of mixed-code teaching in Hong Kong classrooms**

The definition of mixed code, as Pennington (1998) terms it as a "bilingual instructional genre", is that "the content of lessons is introduced in English and then explicated through examples, definitions, and further elaboration in the students' mother-tongue, followed by a restatement, conclusion, or transition to a new topic given in English". (Pennington 1998 p.7) Before the introduction of the guidance on the medium of instruction in Hong Kong in 1997, code-mixing was a very common phenomenon in the education sector because the textbooks were mainly written in English (sometimes with Chinese translation in the brackets next to specific academic terms). Students had to do homework and take exams in English, and therefore English was the main means of communication in secondary schools. Teachers, with

an aim to strengthen the understanding of the knowledge of students, to help overcome students' language barriers, and also to create a friendlier learning environment, used Cantonese from time to time to ensure that the students had gained knowledge in the lessons.

**Table 2.7****Teachers' language use in the classroom [extract]**

	English	English+Cantonese words/phrases	Cantonese+English words/phrases	Cantonese
Talking to individual students about class work	35%	24%	22%	19%
Chatting to students about non-academic matters	25%	15%	24%	37%

(Evans 1997 p.57)

Teachers would code-mix and code-switch, especially in those subjects which are content-based and concept-based, since these subjects require more specific explanations.

**...this form of classroom instruction, in which an idea related to written material is introduced in English, elaborated in Cantonese, then restated in whole or in part in English, is common. This bilingual instructional genre translates the content of the curriculum into the students' familiar idiom while maintaining a function for English as 'priming' or framing—introducing and concluding—topics. In addition, English is generally employed in secondary education as the language in which technical terms are expressed, in a form of bilingual discourse which Johnson and Lee (1987) have termed, "insertion-switching".**

(Pennington 1998 p.8)

According to table 2.7, it is true that teachers use English quite frequently in classroom, which may exceed half of total class time when they teach the whole class and manage the classroom. However, when it comes to talking to individual students about class work or not about class work, code-switching and code-mixing are also very commonly seen. When it is related to academic work, they would use mainly

English, but the use of English with the insertion of Cantonese words and phrases, or vice versa, are common as well. When the conversation does not involve academic work, Cantonese is mainly used. If the percentages of the two columns which relate to the occurrences of mixed code are added together in a particular situation, i.e. the percentage of both the 'English + Cantonese word/phrases' and 'Cantonese + English words/phrases', it would sum up to 46% in the situation of 'talking to individual students about class work'. It would exceed the percentage of using either pure English or Cantonese in the same situation, by 11% and 27% respectively.

Tables 2.6 and 2.7 illustrate the language patterns in classroom communication in 1997, before the 1998 medium of instruction policy was enforced (details of the policy are elaborated in section 2.9). Evans (2002) conducted a similar research of the language patterns in classrooms four years after the policy was put into practice. He adopted the approach of questionnaire to investigate the language patterns of EMI schools. The sample was 262 university students who had studied in EMI schools. They were requested to recall the language used in the last four years of their secondary schooling. With regard to teachers' language use in EMI classrooms, we can see from the following extracts that teachers' use of teaching medium is not consistent with what the language policy implemented in 1998 has suggested for EMI schools. The figures in tables 2.8 and 2.9 also indicate that the use of English and Cantonese (code-mixing and code-switching), and even 'mainly Cantonese', still play a prominent role in classrooms, especially when teachers are discussing work with individual students. We can see that the degree of English used by teachers varies according to situations, ranging from more English in teaching the whole class, to more code-mixing or mainly Cantonese when it comes to talking to individual students.

**Table 2.8****Teachers' language use in academic subjects in Forms 4-5**

Situations	Mainly English		Cantonese and English		Mainly Cantonese	
	EMS	FEMS	EMS	FEMS	EMS	FEMS
1. Teaching the whole class	55%	15%	17%	17%	28%	68%
2. Giving instructions to the students	47%	10%	17%	13%	36%	77%
3. Answering students' questions in front of the whole class	43%	12%	18%	11%	39%	77%
4. Discussing ideas with the whole class	39%	12%	23%	9%	38%	79%
5. Managing the classroom	34%	12%	23%	9%	38%	79%
6. Talking to individual students about their work	17%	2%	12%	6%	71%	92%

EMS=English-medium schools (i.e. schools which are permitted to continue using English as the MOI). FEMS=Former English-medium schools (i.e. schools which up to 1998 used English as the MOI, but are now required to use Chinese). Proportions for the EMS and FEMS are significantly different (under 5% significance level).

**Table 2.9****Teachers' language use in academic subjects in Forms 6-7**

Situations	Mainly English		Cantonese and English		Mainly Cantonese	
	EMS	FEMS	EMS	FEMS	EMS	FEMS
1. Teaching the whole class	66%	32%	15%	19%	19%	49%
2. Giving instructions to the students	57%	25%	15%	13%	28%	62%
3. Answering students' questions in front of the whole class	51%	23%	20%	13%	29%	64%
4. Discussing ideas with the whole class	47%	22%	22%	16%	31%	62%
5. Managing the classroom	43%	19%	9%	6%	48%	75%
6. Talking to individual students about their work	21%	11%	19%	13%	60%	76%

(Evans 2002 pp.109-110)

Evans's research (2002) separates the study of the language patterns in classrooms

into two parts, which involves the language use in academic subjects in F.4-5 (HKCEE level) and F.6-7 (A-level). The situation in F.6-7 remains more or less the same as that in F.4-5, except that 'mainly English' scores a generally higher percentage in the majority of the six items listed. Despite the obvious increase in the use of English in the A-levels, we should note that 'Cantonese and English' and 'mainly Cantonese' still play an important role in classroom interactions even in the EMI context. In addition to this, despite the more frequent use of English as the teaching medium in the English-medium schools (EMS) as compared to the former English-medium schools (FEMS), the fact that code-mixing is hardly eliminated should not be overlooked.

Many papers worldwide suggest that learning through a language that students are not familiar with would hamper their general acquisition of knowledge; and the mother-tongue (L1) is the best medium for students to learn through (e.g. the Llewellyn 1982; UNESCO World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal 2000). As the report of the UNESCO World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (2000) argues:

**Education in an unfamiliar language hampers EFA [Education For All]. Over the last four decades, evidence has accumulated suggesting that teaching learners in a language they do not understand is not very effective and causes a high incidence of repeating and dropout.**

Only the elite few could gain and survive the education system that is dominated by a second language. In fact, this is also the case in the context of Hong Kong, as revealed by surveys done locally. Despite the evidence showing the educational benefits of mother-tongue education in section 2.4.1, English medium used to be prevalent before the introduction of the 1998 MOI policy. In order to facilitate communication within classrooms, mixed code turned out to be a usual practice. The following section is going to elaborate on the problems associated with mixed-code teaching and the arguments for and against it.

## **2.8.2 Problems with mixed-code teaching**

### **2.8.2.1 Arguments for and against mixed-code teaching**

Code-mixing is a speech behaviour under severe criticism from the language purists, who urge for the practice of sticking to either one of the languages as a medium of instruction as students will not be put into linguistic confusion, and it is believed that it will be good for students' language learning. Luke (1991) raises doubt about this hypothesis. Although the accuracy of this assumption is controversial, and the language standard of students depends on many other external variants apart from the teaching medium, nevertheless Luke (1991) raises an important point when he is defending the use of code-mixing and code-switching. He argues that this unique model of teaching medium does not come into existence without being created. But why it would be created if one cannot find it useful and applicable to daily life? If teachers do not find code-mixing facilitating their students, then why would they do it? It should have some values for existence, for this phenomenon is universal in bilingual communities. Luke (1991) stresses that code-mixing and code-switching are just a symbol of bilingual competence, showing that people can handle both languages well; and it is also a means of achieving bilingual skills.

It is evident that the criticisms on mixed-code teaching in Hong Kong are not supported by adequate and reliable evidence, which might explain why the medium of instruction policy which found its basis on the 'purist principle' has suffered negative responses from all sectors in the community. As the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (1992) and So (1992) put it, mixed code is not necessarily hazardous to the language development of students. On the contrary, a research in Germany was indicative of its benefits in learning. The research conducted by Butzkamm (1998) in 1991 features the classroom discourse of a history lesson. There were 25 13-year-old girls and boys involved in the study and it has illustrated the possibility of using the mother-tongue as an ally of the foreign language for teaching. As indicated in the discourse analysis in Butzkamm's (1998) paper, students retreated to their mother-tongue when they encountered difficulty in the expression in English, and with the expertise and appropriate guidance and mixed-code explanation by the teacher, the mother-tongue could act as a lubricant in foreign language acquisition. Butzkamm (1998) justifies

that “code-switching as an integral part of the speech of bilinguals...used properly and systematically, but on the whole quite sparingly and unobtrusively, it is clearly not a last resort, but a natural short-cut...It provides the most immediate and direct access to the foreign language expression needed to carry on the conversation and to get one’s message across”. (p. 95)

Having made a brief outline of the benefits of code-mixing in lessons, we should be wary of the risk that cross-cultural and cross-contextual study would engender because teaching conditions and cultures vary to a large extent across different countries and cultural contexts. Butzkamm (1998) points out that the history teacher in this German classroom is an additive bilingual in German and English who has written extensively on the teaching through English and got involved with teacher training programmes. In other words, it is a controlled experimental study which might be too ideal in the authentic classrooms because not all local English teachers in Hong Kong are necessarily additive bilinguals in English and Chinese. Even if the ‘Mother-tongue as a lubricant hypothesis’ does work, it might not apply to the Hong Kong context due to the uneven qualifications and English proficiency of Hong Kong teachers. Discussion of the use of mother-tongue as a facilitative tool will be more comprehensively elaborated in section 5.3.2.3 in chapter five.

#### **2.8.2.2 Issues of concern in relation to cross-contextual comparison**

##### ***Provision of bilingual teachers***

Language teachers, as the main delivery agent of knowledge for students, play a vital role in students’ learning and acquisition of the second language. Given the fact that the drop-out rate of primary and secondary English teachers has been on the increase during the past three years, the supply of professional English teachers could hardly match the demand for it. Whitehead (2001) reports that “only 18% of English language teachers majored in English language courses” (p.5), therefore, the quality of local English teachers raises an issue of concern. In addition to this, the other matter that exacerbates the situation is the ‘natural drop-out’ of in-service English teachers due to the implementation of the benchmarking examination, which will be more fully elaborated in section 7.3.1.2.

One of the reasons for the limited number of professional English teacher graduates is that the entrance examination and selection for the 'Certificate of Education' course for English teachers is highly competitive, and not many of them get accepted every year. The possible scenario which could be predicted as a result of this problem is that the vicious circle, which the Education Department has been trying so hard to remedy/avoid, would be formed again. Due to the shortage of English teachers, those who are originally not qualified or trained as English teachers, or who do not even major in English would be employed again. Expansion of places offered by the 'Certificate of Education' courses is probably the only way to guarantee high quality English teachers.

### *Class size*

Apart from this, the class size of the Hong Kong classrooms also slows down whatever progress or improvements would have been achieved if the teacher-student ratio had been lower. For a class with more than an average of 40 students, obviously one teacher would find it difficult to look after the needs of students with varying and distinctive language proficiencies and abilities.

The above reasons explain why cross-contextual comparison should be dealt with cautiously since different variables exist and affect the outcomes in each distinctive study, and what is appropriate in one context could not be generalized to another. Unlike the skilful code-mixing technique displayed by the German history teacher in Butzkaam's (1998) research, Hong Kong English teachers mainly see code-mixing as the easy-way-out, and a kind of survival strategy in a complex situation rather than a facilitative lubricant.

### **2.8.3 Choice of language in relation to identity and culture**

"Language not only reflects culture. It is part of culture." (Li 1998 p.181) The issue of language choice after the implementation of the 1998 medium of instruction policy will be explored in section 6.4.2 in chapter six and respondents' choices of language are studied with regard to domains. The adoption of domains is based on the



hypothesis that ‘interlocutors, place and topic’ are the main variables of the domain and “the way in which these variables are manipulated determined the extent to which the domain configuration was likely to be perceived as congruent or incongruent.” (Romaine 2000 p.48)

People’s choice of language usually reflects their choice of identity, and the extent to which they feel they belong to a particular group. Another force which pushes code-mixing into existence is that inserting English words or phrases into a Cantonese sentence is usually what young academics, professionals and well-educated people in Hong Kong do. Code-mixing has emerged as the speech habit of the upper middle class. For those who would like to identify with that group, they would code-mix very frequently. That is what students in secondary schools, and mainly tertiary institutions do—to try to sound more knowledgeable and professional on the one hand and to avoid sounding too Chinese or too western on the other. This is one of the symbols of ‘biculturalism’, and perhaps is one of the by-products of the hybrid culture of Hong Kong. Mixed code has also developed into a symbol of identity that is typical to the students and more well-educated group. This thesis is also making an attempt to explore the change of cultural construct and attitude of people in the educational sector after the handover and the implementation of the new MOI policy. Further investigation is going to be carried out and elaborated in chapter six.

### **2.9 The new language policy in 1998**

During the period of colonial administration, mother-tongue education did not receive too much attention and the government did not make much effort to promote mother-tongue education either. It adopted a minimal intervention policy in terms of teaching medium, which means that the choice of the teaching medium was left to the schools themselves. However, it is no longer the case as the Education Department made a strong move to direct all the schools in Hong Kong to either English-medium or Chinese-medium in 1998.

**Table 2.10****The medium of instruction at secondary level in the 1990s**

Year	English-medium		Chinese-medium		Mixed-medium	
	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of schools	No. of students	No. of schools	No. of students
1990	355	388 951	27	35 293	0	0
1991	377	400 462	24	27 737	22	NA
1992	388	409 993	24	26 786	18	NA
1993	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1994	420	421 269	25	26 804	11	NA
1995	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1996	421	429 551	25	25 807	8	NA
1997	424	421 573	26	25 573	8	NA

Source: Education Department (1990-1997) NA=Not Available

(Evans 2002 p.105)

As we can see from table 2.10 illustrating the teaching medium of schools before 1998, more than three quarters of the schools in Hong Kong claimed themselves to be English-medium schools before the policy was put forward, and the number was apparently increasing from 1990-1997. Apart from Chinese-related subjects, English was supposed to be the only medium in all classrooms. However, the actual situation was that teachers in these so-called English-medium schools usually used code-mixing, which means using Cantonese with insertions of English technical terms when necessary.

The argument of the Education Department was that declining language standards and lower academic achievement are the results of mixed-code teaching in Hong Kong. This type of bilingual teaching method was condemned by the Education Department and, therefore, usually schools are not willing to admit explicitly that they use mixed-code teaching.

The government believes that language purism will benefit students, and it believes mother-tongue education will improve students' understanding of the lessons. However, the government also realizes the high demand for proficient English speakers. Therefore, it put forward the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment,

which is known as the MIGA<sup>4</sup>, to indicate students' language abilities, and the teaching medium of the schools depends on student intake to a large extent.

According to the results in MIGA, students are grouped into the English-medium group if they are ranked within the top 30-40% of students in both their Chinese and English learning abilities, and they fall into Chinese-medium group, if they are below the 30-40%<sup>5</sup>. Students are divided into three categories according to their results.

**Group I: [Students are classified] as able to learn effectively in either English or Chinese.**

**Group II: [Students are] able to learn effectively only in Chinese.**

**Group III: [Students are] able to learn better in Chinese but may also learn effectively in English.**

(Hong Kong Education Department 1997b p.5)

As for the schools, they have to meet three criteria if they want to qualify for English medium teaching. The criteria are as follows:

- 1. Student ability to be an average percentage of not less than 85% of MIGA Groups I and III students in S1 intake for the past three years. We maintain that 85 % is the optimal cut-off point as it provides the lowest possibility of MOI mismatches between students and school places allocated;**
- 2. Teacher capability to be based on the principal's assessment and certification. As necessary, ED inspectors may visit applicant schools to gather information on the state of readiness of using English as the teaching**

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<sup>4</sup> "The purpose of MIGA is to provide information on the medium of instruction grouping of Secondary 1 entrants in terms of their ability to learn in Chinese or English during their secondary schooling...MIGA is based on the school's internal assessments of pupils at the end of Primary 5 and during the mid-year of Primary 6. Internal assessments are used because they are seen to be more reliable than a single external assessment. More importantly, Primary 6 pupils will be relieved of the psychological pressure arising from an external testing." (Hong Kong Education Department 1997a)

<sup>5</sup> According to the MIGA results, the percentage of students who fall into Group I is 33.32%, while those who fall to Group III is only 7.49%. 58.86% of the students are categorised as Group II, which amounts to the majority. (Education Commission 1995 p.70)

**medium; and**

- 3. Suitable MOI strategies and support programmes (e.g. bridging courses) to be in place to give sound school-based assistance to their S1 students.**

(Hong Kong Education Department 1997c p.5)

After the government passed the 'Medium of instruction Guidance for Secondary School' in 1997 and made a serious attempt to eliminate mixed-code teaching in 1998, the majority of schools in Hong Kong, which used to be English-medium schools, were forced to switch to Chinese-medium. As a result, only 114<sup>6</sup> out of more than 400 schools in Hong Kong were qualified for the continuation of using English as the teaching medium, as opposed to the past when more than 300 schools belonged to the English-medium group.

### **2.9.1 Voices against the new MOI policy**

The impact of this policy is far-reaching. In the case of Hong Kong, discontent was stirred up from students, parents and schools, and also from the business world with the fear that there would not be an adequate supply of fluent English speakers. The effort of the government was in vain no matter how hard it tried to convince people of the educational value of the mother-tongue hypothesis. In fact, bilinguals have been trying to make a boost to the promotion of bilingual education and they claim that sticking to mother-tongue would in fact do more harm than good in cultivating students' language skills and would also fail to meet the linguistic requirements of Hong Kong society. One of the goals of education is to nurture a group of educated people to serve the needs of society, to keep the economy going and flourishing. Therefore, educators and policy makers should first acknowledge the needs of the society. What linguistic abilities does Hong Kong actually require its people to possess? The other consideration is that with the handover of 1997, are there any changes with the use of language in the society?

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<sup>6</sup> The number of EMI schools in Hong Kong was reported to be 114 according to newspaper reports in 1998. However, the number has been reduced to 112 according to the latest confirmation with the government officer in August, 2002.

The explanation which So (1992) has given might be relevant to the phenomenon of strong parental opposition to the government decision of forcing the majority of schools to adopt CMI as the development of English proficiencies has inevitably been adversely affected. He comments,

**Our future language needs render the dichotomous Chinese vs English orientation of the current debate out-dated, and point to a need to stimulate a linguistic environment within the schools that approximates the linguistic dynamics in post-1997 Hong Kong. This environment will be characterized by a shift from a need for bilingual brokers to mediate between the colonial administration and the government to a need for trilingual brokers to mediate among Beijing, the local government and the international community...educational development cannot evolve in isolation from socio-economic developments. And if one does look forward, what he sees is that the inevitable shift in language demands and political orientation require that our students be given opportunities to perform tasks of various nature in Cantonese, Putonghua and English, rather than in any one of these languages, and also be given a good measure of biculturalism that is grounded in the Chinese tradition.**

(pp.85-86)

Johnson (1997a) states that parental concern has played a crucial role in the development of language policy. Parents recognize the linguistic needs demanded by the economic-oriented society:

**In Hong Kong, students and their parents place a high value on English, but show very little interest in supporting the weight of British, European or Western culture and civilisation...The community these parents want their children to enter is that of the bilingual academic, professional and business elite of Hong Kong. Membership of this group requires Hong Kong identity, native speaker Cantonese, written Chinese and proficiency in the national language, Putonghua, as well as the international language English. Members of this elite group use their English to do business (in the broadest sense) with native speakers, but they also use it to do business with for example Japanese, Germans, French, Thais, Koreans and Indonesians.**

(p. 21)

The unique linguistic demands of the society render the language problem of Hong Kong society even more complicated and different from the usual and ordinary situation of bilingual communities. Being the mediate brokers between China and the rest of the world, people in Hong Kong are required to be bilingual in terms of writing, but trilingual in terms of speaking. When it comes to speaking, it has been clarified in section 1.4 that the spoken form of Cantonese and the official PRC language, Mandarin, are totally unintelligible, whereas the two share a common set of characters—Modern Standard Written Chinese.

In order to cater for the needs of the language environment and also the socioeconomic and political requirements of the HKSAR, supporters of bilingual education strongly encourage bilingual education to be adopted. A certain amount of literature has been written to argue in favour of bilingual education.<sup>7</sup> So and Luke are the two major proponents of mixed code in Hong Kong, at the time when the majority of educators believe that it will bring detrimental effects to academic achievements of students.

So (1992) and the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (1992) both argue that the usual classroom practice of code-mixing could be beneficial. Their opinions diverge from the opposing groups in the way that they do not share the same approach to the analysis of problem. The government, as well as lots of educators/linguists who are against mixed-code education, believe that code-mixing is the reason that engenders the decline in language standards and performances. Nevertheless, So (1992) and Luke (1991) deal with the problem by pointing out that code-mixing is in fact the linguistic trend the bilingual community of Hong Kong is moving towards. As So (1992) argues,

**First, code-mixing is a mark of bilingual behaviour. In other words, if more and more bilinguals are produced in Hong Kong, code-mixing will get more and more common, and it appears that this is exactly what is happening now, with**

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<sup>7</sup> Cummins (1996) has done an evaluation of international bilingual education programmes. Some examples include Malherbe's Afrikaans-English bilingual education study, the Verhoeven's Turkish-Dutch bilingual program, the Basque-Spanish bilingual programs. Cummins (1996) suggests that all the studies are consistent with the interdependence hypothesis and are supportive of the L1-L2 relationship.

**the mixed-code becoming the native tongue of the local educated community.**

**(p.87)**

He further condemns the general antagonistic and negative attitudes towards code-mixing as “more a case of either a monolingual inward-looking society unaccustomed to such a language variety, or an inappropriate application of monolingual norms, on the part of language purists, to bilingual behaviour”. (So 1992 p.87) His view is supported by Li (1994), who says that “I agree entirely with So (1992) that code-mixing is far from being a form of corrupted speech. On the contrary, code-mixing has enriched the bilingual’s speech repertoire and, as a functional (not standard) variety, it serves a very constructive purpose in and beyond the classroom (p.87).” (p.121) According to a small-scale research done by Cheng (undated), mixed code yields higher educational benefits by increasing learners’ motivation level, and mixed code is found to be particularly beneficial to low achievers. Li (1998) continues to argue that instead of condemning mixed code as a form of linguistic impurity, it would be more constructive if people can accept it as “(a)...a consequence of languages in contact; (b) jettison the unnecessarily negative attitude and shameful feeling associated with code-mixing; and (c) explore ways to turn code-mixed speech and writing into a useful resource, for example, by exploring its potential in pedagogy, to help promote and maintain monolingual written language norms.”( p.185) The purist hypothesis is supposed to be adopted for the sake of raising the language standards of students, but linguistic purism does not necessarily suit the case of Hong Kong if bilingual proficiency is the ultimate goal, because the purist approach will benefit one end (learning of Chinese) at the expense of the other one (learning English).

As mentioned earlier, the strong opposition to the policy mainly came from parents because of the fear that their children’s upward and outward mobility will be affected adversely if they are educated in Chinese. Parental opposition reached its climax soon after the results of the MOI of all secondary schools broke out (please refer to appendices XVII, XVIII and XIX for newspaper extracts). It was reported that some parents burst into tears as soon as they were informed the results of the MOI distribution as they accused the new MOI policy of depriving their children of chances to develop their potential through English. The other main worry was that their

children would be disadvantaged due to the linguistic discrimination brought about by streaming. The parents' committee of one of the 'forced-to-be' Chinese-medium schools held meetings immediately after the implementation of the policy, with an aim to further appeal (Unnamed reporter from the Oriental Daily 1998, please refer to appendix XVIII). As for teachers and school principals, they opposed the policy because English-medium schools enjoy more prestige and are more likely to recruit high-ability students. Press conferences were held in several 'forced-to-be' Chinese-medium schools to seek attention of the public and to exacerbate the mood for social opposition. Slogans against the new MOI policy could be seen everywhere in one of the schools, for example "We don't all enter as Band 1 students, but we all leave with Band 1 results" as shown in appendix XIX. Different means were used by the principals and teachers of Chinese-medium schools, like expressing condolences for the fatal decision made by the government regarding the 1998 MOI policy in the morning assembly to convey their discontent and disappointment (as shown in appendix XVII). In fact, parental influence and opposition has long been one of the main forces impeding the full implementation of mother-tongue education in Hong Kong. Lee (1993) offers a piece of evidence illustrating the unpopularity of CMI schools in Hong Kong:

**In 1987, the Carmel Secondary School made a bold attempt to switch to Chinese teaching when the government adopted a policy of 'positive discrimination', in which schools using Chinese were given extra resources for their English classes. After three years of experimentation, the school council decided to switch back to English. This decision was a clear signal to the public that the experiment had failed, and the decision was made for a number of reasons. First, as a result of the announcement of the school changing to Chinese medium, it was no longer able to attract as many good students as it had previously...Second, teachers in the school admitted that it was very difficult to convince parents to allow their children to receive an education in Chinese...A third, practical issue was that even teachers were worried that students had problems coping when they switched to an English school or a tertiary institution.**

(p.210)

The failure of the attempt made by the Carmel Secondary School can possibly be



explained by the social belief that EMI education is more beneficial to students, and this belief does not seem to have undergone many changes during the past decade. The Education Department attempted to soothe the public by ensuring that teaching of English in CMI schools will be consolidated and strengthened through the use of NET (Native English Teachers) scheme in primary schools and secondary schools as a means to strengthen the English language foundation of students. As the Hong Kong Education Department (undated c) states,

**NETs will act as English language resource teachers in the schools. Besides being responsible for classroom teaching and assessment, they will assist in school-based English teacher development programme and help foster an enabling environment for students to speak English and practise their oral skills.”**

However, we should note that the use of NET does not directly bring positive outcome in English teaching even though students are exposed to English native speakers during the lessons. The personal experience of Randolph (2001) can be cited as a good example of the use of English native speaker as an English teacher in a totally Chinese-speaking context. As Randolph (2001) suggests,

**Relationships between the students and me, their teacher, were crucial for trust to develop to the point where students cared enough to risk embarrassment in the classroom. This was especially critical because I was not from the host culture. Knowing this, I had spent considerable time and effort prior to my inquiries doing extensive reading in the areas of Chinese cultural and educational practices, a necessity in gaining respect from EFL students (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). These insights were used to create informed questions so that I could reach out to my students in a caring and respectful manner. I spent considerable time with students outside of class on field trips to local gardens, bookstores, restaurants, museums, and libraries.**

(p.12)

This experience of Randolph coheres with the argument<sup>8</sup> proposed by Swain & Johnson (1997) with regard to effective bilingual education. Not only that the L2 teachers have to possess high level of bilingual abilities in students' L1 and L2, assimilating to students' L1 culture is another prerequisite.

### **2.10 Chapter summary**

This chapter is split up into three main sections. The first section spreads from 2.0 to 2.3. It aims at enriching the understanding of the question of Hong Kong identity by tracing its origin. It then continues to discuss its development throughout the past few decades and how it has finally emerged as a unique form of culture typical for Hong Kong Chinese.

The second section goes from 2.4 to 2.6. It sets out the features of bilingualism in Hong Kong. It outlines the types of bilingualism most commonly found in Hong Kong and the types of bilingual education available in the local context. This is especially crucial because a new form of bilingual education unique in the local context—mixed-code teaching—has developed. This section projects the strengths and weaknesses of bilingual education and also provides details on the linguistic theoretical frameworks that the Education Department has referred to in the design of the 1998 MOI policy, which are the threshold and linguistic interdependence theories.

Section 2.7 to 2.9 lays out the developments of language policy and the changes of the medium of instruction in particular, and the background against which the 1998 MOI policy was implemented. It also attempts to sketch out the public reaction towards the policy. The practice of mixed-code teaching which had been prevalent in Hong Kong, arguments for and against such a practice, are also introduced. In short, it tries to provide a frame of reference within which the 1998 MOI policy is set. Details and

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<sup>8</sup> Swain and Johnson (1997) point out that students whose use of L2 is confined to the L2 classrooms will benefit to a smaller extent than those whose use of L2 can be extended to domains outside classrooms. Besides, they also state that "...The classroom culture of the prototypical immersion program, like its curriculum, is that of the community from which the students are drawn, not that of a community where the target language is the L1. As an example, Japanese teachers recruited from Japan might need to adjust to the classroom culture in a North American or Australian immersion classroom before they could work effectively, no matter how proficient they might be in English. The same has been shown to apply to expatriate English-speaking teachers in Hong Kong." (pp.7-8)

aims of the MOI policy are also elaborated more fully in this section.

In the light of the discussion of the MOI issues in the local context, the Singaporean chapter that follows is going to place bilingual education and issues of cultural identity in another context that shares some features in common with the local Hong Kong context, but might be able to add new insights to the implementation and design of the current policy.

## CHAPTER THREE: A COMPARISON WITH SINGAPORE

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### 3.0 Introduction

The linguistic complication in Hong Kong is distinctive in the way that three languages are co-existing at the same time in the society, and in that we can also see a conflict within the Chinese language itself—as Chinese is a term too ambiguous and abstract. Cantonese emerges as a powerful dialect of Chinese. Having been under colonial influence for more than 150 years and having developed their own sense of identity, Hong Kong people are finding that the language problem in Hong Kong cannot just be solved by forcing Mandarin into the society.

When we look at the case of Hong Kong, an appropriate comparison can be made with her neighbour city state—Singapore, which was facing similar conflicts of languages due to its multiracial and multicultural characteristics when it became independent in 1965.

### 3.1 Historical context of Singapore

#### 3.1.1 Linguistic pattern of Singapore

Singapore is a small island with a population of around 4 millions, whose ancestors mainly came from neighbouring countries such as China, Malaya, and India, and who are subdivided into various groups with different dialects. “The island was settled in 1819 and became part of the Straits settlement in 1826. It joined Malaysia in 1963, leaving it to become an independent state in 1965.” (Luscombe undated) The British first landed on this small island for trade, and as in the case of Hong Kong, education was of little importance to the colonial government and it was only reserved for the elite class. It was a poor country with a gloomy economic prospect. Unlike Hong

Kong, Singapore gained its own sovereignty and became independent after the British occupation.

Universal free education was implemented after the British left, and domestic and diplomatic policies were left in the hands of Singaporeans. Education ranked high on the list of priorities. With more of the population being able to receive education, more problems awaited to be solved. The first was the language policy in schools. As Gopinathan (1997) comments,

**Singapore society in the 1950s was characterized by deep ethnic and linguistic segmentation. It was poor, had a rapidly rising birthrate, and had few prospects for economic survival...a four media of instruction (English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil) school system mirrored the fragmentation of Singapore society.**

(pp. 71-72)

The Singaporean government put forward a policy of bilingualism as a means to remedy the linguistic and ethnic diversity, and used this concept to integrate the multiethnic society as a whole. In order to put the fragments of different cultures and races together, the government adopted the principle of 'equality of treatment' of languages. English is used to link all different races, and also as a language of legislation in the legal system.

### **3.1.2 Language policy and the political motive behind it**

'Bilingualism', proficiency in two languages, is the ideal target of the government. However, it should be noted that the knowledge of English and another dialect of one of the language groups (e.g. Cantonese) does not count as bilingualism in Singapore. Therefore, to be bilingual in the context of Singapore means the ability to exercise English and another official language, be it Malay, Mandarin or Tamil. English is supposed to be a neutral tool for communication, and at the same time the second language. In other words, the person's mother-tongue serves as a symbol of cultural identity of a certain ethnic group.

Up till the late eighties the rationale offered for extensive use of English was that it was to be learnt for its utilitarian value, for employment and for guaranteeing access to the science and technology of the west—the rationale accurately mirrored the rapid emergence of English as the major language of administration, commerce, education and consequently, social status in the seventies. Rapid economic growth and the spread of English medium education in the sixties and seventies strengthened English's dominant status, and its role as a link language. The rationale for learning 'mother-tongue' more correctly, ethnic mother tongue since it is designated on the basis of ethnicity, offered by the government was that it would give pupils an anchor in their ethnic and cultural traditions, thus avoiding the excesses of westernization and hopefully preventing deculturalization.

(Gopinathan 1994 p.67)

Like Hong Kong, as a small nation that was lacking in natural resources and human capital, Singapore relied heavily on entrepôt trade during the early years of independence. The entrepôt trade of Hong Kong met a destructive challenge from the late 1960s to the 1970s when China slammed its door to the rest of the world due to the Cultural Revolution and the Hong Kong economy suffered. As for Singapore, entrepôt trade had gone downhill and brought about high unemployment and underemployment (Tickoo 1996 p.435). The economic infrastructures of both Hong Kong and Singapore had gone through metamorphosis since the decline of entrepôt trade. Preparation of a skilled and well-trained workforce was regarded as a means of boosting the economy. Reforms in education had therefore turned out to be one of the top priorities. At the same time, reforming an education system which has to serve and deal with the needs of different ethnic communities also implies that policy-makers of the Ministry of Education have to be exceptionally cautious. As Tickoo (1996) analyses, "a reorganization of the educational system to ensure usable competence in English for workers in a growing number of sectors was therefore a basic need. So English education became the linchpin of a bilingual policy and standards in its use began to receive attention at the highest levels of decision-making." (p.437)

The inherent conflict of English as an imperial and colonial language for the British ex-colonies, and as a *lingua franca* that is selected by the world's economic

mechanism, has made the case of Singaporean's use of English as the first and official language even more complex. The use of English indicates its colonial past. However, as a nation state with an aim of reviving its economy and increasing the competitiveness of its human capital, the leaders of Singapore have obviously ranked the financial and economic concerns above the moral and ethnic values of the people. Like every other place or country that has undergone the process of industrialization, the strengthening of moral and cultural values is likely to give way to the pursuit of scientific, economic and technological success that yields immediate material rewards (James 1998). One would put little doubt in the statement that Singapore owes its prosperity and status in terms of international trade to the ascendancy of English to a world language. With the widespread use of English in the city state, Singapore is equipped with the appropriate manpower and workforces that could facilitate the development of high technology and commerce and hence its competitiveness in the world market is strengthened.

## **3.2 Similarities and differences between Hong Kong and Singapore**

### **3.2.1 Economic structures**

It is clear that both Hong Kong and Singapore shared a similar historical background, though their political paths diverged. Both had been ruled by Britain, and the economic development was very alike. Both developed from entrepôt to industrial economies, and both maintained close ties with their hinterlands despite their colonial backgrounds, though Hong Kong did not undergo the development as early as Singapore did. As Ho *et al* (1996) comment,

**Both Hong Kong and Singapore first developed as entrepôt of a vast hinterland and were not intended as self-sufficient and independent units of economic activity. Although geo-political forces in the immediate postwar period partially severed their ties with the hinterland, the economic and social logic of such ties remained intact. Hence, once political barricades were lowered, institutions facilitating economic exchanges were remolded, and the economic necessities of such exchanges became apparent, the economic (and political as well in Hong Kong) reintegration between the two city-states and their respective hinterland became inevitable.**

(p.121)

Apart from the similarity regarding the economic structures in the times of economic take-off, both have evolved into one of the four Asian little tigers in the late 80s and early 90s (others being South Korea and Taiwan); both rely heavily on foreign investments, capital and technological equipment. Regarding language, both Hong Kong and Singapore recognise the importance of English as an international language possessing high economic values. Hong Kong and Singapore have recognised the fact that English is an economic tool without which inter-communication with the outside world is not possible.

### **3.2.2 The use of English in Singapore and Hong Kong**

We can draw some similarities between Singapore and Hong Kong, at least to some extent, at this point. The Hong Kong society has inherited several features of cities or states which have undergone industrialization. Having the rule of 'survival for the fittest' in operation in the society, English remains a dominant linguistic instrument that serves as a stepping stone to the gateway of success and economic rewards. Nevertheless, Singapore differs from Hong Kong in the sense that it has retained English not as a second or foreign language as Hong Kong does in the post-colonial era; Singapore has made it the first language. The continuation of English in the linguistic repertoire in Hong Kong is basically instrumental. The new medium of instruction policy that reserves the top 30% of students to receive English-medium education has in fact marked a new page for the history of education. By making Chinese education the main stream for the vast majority, it also symbolizes the fact that English has retreated to the role of merely a foreign language that is learned for pragmatic needs. By streaming schools into either Chinese-medium and English-medium, the government could not only make sure of a group with high English proficiency level to help maintain and develop the economic *status quo* of the society, but could also dilute the colonial connotations of the English language.

English functions at a higher level and serves mainly in the domains of business, trade, legal system, and government administration in Hong Kong. Though Chinese



joined English as the official language of Hong Kong in 1974, Cantonese serves another level of functions: a language used in everyday life among the general public. Nonetheless, one point we should be more aware of when we make comparison is that Cantonese, unlike the case of Mandarin, Tamil and Malay in Singapore, is not learned at the second language level in Hong Kong as most of the Singaporeans do for their ethnic mother-tongues. Cantonese is the mother-tongue of the vast majority. Apart from this, English does not act as a *lingua franca* in all aspects in Hong Kong. We do not learn English as our first language but it is very common for Singaporeans to talk in English with each other even in the household domain. As Pakir (1993) puts it,

**Ten years ago, as revealed in the 1980 Census of Population, 12% of the population claimed to use English as the predominant home language. In the 1990 Census of Population, 20% claimed English as their predominant household language...In 1980, 9% of six-year-old school children claimed English as the most frequently spoken home language. In 1990, 26% did so, higher than the national average of twenty per cent.**

(p.213)

However, it would be regarded as 'showing off', snobbish or unusual to speak in English in inappropriate domains in Hong Kong, as English does not penetrate to the whole population, or all domains in Hong Kong. As in the case for Singapore, English serves as the multifunctional language for general communication within the city state and for economic interests (Chua 1990).

### **3.2.2.1 The popularity of English-medium schools**

Despite the proposal of 'equality of treatment' of languages, English stood out as the most important language: a language for material success, for upward mobility in Singapore. Parents share a common perception that enrolling their students in English-medium schools would empower their children with English proficiency which is necessary if they are to get into professions of the upper-middle ranks like doctors, lawyers or accountants. They are thinking for the sake of their children's future career and therefore, it is not surprising to see that in 1983, less than 1% of the primary one population were enrolled in Chinese-medium schools (Gopinathan 1994 p.75). By

1987, the Chinese-medium schools received no pupils at all (Chua 1990 p.263). This view seems to be shared universally by parents. We can see from the case in Hong Kong when the government adopted a firmer stand on controlling the medium of instruction by switching all the schools not qualified for English medium to Chinese medium, and put an end to the mixed-code practice in Hong Kong classrooms. Parents, as well as teachers from those 'forced-to-be' Chinese-medium schools protested against this policy, and demonstrated their feelings of unfairness and the effect of labelling such a policy would produce, as has been pointed out in section 2.9.1.

Like Hong Kong, mother-tongue education is equally hard to be promoted successfully in Singapore due to the inadequate support from parents. Parents ignore all the research findings that try to prove the educational benefits of using mother-tongue as the teaching medium. They only care about what is economically and practically advantageous to their children. As Gupta (1994) analyses,

**To persuade the population of Singapore to see education in the real mother tongue as important would require a radical shift both in educational philosophy and in Singapore's social structure, such that people with skill in English would not be rewarded over people with skill in other languages. As long as language use and social class remain linked it would appear to be disadvantaging children to deny them access to the languages of power unless they already speak those languages.**

(p.182)

### **3.2.2.2 The bilingual language policy**

The situation in Hong Kong shares certain points in common with that of Singapore in this particular dimension and it is no surprise that Hong Kong has chosen a similar path, though different in certain ways, to the Singaporean when the problem of bilingual language policy is concerned. Before going on to comparison, the diagrams in appendices VI and VII illustrate the general picture of the education systems in both Hong Kong and Singapore.

The common feature between the education system of Singapore and Hong Kong is that students are streamed into different medium of instruction groups according to their language abilities in secondary schools. However, it should be noted that streaming takes place at an earlier stage in Singapore. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education, Singapore (undated):

**Table 3.1****Types of streams in primary education in Singapore**

Types of streams	
EM1 Stream	For pupils who do very well in English Language, Mother Tongue and Mathematics at the end of P4. Pupils will learn English Language and Mother Tongue at a higher level i.e. Higher Malay, Higher Chinese or Higher Tamil.
EM2 Stream	For the majority of pupils. Pupils will learn English Language and Mother Tongue i.e. Malay, Chinese or Tamil. Principals will decide on the pupils who will need additional lessons in English Language in - EM2(E) sub-stream or the Mother Tongue in the EM2(MT) sub-stream.
EM3 Stream	For pupils less able to cope with Languages and Mathematics. Pupils will learn Foundation English Language and Mother Tongue at basic proficiency level. Teaching of Mother Tongue will emphasize oral/aural skills, reading and listening comprehension as well as conversation.
ME3 Stream	Pupils recommended for EM3 stream in P5 will also be able to opt for ME3 stream. Schools will provide ME3 classes if there is a sufficient demand. Pupils will learn Mother Tongue at higher level (Higher Malay, Higher Chinese or Higher Tamil) and Basic English Language. Teaching of English Language will emphasize .-oral/aural skills, reading and listening comprehension as well as conversation. The language of instruction for all subjects will be in Mother Tongue

The last and least prestigious option would be the ME3 stream, which teaches all the subjects through the mother-tongue. It is specially designed for those who are not able to cope with either English or the mother-tongue. This stream is more of an option in name only, as ME3 classes will only be offered if there is sufficient demand for them. As for secondary education, all the students have to sit for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) at the end of primary schooling, though the number of subjects being examined varies according to the language stream the student belongs to. Three core subjects (English, Mathematics and mother-tongue) are tested in every individual stream, with the top 10% of students having special courses and learning English and the mother-tongue at first language level, whereas those who attend the second most prestigious stream, the express courses, receive English education at the

first language level and the mother-tongue at the secondary level. Graduates from these two streams sit for the same GCE O Level at the end of secondary education. However, students graduating from the Normal courses (around 20%) which is the ME3 equivalent at the secondary level, sit for the GCE N Level, which is a reduced form of GCE O Level examination.

Before going into further elaboration, it is essential to refer to the comparison of population between Singapore and Hong Kong, which may help us understand the different approaches to bilingual policy these two places have adopted.

### 3.2.3 The comparison of the population composition of Singapore and Hong Kong

The composition of the Singaporean population is obviously more complex than that of Hong Kong. The table below illustrates the racial composition of the two places:

**Table 3.2**

**Ethnic composition in Hong Kong and Singapore**

Racial Groups	Singapore (%)	Racial Groups	Hong Kong (%)
Chinese	76.4	Chinese	94.9%
Malays	14	Others <sup>9</sup>	5.1%
Indians	7.9		
Others	1.4		

(Figures from Central Intelligence Agency undated b & Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department 2001a)

We can see from the table that both places have Chinese as the major racial group in the population. One point that should be noted is the ambiguity of the term 'Chinese', since it is a collective term of all the Chinese people in general. However, the Chinese racial group in Singapore consists of people from different regions of China, whose mother-tongues are not intelligible to one another. The group includes people from the Hokkien region and the Canton region etc. The dialectic group of the Hong Kong

<sup>9</sup> "Others" includes Filipino (2.1%), Indonesian (0.8%), British (0.3%), Indian (0.3%), Thai (0.2%), Nepalese (0.2%), Pakistani (0.2%) and an unidentified category of "others" (0.9%) according to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2001a).

Chinese is more unified in the way that the vast majority are Chinese from the Canton region. Although the group from Shanghai (which is further up along the coast of the South China Sea) has exerted certain cultural influence on the Hong Kong Chinese population due to the mass immigration of Shanghainese to Hong Kong in the 1960s, the second generation of this particular group are largely immersed in the Cantonese population and culture and all of them could exercise Cantonese to a very high level.

Unlike Hong Kong, the Singapore government used 'bilingualism' as a means of unifying the fragmented pieces due to the great diversity of racial groups. Bilingualism serves an integrative function. The bilingual policies of Hong Kong and Singapore have been developed for two diverging ends. The bilingual policy in Singapore was implemented out of the need to solve political, economic and social challenges, which are the potential threat for the nation state. The type of bilingualism that the former Prime Minister, President Lee Kuan-Yew supported, is English-based bilingualism (EBB). For students who are being categorised into various streams who learn English at different levels of proficiency, the most ideal cases are those where balanced and additive bilingualism in English and the mother-tongue would be achieved. As for Hong Kong, the new medium of instruction policy gears towards the mother-tongue, Cantonese, for the majority, leaving the right to learn through English medium to those who survive the selection process. It has been highlighted in the relevant education documents how beneficial it is to learn through the mother-tongue, claiming that one should consolidate his/her mother-tongue before jumping to another language. In other words, English has been relegated to a supplementary and secondary role.

The bilingual language policy in Singapore is based on the principle of making use of the politically neutral elements of English language for gaining material rewards, and at the same time imparting the moral and cultural values through the mother-tongue according to individual ethnicity. With the operation of the language streaming policy since the 1980s, the economic success that Singapore has achieved partially as a result of English-based bilingualism could apparently be seen. However, the bilingual policy does not seem to bring equal success on the other side, which might not be a concern for immediate attention but could not be overlooked—it is the inculcation of traditional

cultural values. As James (1998) puts it, “The languages that correspond to ethnicity, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, which are three of the official languages, are somewhat artificially drawn.” (p. 105) The ethnic composition of the Singapore society shows that the population of the four ethnic groups is not evenly distributed. It consists of around 77% of Chinese people who fall into scattered dialect groups<sup>10</sup>. With the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’<sup>11</sup>, the government tried to unify the different dialect clans by promoting one single common language—Mandarin. According to Tickoo (1996), “over the last 15 years Mandarin has definitely displaced other Chinese dialects from many of their domains of use. By 1990 Mandarin had become a commonly-spoken language in about 30% of households”. (p.443) Issues of concern brought about by this bilingual policy will be discussed in fuller detail later in the chapter.

The bilingual policy in Hong Kong is much simpler in the way that there is only a clear-cut distinction between Chinese-medium schools and English-medium schools in secondary education. A distinctive feature between the bilingual policy of Singapore and Hong Kong is that the Ministry of Education in Singapore is making the vast majority (both EM1 and EM2 streams in primary education and Express and Special Streams in secondary education) of students attain first language proficiency in English. The difference only lies in the level attained for the mother-tongue. Whereas in the case of Hong Kong, the Education Department has never attempted to set the target of English language proficiency to the first language level, as it violates and is against the linguistic norm of a society with around 90% of the population sharing the same Chinese dialect.

Sections 3.1 to 3.2 cover the background information of the history and language use

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<sup>10</sup> Other dialect groups being Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Mandarin and Teochew. (The Literature, Culture and Society of Singapore undated)

<sup>11</sup> “From 1979 to 1981, the target audience of Speak Mandarin Campaign [SMC] was Chinese Singaporeans in general...The primary message to Chinese Singaporeans was to speak Mandarin in place of dialects to help them better understand and appreciate their culture and heritage. While the Campaign has succeeded in getting dialect-speaking Chinese Singaporeans to speak Mandarin, research indicated that Mandarin was losing ground among English-educated Chinese Singaporeans. From 1991 onwards, the SMC started targeting English-educated Chinese Singaporeans to encourage them to speak Mandarin. In 1994, the SMC targeted English-educated business professionals and working adults.” (The [Speak Mandarin] Campaign Undated)

in Singapore, with special focus on its language policy in secondary education. A comparison was made between Hong Kong and Singapore in terms of the use of English in the society, the popularity of EMI schools, and the bilingual policy. The aim of making such a comparison with Singapore is that by putting the Singaporean case in the frame of reference and taking a step backwards to look at a case with certain similarities and differences, new insights and implications could be drawn. The second part of this chapter is going to devote itself to the question of cultural identity in multicultural and multilingual Singapore, and how relevance could be drawn to the identity question in Hong Kong.

### **3.3 Cultural identity in relation to English language in Singapore**

One thing we should notice is that although English is used as the first language in Singapore, it does not involve westernization of cultural identity. Asian, and in particular, Chinese traditional values, are still the pillars governing the moral well-being of the society. Maintaining its own identity is crucial to a nation, but it is somehow difficult if a country is using a foreign language as the first language, as language is a manifestation of one's national identity. There is undoubtedly a clash of interest and contradiction within the policy itself, but Singapore has been doing very well in maintaining the Singaporeans' sense of belonging and pride to the society. There were in fact two events which posed a threat to the status of Chinese in Singapore: one was the merging of Nanyang University, a Chinese-medium institution, with the University of Singapore to form the National University of Singapore in 1980. Another event was in 1987 when English was introduced as the first language in the entire school system. However, the government also made a lot of effort to reinforce the status of Chinese. The Ministry of Education took immediate action when there were signs of dropping Chinese standards, and that it showed respect to this traditional language despite the dominance of English in the scene. For example,

**The front-page lead in the Sunday Times (May 1987) placed the situation before the public with an assurance by the MOE [Ministry of Education] that it is ever ready to start a Chinese medium school as soon as sufficient enrolment makes it**

**feasible.**

(Chua 1990 p.263)

In 1991, a committee was formed to review the Chinese standard of Singaporean students, and in 1992, it produced a report emphasizing the status of Chinese in Singapore.

**It noted, and acknowledged that “individual social mobility and economic gain have been significantly influenced by one’s proficiency in English.” It noted, however, that in daily language use, in the mass media and entertainment domains, Mandarin continued to have a significant place, asserting that the “Chinese language is the main conduit through which Chinese Singaporeans learn about their roots, culture and traditional customs...and important to Singapore in the area of business, commerce and diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.”**

(Gopinathan 1994 p.83)

The reassertion of the political status of Chinese and its socioeconomic values definitely helps allay the fears of western encroachment and dilution of one’s national identity. The policy adopted is consistent with what President Lee Kuan Yew announced in the 1970s, to “remain ourselves and not end up aping the west.” (Gopinathan 1997 p.71) Nevertheless, in his last national day speech before his retirement in 1990, a sense of regret was apparently felt when he was recalling the education policy adopted when he was in office. Lee Kuan Yew suggested, as quoted by Gupta (1994):

**If I had the opportunity to start all over again in 1965, then the system of education would not be the same. I would have preserved the Chinese primary schools. It is much more convenient because ages of six to 12 are the most important period to emphasise the importance of values, English as a second language...I believe that cultural values are our basic strength. If we lose these, then we will not be able to solve our problems.**

(p.147)



### **3.3.1 Issues of concern in relation to the cultural identity in Singapore**

As we can see from the ethnic composition of the population in Singapore in table 3.1, Chinese is the main but not the only ethnic community there. With the fierce promotion of Mandarin as the common speech among different Chinese dialect groups, the crisis of 'dialect loss' has emerged. As Saravanan (1997) quotes, it is concluded that "many young Teochew [one of the dialect-groups of Chinese] speakers no longer identify themselves as Teochews but as Singaporean Chinese or simply as Singaporeans. Parents who could speak Teochew used it with older members of the family, but otherwise regarded Mandarin and English as the normal languages for wider communication...They [younger generation] had, therefore, put the instrumental value of Mandarin and English before the symbolic value of Teochew." (p. 156)

#### **3.3.1.1 Unequal treatment of the four official languages**

In fact, the other two official languages in Singapore, Tamil and Malay, suffer similar fates as the Chinese dialects. The lack of promotion and instrumental values of these two languages because of their comparatively weak international status and the small population size in the nation have led to the result of language shifts from the younger generation's mother-tongues to English. The decline in the use of Tamil (Tickoo 1996 p.443) and the increased adoption of English in household domains imply the future trend of the ethnic mother-tongues, be it the Chinese dialects, Tamil or Malay.

A hidden issue of concern which has already caused alarm is the unequal treatment of languages with overemphasis placed on Mandarin. Government policy such as the 'Speak Mandarin Campaign' with special attention given to Mandarin has led to a potential rivalry for the second most important language in Singapore among Tamil, Malay and Mandarin. Bataens-Beardsmore (1998) defines this situation as "...acculturated bilingualism. People who undergo a form of disorientation brought about by cultures in conflict." (p.89) Baetens-Beardsmore also suggests that "there are subtle manifestations of its emergence that can be gauged from the medium coverage devoted to the preoccupations of the Chinese-educated about Chinese cultural values

following the 1991 general elections.” (p.89)

The following table illustrates the percentage of people of the three main ethnic groups in the occupational prestige scale. It is a scale developed by Chiew (1991) to rank occupational prestige in relation to the income and level of education of a certain occupation and was quoted by Gupta (1994). It is indicative of the unbalanced power relations between occupational status and the ethnic groups.

**Table 3.3**

**Occupational prestige scale for the three main racial groups in Singapore**

SOPS (Singapore Occupational Prestige Scale)	Chinese %	Malay %	Indian %
Below 20	14.5	28.9	23.8
20-40	40.0	29.5	33.7
41-60	28.4	36.8	29
61-80	16.2	4.9	13.0
81 and higher	1.0	0.0	0.6
N=	773	350	324

(Gupta 1994 p.177)

As shown in the table above, the majority of the Chinese population in Singapore ranks high in the prestige scale, with 40% in the age group of 20-40 (which is supposed to be the golden age for career advancement) against 29.5% and 33.7% for the Malay and Indian population respectively. The Chinese occupies 76.4% of the total population of Singapore, its standard language (though not necessarily the ethnic language for every group of Chinese), Mandarin, also rises as the most popularly learned second language. This puts the Malay group and the Indian group further down to the end of the scale as they are not supposed to learn Mandarin/standard Chinese as their second language.

The overemphasis of Mandarin has in fact stirred up discontent of people whose senses of ethnic identity are particularly strong. It can be illustrated from the feedback of the Singaporeans on the ‘Speak Mandarin Campaign’. Here is one of the examples written by a Singaporean Chinese whose mother-tongue is Cantonese,

**...With a more dynamic Indonesian and Malaysian economy, the chances of us coming into contact with the use of Malay (although there are some differences in Indonesian Malay and Malaysian Malay) is high...The problem is that this Speak Mandarin Campaign has gone on for too long to be effective/useful at all, and that the other racial groups are feeling uncomfortable with it.**

(Singapore language policy: How can we move forward from the Speak Mandarin Campaign undated)

When we go back to the context of Hong Kong, the problem of social solidarity, if there is any, is not likely to bring about serious consequences because the vast majority of the society is made up of one single ethnic group. There has been a fear that Cantonese will degrade and that it would be replaced by Mandarin, with the possibility of assimilation of the HKSAR with Mainland China and a gradual disappearance of 'Hong Kong identity'. The possibility that this potential fear would lead to political unrest in the future is low, considering that Cantonese culture is itself a vernacular culture and Cantonese language has not got adequate cultural capital like a sizable amount of literature and a standardized writing system to support its formation as a recognised culture. Unlike the cultural crisis inherent in Singapore with disparate ethnic groups whose own mother-tongues identify their specific ethnic culture, the situation in Hong Kong is not as threatening. After all, the Cantonese culture in Hong Kong is classified as a kind of Chinese culture. The Singapore government did successfully avoid the encroachment of the western values—to westernize without mental manipulation by the west. Will Cantonese remain the cultural/verbal symbol of identity in Hong Kong? Whether the so-called Hong Kong identity is worthwhile to be maintained or encouraged, especially at such a sensitive political moment, is questionable. Hong Kong is unlike Singapore in the sense that it is not an independent nation but is part of China.

### **3.3.1.2 The rise of 'Singlish' in relation to Singaporean identity**

#### ***Emergence of Singlish***

Another point that is worth noting is the transformation of the colonial language,

English, into a language called 'Singlish' (Singaporean English) that carries typical Singaporean characteristics. As Foley (1988) defines, "[it is] a type of English developed which was strongly influenced by background languages, particularly the various forms of Chinese and Malay. The school system provided a form of English much closer to what might be termed "Standard British English" (SBr.E), however, in informal situations the children would revert to a more local variety with all these background influences." (p.4)

Like other Anglophone countries in the rest of the world, a linguistic diglossia exists with a standard form of English performing the more formal functions and a substandard variety operating in the informal domains like chatting with family and friends. Both varieties of English differ in a number of ways, ranging from phonetics to grammars, from the Standard British English to the vernacular type—'Singlish'. As Foley (1988) suggests,

**...[the standard form of Singaporean English] is that used by educated Singaporeans in contexts where a standard form would be considered appropriate. It would be the kind of English used by those people born or brought up in the once colonial Malaya who have been English-medium educated. The 'substandard' variety would be used by Singaporeans, whether they be English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil medium educated, but used in informal situations with their peers or as a *lingua franca* within the community.**

(p.8)

The popularity and spread of 'Singlish' might have helped unify the people in the nation and reduced the possibility of future political and cultural upheavals. The rise in the number of Singaporeans' use of English in either formal sectors or household domains has marginalised the ethnic dialects and a common identity that represents Singaporeans of whatever ethnic groups they belong to has come into existence. Singapore English has been evolving and its development has been reinforced and facilitated through the promotion of local Singlish literature and Singlish artistic performances.

The Singapore variety of English has also found a place in the fast growing area of creative works being produced by local writers, play-wrights and poets. Most of them write about local themes, and almost all of them not only make use of words and expressions that are needed to foreground local realities, but often indulge in code-mixing and switching to heighten the effect. "Made in Singapore" plays in particular which seek deliberately to foreground Singaporean ways of sharing and caring, laughing or crying and have, in many cases, gained great popularity, represent an English that is distinctly Singaporean.

(Tickoo 1996 p.448)

With the distinction of High and Low Singaporean English, diglossia has come into existence with standard Singaporean English performing high social functions and 'Singlish' being the demotic language among the Singaporeans. There have been ongoing debates on the kind of English that is the most suitable for representing Singaporean identity. The debates reached the climax when the pro-Singlish side justified the use of 'Singlish' on television and mass media, whereas the opposition side saw the use of it on television as inappropriate and some even called it a polluted form of English (Bokhorst-Heng 1998) and that the high and standard variety should be used instead. The move to prohibit the use of 'Singlish' on television by the government signified the attitude that 'Singlish' is not officially recognised as typifying Singaporean identity. The Singapore Broadcasting Company went on to define that the most standard English is the one with Received Pronunciation (RP) accent and correct grammar, whereas 'Singlish' was belittled to the state of being grammatically incorrect and was spoken by those with low command of English (Bokhorst-Heng 1998 p.305). Obviously the speech has overlooked consciously or unconsciously the fact that this so-called 'low variety' has in fact been widely spoken by young educated professionals in Singapore, who have perfect mastery of both high and low varieties of English and could switch according to the domains they are in.

### *Varieties of Singlish*

The situation of language in Singapore is further complicated by the existence of not only one single variety of 'Singlish' but various sub-varieties due to the distinction

arising from English coming into contact with multi-ethnic languages in Singapore. For instance, the sub-variety developed from the group whose mother-tongue is Malay would be different from those whose mother-tongue is Chinese. Moreover, there is also a distinction between the 'Singlish' used by the elite group, whose colloquial form is closer to the high variety of standard Singaporean English that evolves in the way "which incorporated both standard and colloquial sub-varieties. The sub-varieties, moreover, continued to change and grow in interaction with changing socio-historical conditions in a way that, for instance, the High of typical diglossia tends not to." (Kandiah 1998 p. 100) The following two examples provided by Kandiah (1998) illustrate the 'Singlish' exercised by the Singaporean Chinese in the lower strata of the society.

**The mee you want hor, no more already.**

**The (type of) noodles you asked for (is) are no longer available.**

**Angeline, my sister hor, she won the car.**

**Angeline, who is my sister, won the car.**

(p.101)

The absence of standardization of 'Singlish' and the attempt the Singaporean government made to discourage the formation of Singaporean identity with the use of 'Singlish' leads to the result that 'Singlish' only signifies the vernacular culture. Before drawing similarities between Hong Kong English and 'Singlish', it seems that Cantonese seems to share more in common with 'Singlish' in terms of social status. The lack of common grounds of the four main ethnic groups makes it even harder to develop one single identity that entails all the cultures to represent Singaporeans. As a matter of fact, the Singaporean government has never aimed to unify the people of the nation state culturally or linguistically through one single language. English is merely used to bond different ethnic groups in the society together for the sake of economic convenience. The 'Speak Mandarin Campaign' mentioned earlier has shown the government's attempt to build the nations' spirit upon Chinese cultural values.

When we look back at the case of Hong Kong, English has never been widely used in the household domains from the beginning of the colonial to the post-colonial era.

Hong Kong apparently lacks the basic sociolinguistic condition that allows the formation of a variety of English that is typical for native speakers of Hong Kong Cantonese. Apart from the inadequate sociolinguistic condition, the question of whether Hong Kong English should receive recognition remains a matter for further debate. According to Bolton & Kwok (1990),

**Whether or not one can speak of 'Hong Kong English' as a recognisable 'localised variety' of English remains a matter for further research and investigation. If one can establish that (in addition to identifiable local accent) there are clusters of shared lexical and grammatical items which contribute to a distinctive body of shared linguistic features then this may well legitimise recognition of Hong Kong English as a localised variety.**

(p.163)

### *Emergence of Hong Kong English*

The popularity of English in the social context of Hong Kong appears to be much lower than that in Singapore. Nevertheless, a pidgin English that is typical to Hong Kong context seems to be developing. Examples like Singapore tend to suggest that the emergence of a language that carries localised connotations is not uncommon in former colonies where the cultural identity and cultures are likely to be hybridized. Being the language of the former colonizer of Hong Kong, English on this small island has also been incorporated in the society as part of the movement of historical, social, cultural and economic currents.

Previous sections have pointed out the difference of linguistic distribution of the populations in the two places, Hong Kong and Singapore. The number of Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong has undoubtedly singled Cantonese out as the mother-tongue of Hong Kong, though its linguistic repertoire has been broadened because of the society's cosmopolitan nature and its status as an immigrant city. Bolton (2000) analyses the characteristics of Hong Kong English according to five criteria that define a world English. They are:

1. **Accent. A standard and recognizable pattern of pronunciation handed down**

from one generation to another.

2. **Vocabulary.** Particular words and phrases which are regarded as peculiar to the variety.
3. **History.** A sense that this variety of English is the way it is because of the history of the language community.
4. **Literature creativity.** Literature written without apology in that variety of English.
5. **Reference works.** Reference works, dictionaries and style guides which show that people in that language community look to themselves, not some outside authority, to decide what is right and wrong in terms of how they speak and write their English.

(p.277)

Regarding the first criterion of a Hong Kong accent, the fusion of English and Cantonese accents has created a localised accent for English, which could be easily identified by people within the same linguistic community. Throughout the development of over a century, social dynamics have engendered a series of vocabularies that are localized. Bolton (2000) has made a comprehensive list of Hong Kong English vocabularies. Some interesting examples include:

1. **astronaut** *noun*...Hong Kong English a person whose family emigrated abroad, for example to Australia or Canada, but who remains working in Hong Kong, and then spends a great deal of time flying between his or her family and Hong Kong.
2. **black hand** *noun* Hong Kong English a behind-the-scenes mastermind who plans political or criminal activities.
3. **black society** *noun* Hong Kong English a Chinese secret society or triad.

(p.278)

Examples like these illustrate how Hong Kong English evolves from languages in contact; the fact that extra meanings are embedded within the words are subject to the influence of context, which allows space for Hong Kong English to develop.

The point on literary creativity may overthrow the argument that Hong Kong has



engendered its own English because of the lack of literature to back up this particular variety of English. Most of the local writers do not write entirely in English, which is a second language to the majority of the population and also to the writers themselves. Even for those local English language writers, their varieties are distinct from the English varieties of core English speaking countries. As Bolton and Lim (2000) explain,

**... 'English' is never one homogeneous language operating in their writing; instead, the varieties of English in these writers' collective repertoire range from standard international English, a cosmopolitan register, to national (British or America), local and even marginal registers.**

(p.437)

With regard to the fifth point listed in the characteristics of world English-reference works, it has been claimed by Bolton (2000) that works are now in-progress though nothing has been released yet. According to Bolton (2000),

**...it is possible that the Macquarie Dictionary Company will publish a dictionary of Hong Kong English in the near future...Bolton, Gisborne and Hung (forthcoming) are also compiling a database of around one million words of English in Hong Kong as part of the worldwide ICE (International Corpus of English) project.**

(p.280)

Section 2.2 in chapter two has brought out the issue that the hybridized nature of Hong Kong culture has expressed itself through its mixed-code language, which is the result of the hybridization of Chinese and English languages. The unique historical background of Hong Kong brings implications on the English language used in the ex-colony, as historical and cultural developments have probably provided a basis for the growth of a unique variety of English in the context of Hong Kong.

As can be seen from the case of Singapore, 'Singlish' has emerged as a symbol of Singaporean identity, not only as a vernacular form of identity for the lower social stratum, but also for the educated and elite group. This dual position of 'Singlish'

parallels Hong Kong English in the sense that while Hong Kong English is “condemned for degrading or corrupting the English language...[and] the use of pidgin English in Hong Kong has become associated with illiteracy, and continues to be represented in British and American literature as part of a stylistics of caricature” (Bolton and Lim 2000 p.437), Hong Kong English also represents a distinctive form of identity that unifies people from all strata in the local society, be it the lower-working class or the upper-middle-class.

The question of Hong Kong English has obviously arisen as a consequence of English as the colonial language, coupled by the question of Hong Kong identity which has reached the climax during the 1960s to 1990s, and complicated by the currents of globalization and internationalization of the English language. Some might argue against the recognition of the Hong Kong variety of English because English is still privileged to the expatriate group in Hong Kong, and also to those people who carry an ‘elite’ label, though its use has been widely extended since the introduction of the 9-year free education in 1979, with more people getting the opportunity to learn English. Nevertheless, we cannot cast any doubt on the fact that more English words are used to intertwine with the local language, Cantonese, which results in more code-switching and code-mixing. With the linguistic influence of the local dialect Cantonese, it is no surprise to say that the kind of English in the Hong Kong context has been modified somewhat but at the same time when we think about classifying it as ‘Hong Kong English’, it might be more appropriate to regard the change as a ‘natural outcome’ of two different languages coming into contact. The growth of Hong Kong English goes hand in hand with the identity question. Whether its use and spread should be legitimated is out of the scope of the current research, however, it cannot be denied that it is emerging. This emergent character of Hong Kong identity implies that it takes its form according to context and environmental changes. It is not the outcome of solely the local eastern or the hegemonic western influences; instead, as explained by Szeto (2001),

**Hong Kong is being hyped by some pro-state scholars as a unique “admixture”, a unique kind of hybridity, proudly coming out of the margin to the regional centre. This hegemony of discourses gradually gather force and self-legitimation,**

**as if they are self-evidently justified by Hong Kong's so called unique experience in-between two colonisers and the unique ability to succeed in between Eastern and Western models/civilisations.**

This notion of 'Hong Kong as a hybrid product in-between China and Britain' may result in the cultural space in which local culture has adapted to forms that are constructed by the waves of social, economic and cultural mentality changes during the colonial era.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The comparison between Hong Kong and Singapore has resulted in more diversity than commonality in cultural, linguistic and historical levels. The 'Five shared values' proposed in 1991 suggest that the moral values that Singaporeans must possess for keeping the well-being of the nation include

- 1. Nation before community and society above self**
- 2. Family as the basic unit of society**
- 3. Community support and respect for the individual**
- 4. Consensus, not conflict**
- 5. Racial and religious harmony**

(Singapore infomap undated)

The moral principles outlined here have obviously revealed that harmony among the different races is the main concern in Singapore, and inculcating patriotism and loyalty to the nation could also promote consensus among the population. In this aspect, Hong Kong seems to project a much simpler picture because of the fact that the racial distribution of population is mainly Cantonese-speaking Chinese. Instead of promoting a sense of loyalty to the Hong Kong society, moves have been made to strengthen the positive side of 'Chinese identity' by educating citizenship, civic education and the appreciation of recent Chinese moral literature to increase Hong Kongers' pride of being Chinese. The major distinction between these two places regarding the bilingual policy is that Singapore has been implementing the highly selective 'English-oriented' streaming policy in schools with success for quite a

number of years. As for Hong Kong, the bilingual policy has just been shifted with the emphasis on mother-tongue Chinese for the majority and the introduction of Mandarin to the syllabus. It should be noted that both places owe their success in economic progress throughout the past several decades to the reliance on and global power of English that, coincidentally, used to be the colonial language of both Singapore and Hong Kong. Whether the new medium of instruction policy in Hong Kong would fit the dynamic and fast-changing society is still subject to speculation, and it would take at least ten years, when the school children who are now receiving mother-tongue education leave schools and contribute to the society, to prove the real impact of it.

### **3.5 Summary**

The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the case in Hong Kong by placing the Singaporean case in the spotlight. The historical context and demographic combination of the city-state is outlined; similarities and variations between the two places are described. Singapore and Hong Kong share many points in common in terms of colonial history and identity issues. The bilingual policy of Singapore, including how students are streamed by their English abilities and how the government has been trying to develop youngsters along the core values of Chinese culture while making them highly proficient in English has also been outlined. The chapter makes an attempt to conclude the implications the Singaporean case has brought with regard to the implementation of bilingual policy and how the cultural issue has risen as a point of interest in places that have gone through similar colonization. The emergence of the Singaporean culture and subsequent formation of the Singaporean identity juxtaposes the question of Hong Kong identity. It is hoped that stimulation from such a comparison and a stepping back from the case of Hong Kong will bring new insights to the implementation of the current MOI policy in Hong Kong.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

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### 4.0 Introduction

The process of choosing the appropriate methods for data collection is an essential and vital stage during the research. The methods being chosen will affect the outcomes of the research and so should match exactly with the type of questions that I attempted to address. In this chapter, I am going to talk about my main aim of the study, my reasons for choosing the particular methods, the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen, how I arranged the sample, the problems I came across during data collection and finally, how I analysed my data.

### 4.1 The aim of the research

The main aim of the study is to explore the impact of the new language policy imposed in Hong Kong. This new policy was implemented in 1998 and involves a change of the medium of instruction from English to Chinese in the majority of secondary schools in Hong Kong. The study aims to examine the different aspects of this new language policy from the perspectives of different groups of people in the field of education, and it raises several dimensions of concern including the education and cultural impact associated with such a change: for example, how teachers, teacher trainers, policy makers and students feel about such a change and the impact it has when practised in the real classroom. After that, in the concluding chapter I will make an attempt to develop a tentative alternative model of teaching medium based on the research findings and literature review. It is hoped that this research will provide some alternatives and insights to the present literature in the field.

### 4.2 Main research questions

The main research question of this study is: **What is the impact of the 1998 Medium**

**of Instruction policy on the educational and cultural dimensions in secondary education in Hong Kong?** I have divided the main research question into smaller sub-questions, which focus on the implications that such a change might have brought. In short, the aim of conducting this particular research is to explore the impact of the change of the medium of instruction in Hong Kong by looking at dimensions involved with the change. With this main aim in mind, the subsidiary research questions were formed as follows:

- 1. What is the impact of the new MOI policy on language proficiencies of students according to respondents?**
- 2. What is the impact of the new MOI policy on the teaching and learning of general academic subjects according to respondents' perceptions?**
- 3. If a bilingual model is practical in Hong Kong, then what model should be adopted according to the views of respondents?**
- 4. What is the impact on language attitude after the implementation of the 1998 medium of instruction policy?**
- 5. What are the cultural implications of the new medium of instruction policy on students according to the views of respondents?**
- 6. What are the political implications of implementing mother-tongue education according to the perceptions of respondents?**

Having planned the research questions, the next step was to find the most appropriate methodology to yield the best results from the subjects.

### **4.3 Qualitative vs quantitative methods**

The debates over the strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches can never be resolved satisfactorily so what I did when designing the research instrument was to maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the methods being adopted. Obviously, the differences in terms of the characteristics and nature of quantitative and qualitative approaches draw a clear distinction between the types of data yielded from either of the approaches. However, it was equally crucial to take into account variables like 'how quantitative and qualitative the data'

are when I was doing my analysis.

The differences between the two approaches stem from the origins of the paradigms they belong to. As Bryman (1992) suggests,

**The former [quantitative model] has clearly been influenced by the natural science model of research, and its positivist form in particular. Qualitative research has been influenced by an epistemological position that rejects the appropriateness of a natural science approach to the study of humans; this position finds its expression in such theoretical strands as phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. These epistemological precursors have influenced the concerns of the two research approaches: the concern in quantitative research about causality, measurement, generalizability etc. can be traced back to its natural science roots (Bryman, 1988). But this is not to say that quantitative and qualitative research are forever rooted to their original epistemological positions.**

(p.59)

The qualitative approach tends to collect data that is difficult to measure and display in numerical, quantifiable terms. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) note that:

**Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes. Inquiry is purported to be within a value-free framework.**

(p.8)

Qualitative and quantitative researchers have different outlooks and perspectives regarding the construction of reality. Qualitative researchers investigate reality from a more humanistic point of view, with the belief that reality is constructed through interactions of different individuals; they therefore put emphasis on the generation of new theories, as opposed to the positivists who believe that “there is a reality out there

to be studied, captured, and understood...” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998 p.9). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) continue to claim that the “postpositivists argue the reality can never be fully apprehended, but only approximated (Guba 1990 p. 22). Postpositivism relies on multiple methods as a way of capturing as much of reality as possible.” (p. 9)

Bryman (1992) has made a brief comparison between the nature and characteristics of the two approaches according to the labels being given by different writers for social research methodology, which is illustrated in the following table.

**Table 4.1**

**Comparison of features between qualitative and quantitative research**

Quantitative	Qualitative	Authors
Rationalistic	Naturalistic	Guba & Lincoln(1982)
Inquiry from the inside	Inquiry from the outside	Evered & Louis(1981)
Functionalist	Interpretive	Burrell & Morgan(1979)
Positivist	Constructivist	Guba (1990a)
Positivist	Naturalistic-Ethnographic	Hoshmand (1989)

(Bryman 1992 p. 58)

The descriptions appear to lie on two extremes with reference to the perceptions of the real world. However, the characteristic they have in common is that they both intend to look at individual’s perspectives on certain issues. The difference is mainly that qualitative researchers are in a better position to look more closely and deeply at an individual’s points of view, as they conduct face-to-face interviews. During the process they can not only prompt and probe, but also make observations of the subjects in greater detail. They are more prone to the construction of new ideas and reality.



### 4.3.1 Interviews

#### 4.3.1.1 Reasons for choosing interviews

As Cohen and Manion (1997) quote from Cannell and Kahn (1968), interview is defined as “ “a two-person conversation” initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.” (p.271) One of the greatest advantages of interviews is that they allow more space and time for the interviewee to describe his/her feelings, as the interviewer can have a more direct contact or interaction with the interviewee. As Brenner *et al* (1985) suggest, “ there is an implicit, or explicit sharing and/or negotiation of understanding in the interview situation that is not so central, and often not present, in other research procedures. Any misunderstandings, on the part of the interviewer or the interviewee can be checked immediately in a way which is just not possible when questionnaires are being completed, or tests are being performed.” (p.5) They carry on to say that “[during interviews]...people not only can comment on their experiences and feelings, but also that they do this in everyday life...because the interview as a research tool is very flexible, it can deal with a variety of subject matter at different levels of detail or complexity.” (p.7)

As I wanted to have a more in-depth understanding of how different groups of subjects think and react to the aforementioned research questions, which means that subjects would be required to give explanations to their answers instead of just replying ‘yes’ or ‘no’, interview would appear to be the best alternative for obtaining more personal opinions. In a word, an approach which is more qualitative than quantitative-oriented.

**The more a program aims at individualized outcomes, the greater the appropriateness of qualitative case methods. The more a program emphasizes common outcomes for all participants, the greater may be the appropriateness of standardized quantitative measures of performance and change.**

(Patton 1987 p. 19)

An advantage ‘interview’ has over ‘questionnaire’ is that it appeals to natural human

needs. As Gillham (2000) puts it, “...people like the attention, they like to be listened to, they like their opinions being considered. This doesn’t imply a patronizing stance on the part of the interviewer. These are human needs...” (p.15). The opinions of different groups of subjects will be compared and contrasted in the following chapters, as I believe that the data will be more convincing and generalisable with the comparison between the quantitative data on the one hand and qualitative data on the other when formulating hypotheses. As Kvale (1996) suggests,

**Quality refers to what kind, to the essential character of something. Quantity refers to how much, how large, the amount of something. In Webster’s (1967) qualitative analysis is described as a chemical analysis designed to identify the components of a substance, and quantitative analysis as a chemical analysis designed to determine the amounts of the components of a substance.**

(p.67)

#### **4.3.1.2 Design of questions for interviews**

I started working on the interview questions after I finished drafting the subsidiary research questions. Some questions were drawn on the linguistic hypotheses on which the medium of instruction policy was made: for instance, the questions “does mother-tongue education affect students’ language proficiencies? Do you think students could do better in language subjects if they are taught through the mother-tongue?” were set according to the motive of the Education Department to put forward mother-tongue education to improve both the L1 and L2 by consolidating the knowledge of L1 first.

There is another question about the use of the bilingual model in Hong Kong schools which was created with reference to the literature I have read about the adoption of different forms of bilingual education worldwide. My main motive here is to find out if there is a unique kind of bilingual education model that fits the context of Hong Kong, be it code-mixing, or use of different languages in different lessons during the day.

Having thought about the types of interviewees that I would have to deal

with—teachers from CMI and EMI schools, teacher trainers and policy-makers—I decided to prepare four sets of interview questions: one for every single set of subjects (teachers from CMI schools being one set, teachers from EMI schools being another and so on) All of them are very much alike to one another in terms of content and the use of words for phrasing the questions as the aim was to obtain perspectives from different groups of subjects regarding the same main questions. There are some questions that are totally identical, as illustrated in Appendix I, II, III and IV, but slight differences can also be noted between all four sets of questions. For example, the following question was generated for teachers from CMI schools in addition to the interview questions for teachers from EMI schools:

- *Is there any cultural implication or impact on students' self identity with the use of mother-tongue?*

The reason that it was not used for teachers from EMI schools was that teachers from the English-medium stream would have no experience of using Cantonese as the medium of instruction, as English is supposed to be the only choice for them. In this case they would not be able to tell the possible outcomes with regard to the cultural implication of mother-tongue education.

A slight alteration was made to the interview questions for teacher trainers as well. The question about the fairness of the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) was deleted from the protocol for teacher trainers because it was assumed to be beyond their knowledge. This question was deleted after the first interview with the teacher trainer was completed, as I was informed that teacher trainers normally do not have much idea about the assessment. Therefore, there is no point raising a question that falls beyond the knowledge of the interviewees.

As for the questions for the policy-makers, an extra question was inserted at the end of the interview:

- *Can you give me some guidance about the direction that the Medium of Instruction policy is heading towards in the future?*

Policy-makers are always in a better position to respond to questions that relate to future trends. After all, it is policy-makers who make final decisions whether to keep, abolish or change the policy. Therefore, this question was put to the policy-makers as they would be able to answer with reference to what is currently going on within their policy-making committee, instead of just making predictions on possible scenarios as others do.

#### 4.3.1.3 Weaknesses of interviews

##### *Bias*

There is no doubt that the interview possesses certain strengths, which would enable the researcher to gather valuable and accurate data if he or she does the job well. However, weaknesses inherent in the interviews are also inevitable because of the nature of the method itself. The first pitfall, bias, stems from the great flexibility and space offered by open-ended interview questions. As Brenner *et al* (1985) explain,

**...because the contact between interviewer and respondent is face-to-face and may be intensive, there is ample opportunity for bias to occur...for example, when respondents feel sensitive about topics raised in the interview, the answers, if provided at all, are likely to be invalid.**

(p.4)

Bias is the major problem of using interviews, and is also the source from which other problems associated can arise, resulting in the lack of reliability and validity of the research findings.

**One of the problems that has to be considered when open-ended questions are used in the interview is that of developing a satisfactory method of recording replies. One way is to summarize responses in the course of the interview. This has the disadvantage of breaking the continuity of the interview and may result in bias because the interviewer may unconsciously emphasize responses that agree with her expectations and fail to note those that do not. It is sometimes possible to summarize an individual's responses at the end of the interview, it is**

**likely to induce greater bias because the delay may lead to the interviewer forgetting some of the details. It is these forgotten details that are most likely to be the ones that disagree with her own expectations.**

**(Cohen and Manion 1997 p.283)**

Despite the higher proportion of bias in interview interactions, I still prefer this method because it allows greater flexibility, and also has the advantage of letting me go into the attitudes of the interviewees—their opinions, what they like or dislike etc, provided that the interviewer is able to control the situation well. Therefore, the interviewer should put great effort into eliminating as many constraints inherent in interviews as possible. It is difficult for interviews to be totally objective because there are unavoidable features associated with human emotions, behaviour and interactional influences between the interviewer and the interviewee. One of the ways to overcome this weakness is the control of the interviewer's attitude. As Cohen and Manion (1997) quote from Tuckman (1972),

**At all times, an interviewer must remember that he is a data collection instrument and try not to let his own biases, opinions, or curiosity affect his behaviour. It is important that the interviewer should not deviate from his format and interview schedule although many schedules will permit some flexibility in choice of questions. The respondent should be kept from rambling away from the essence of a question, but not at the sacrifice of courtesy.**

**(p.286)**

In spite of the need to keep a distance from the interviewee so as to avoid interpersonal influences which would decrease objectivity, nevertheless, it is equally important to develop a relationship of mutual trust and a certain level of naturalness, which will maintain the flow of the interview. I am aware that interviewees tend to be more willing to disclose and reveal their inner thoughts because the 'interviewing atmosphere' is the most essential key element for making the interviewees at ease and making the interview seem like just an informal conversation.

### **4.3.2 Questionnaires**

#### **4.3.2.1 Use of questionnaires**

When I first designed the format and chose the research technique for collecting data from students, I considered doing individual interviews with secondary school students and making triangulation within one model with different subject groups. However, having taking the difficulty of getting permission to do individual interviews with students into account, I gave up the idea. Another option was to arrange group interviews with students. Having considered the constraints and feasibility of group interviews, I decided to turn to questionnaires for a more valid result. The main drawbacks accompanying group interviews are that students are more likely to be influenced by their peers and there is a tendency, particularly in a Confucian culture, for them to show consent to what other students in the group think. In a group of students, it is inevitable that one or two of them may be more dominant and leading. Besides, some students may be reluctant to express their views or show disagreement in front of other classmates because of peer pressure. The problem of getting direct contact with students is another obstacle as teachers usually do not want to be disturbed, and normally schools would not grant access to students as they do not want their students to be distracted from their classes nor their normal routines to be disturbed. Having considered the fact that teachers would find it harder to keep students under control if interviews were conducted, the questionnaire was finally opted for as another tool to obtain data.

#### **4.3.2.2 Weaknesses of questionnaires**

There is little doubt that the use of questionnaire has inherent disadvantages that derive from its nature. Oppenheim (1992) lists five disadvantages of using mail questionnaires versus standardized interviews. However, since I presented the questionnaires to the school principals in person (self-administered questionnaires) instead of posting them to the target group, several disadvantages could be avoided. The main weakness remains,

**...no opportunity to correct misunderstandings or to probe, or to offer explanations or help; no control over the order in which questions are answered,**

**no check on incomplete responses, incomplete questionnaires or the passing on of questionnaires to others; no opportunity to collect ratings or assessments based on observation.**

(Oppenheim 1992 p.102)

Issues of concern arose after I did a pilot work with a F.2 student in an EMI school. I set off with the wrong assumption that Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) is an assessment test that is designed for primary school leavers to take in order to indicate the most suitable medium of instruction they should be having. I therefore included the following two questions in both CMI and EMI questionnaires as shown in appendices VIII and IX:

- *Have you taken the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment test when you were in primary 6?*
- *If you have taken the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment test before, do you think it can test and indicate your language proficiency?*

The questions aim to obtain the perspectives of students about the fairness of the test. The F.2 student who helped me in the pilot study showed little knowledge about the MIGA. He expressed that he had no idea about the test, and had no memory of having taken such a test before. He continued to obtain information about the MIGA from his classmates, and came out with the result that only a random sample was chosen to take part in the test at the primary level. However, I later on found out that MIGA is in fact not an assessment in the form of practical test. The grouping system categorises students with reference to the internal performances of students in schools. I was misled by the pilot study with this F.2 student and all the questionnaires were distributed to both CMI and EMI schools when I realised that I made a mistake in setting these two questions. Therefore, I decided to leave these two questions behind when I analysed my data as there is not any point in undertaking analysis for something that has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by the respondents. Despite the flaw of making this wrong assumption when designing the questions about the MIGA, the data collected with regard to other questions in the questionnaire are not affected as the two questions mentioned above belong to an independent category.

I was aware of the real nature of the MIGA soon after I distributed my questionnaires and so I was able to make amendments to the interview questions, as interviews were conducted afterwards.

#### **4.3.2.3 Design of questions for questionnaires**

Two sets of questionnaires were prepared for students who belonged to schools of different medium of instruction. I tried to make the questions asked in these two sets of questionnaires as similar to each other as possible, as they would be analysed with reference to the same subsidiary research questions, and also for ease of coding in the later process of data analysis. Nevertheless, minor differences were inevitable and the questionnaire set for the EMI students was around a page shorter than the one for the CMI students. The reason was that there were some questions that are concerned with the practical situations experienced by the students who were taught in mother-tongue, something that their counterparts in EMI classrooms would not have gone through. For instance, the following questions were only presented to the CMI students:

- *Judging from your own experience, do you agree that it is better to learn through your mother-tongue?*
- *Could you state the reason/reasons for your answer in the previous question [the question regarding whether it is better to learn through the mother-tongue]?*

Most of the questions in the questionnaires are closed and they were designed mainly with relevance to the research questions i.e. to deal with students' experiences about mother-tongue education, attitudes towards mixed-code teaching and their perspectives about the three languages in Hong Kong. Questions about the general background of the subject were raised in the first page of the questionnaires with an aim of adding more possible variables in case a similar pattern emerges among a group of students with similar background. For example, students were requested to describe roughly the academic qualification of their parents before going further to other questions. This was to provide me with a clearer view of the social and family education background of students and to check with their pattern of answers in relation to their social groups.



There are questions which require only numerical answers and those that contain a range of alternatives to choose from. Respondents were required to put a tick next to his/her preferences in some questions and to rank their choices according to the order of importance to them. For example, students in both CMI and EMI schools were asked to indicate the importance of Cantonese, English and Mandarin to them by the order of 1, 2 and 3. This makes the categorization and analysis process with the use of computer much easier and more convenient and it gives me assurance of the order of importance in the minds of the subjects.

There are two totally identical open-ended questions in both questionnaires, which allow space for the respondents to think and express ideas, in case some useful and valuable opinions are overlooked.

Apart from the use of words and avoidance of using leading phrases in the questionnaires, I was also very careful with the nature of the question itself. As Borg and Gall (1971) point out,

**.....avoid questions that may in some way be psychologically threatening to the person answering. For example, a questionnaire sent to school principals concerning the morale of teachers at their schools would be threatening to some of the principals because low morale suggests that the principal is failing in part of his job. When he receives a questionnaire containing threatening items, a person usually does not return it.**

(p.200)

The sample questionnaire and a covering letter explaining the nature of the study were faxed to the principals before permissions were granted. Therefore, the use of wording and the types of questions play a very important role in determining the possibility of access to schools.

The questionnaire items focus mainly on the attitudes of students towards the shift to mother-tongue education, their most favourable teaching medium and their views about the use of code-mixing, which had been prevalent in the EMI classrooms before. There was particularly one item concerned with politics:

Political change (handover in 1997) has

- a) A big effect on the use of mother-tongue education
- b) Little effect on the use of mother-tongue education
- c) No effect at all on the use of mother-tongue education

#### **4.3.2.4 Ethical issues**

##### ***Anonymity***

In the questionnaire, the question about political change and mother-tongue education listed above required students to tick the choice that appealed to them most. It was stressed on the covering letter to the principals that anonymity would be used and students would just be identified as either belonging to an EMI school or CMI school; students did not need to write down their names but age and form in the questionnaire. Borg & Gall (1971) argue that anonymity has a negative effect on the questionnaire responses, as revealed from a study that included 400 military officers. Half of the subjects were given questionnaires that required them to sign their names, while the other half did not have to. Differences in terms of responses were found as those who were asked to sign their names took longer to fill in the questionnaires, which might have meant that more thought and care had been shown when they were doing it since their names could be traced back. A pitfall of complete anonymity is that I would not be able to do 'follow-up work' in cases where the respondents left the answers blank, or did not finish the whole questionnaire. However, I perceive that anonymity is more appropriate in research that might pose sensitive questions, as the psychological threat or barrier is likely to be reduced by this. I gave my personal assurance to my interview subjects that their identity would not be disclosed, so that those who filled in my questionnaires would feel more secure even if their choices differ from what other people expected them to choose.

It was also considered that students might not have opinions or particular preferences in all the issues being raised. In order not to force them into answers and not to require them to express particular comments when they actually do not have any, options like 'others' and 'no comments' were given as well.

### *Confidentiality*

Like 'anonymity', 'confidentiality' is another way to increase the response rate and reassure the respondents that the information obtained will be used for research purposes only and that the researcher is the only person who has access to all the data. All the information about the names of respondents/interviewees would not be disclosed without the permission of the person involved. I did not write the statements about confidentiality on every questionnaire to students, but it was written in the letter to the principals, from whom I obtained permission for access to schools and fellow students.

### **4.3.3 Triangulation**

The two methods, interviews and questionnaires, complemented each other with the aim that the results will be more authoritative, which is how triangulation is formed and is used widely in social research. As Patton (1987) comments,

**At the opposite end of the continuum from exploratory research is the use of qualitative methods to add depth and detail to quantitative studies where the statistical results indicate global patterns generalizable across settings or populations. For example, when a large-scale survey has revealed certain marked and significant response patterns, it is often helpful to fill out the meaning of those patterns through in-depth study using qualitative methods. The quantitative data identify areas of focus, the qualitative data give substance to those areas of focus.**

(p. 38)

This kind of methodology by obtaining data from multiple sources is known as triangulation:

**...triangulation involves a comparative assessment of more than one form of evidence about an object of inquiry. There are many ways a researcher can triangulate data. Multiple sources from one technique can be compared...The separate informants should be socially positioned such that each can say something meaningful about the phenomenon in question...depending on the**

**target of inference, somewhat greater credibility can be invested in data from one of the triangulated methods; data from the complementary method can then enrich, or impose qualifications on, explanations arising from the primary one.**

(Lindlof 1995 p.239)

Triangulation does not come into existence because of its superiority over any other means of data collection. It originates from the belief that the nature of some research projects might not match perfectly with either pure quantitative or pure qualitative design in the way that the reliability and validity of data would be reduced. 'Triangulation' provides a more reliable and valid way out for carrying out research. Bryman (1992) outlines that "the results of a qualitative investigation might be checked against a quantitative study. The aim is generally to enhance the validity of findings." (p.60) The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods could bring advantages to the whole research in terms of many aspects. As we could note from table 4.1 drawn by Bryman (1992) of the comparison of both methods, he proposes that both could serve as a supplementary tool to each other so that the outcome would be more accurate. For instance,

**Quantitative research is usually driven by the researcher's concerns, whereas qualitative research takes the subject's perspective as the point of departure. These emphases may be brought together in a single study...The addition of some quantitative evidence may help to mitigate the fact that is often not possible to generalize (in a statistical sense) the findings deriving from qualitative research.**

(pp.60-61)

Data and findings could be given much credibility and their level of trustworthiness will be greatly improved with the use of triangulation. It is concerned with how the researcher could justify his/her data, by tracing back sources obtained from different methods of data collection, before conclusions are drawn. By triangulating data obtained by different methods, bias may be reduced accordingly. As Cohen *et al* (2000) contend,

**Exclusive reliance on one method, therefore, may bias or distort the researcher's**

**picture of the particular slice of reality she is investigating...And this confidence [the confidence in the validity of data] can only be achieved as far as normative research is concerned when different methods of data collection yield substantially the same results...Multiple methods are suitable where a controversial aspect of education needs to be evaluated more fully.**

(p.113-115)

Triangulation is a means to minimize the inherent weaknesses of the design of one method by covering them up with the strengths of the other. It is based on the assumption that bits and pieces of imperfect objects could join together to make a perfect one, and the same applies to the use of different methods of data collection.

#### **4.3.4 Sampling**

##### **4.3.4.1 Size of sample**

After discussing about certain strengths and weaknesses of the methods adopted in this study, the next question to be considered is sampling. How should the researcher organize the appropriate sampling so as to avoid bias on the one hand, and also achieve the most reliable and valid result on the other? What is the most appropriate sample size that would be enough to fulfil the purpose of the research study? Kvale (1996) suggests

**The number of subjects necessary depends on a study's purpose. In qualitative interview studies, the number of subjects tends to be either too small or too large. If the number of subjects is too large, it is not possible to make statistical generalizations or to test hypotheses of differences among groups. If the number of subjects is too large, then it is not possible to make penetrating interpretations of the interviews. If the goal is to predict the outcome of a national election, a representative sample of about 1000 subjects is normally required, so qualitative interviews would be out of the question. If the purpose is to understand the world as experienced by one specific person, this one subject is sufficient.**

(p.102)

As this study is not intended to be a large-scale project that assesses and evaluates the impact of the new language policy, and the purpose is mainly to investigate the impact of the newly implemented mother-tongue policy in secondary education, a 'small to

medium' sample was chosen. I had to be particularly careful in choosing the appropriate sample, which would be able to reflect and represent opinions of the population. As it is going to be a small-scale sample, individual difference and diversity within the sample will pose a problem. That is why the 'Maximum variation sampling' was adopted, which may help solve the problem:

**For small samples a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program.**

(Patton 1987 p.53)

#### **4.3.4.2 Maximising the group variation**

However, the problem remains that in what ways I could make the best out of the small sample, and how should I maximize the variation within the group? Since the research aims at analysing the general attitudes and perceptions towards and the impact of the implementation of mother-tongue education, the sample would include as many different groups as possible so that occupational variation will be greater in the sample and different voices can be heard. Teachers who taught in EMI schools, policy-makers who designed the language policy under study, teachers in CMI schools and teacher trainers were interviewed, student respondents in both CMI and EMI schools were both included. They are in the positions to reflect different voices, and are representing various stages involved, from the beginning of policy-making to the final outcome this policy has brought, i.e. the people who have been practically affected by such a move, like teachers and students.

The first problem encountered that violated my original way of sampling was the ambiguity with the division of schools by the 'banding system'. It was originally planned that 12 teachers, with two in each school that falls to different banding, (ranging from band one to band five) were to be interviewed. The design of such a sample might pose a problem due to the ambiguity of the division of different banding

of schools. Except for the elite few, the division of lines between band one and band two schools is not so conspicuous, and that between band four and five is not very clear either. However, it seems to be an implicit fact that schools run in English medium of instruction normally fall into the band one category, whereas those Chinese-medium schools belong to band three to band five categories. With the aim to make a more thorough division of lines and to eliminate the problem of ambiguity, instead of dividing schools into different bands, I designed two sets of interview questions for the teachers from Chinese-medium schools and English-medium schools. The questions followed the main research guidelines but some of them are different due to the fact that some particular questions put to Chinese-medium school teachers might not be relevant in the context of English-medium schools, and vice-versa, as mentioned in section 4.3.1.2. Therefore variation exists and some additional questions were put to teachers in Chinese-medium schools.

#### **4.3.4.3 Issues of concern**

##### ***Problems of getting access to target schools***

Seven teachers from four different schools were interviewed altogether. The interview sample includes three Chinese-medium schools and one English-medium school. I intended to strike a balance between the interviewees, i.e. six from English-medium schools and six from Chinese-medium schools. However, access was more easily granted to Chinese-medium schools since the majority of Hong Kong schools belong to this group (3/4). Apart from this reason, the labelling effect caused by the streaming of CMI and EMI schools was strongly felt during the course of data collection in Hong Kong. EMI schools tend to be more arrogant and are not willing to help. The other point that is worth noting is that they are not in a very appropriate position to make any comments or judgement on the present MOI policy, as they are apparently the winners in the competition that consisted of language abilities as one of the crucial criteria. It has the implication that both students and teachers are more superior in terms of language proficiency, as they survive through the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) and the assessment criteria.

The distribution of schools for questionnaires is more even than that for the

interviews. A friend of mine, who was a F.2 student in an EMI school, was able to help with the distribution of questionnaires to his classmates. Thirty copies were given to him. However, the response rate was only 66.7%, which was a big contrast to the other three schools, where the response rate was almost 100%. This could be explained by the fact that questionnaires were directly brought to the school principals in person so as to guarantee a higher response rate. Besides, the phenomenon of power hierarchy obviously exists. I gained access to the other schools through either the principals and head teachers, who were of higher rank than students in terms of school hierarchy. Students were more likely to follow the instructions given by teachers and principals, and hence the higher response rates.

Among the seven teachers I interviewed, four of them were English teachers for F.2 students. Three of them were teaching in CMI schools while one of them was teaching in an EMI school. The remaining three teachers out of the seven being interviewed were not teaching any language-related subjects. The sample included one History teacher from the EMI, one Mathematics teacher and one Geography teacher from the CMI as this would offer the researcher a better perspective by making investigations into the impact of mother-tongue education on both English language classes and on other academic subjects.

#### **4.3.4.4 Access to school sample**

Access to all the schools was facilitated by friends. I got permission from school principals over the phone regarding the distributing of questionnaires to F.2/F.3 students (after faxing my sample questionnaires and covering letters). Two sets of questionnaires were prepared for schools with different media of instruction. A Chinese version was designed for students from CMI schools, whereas students from EMI schools were to fill in the English version. Eighty-five copies were distributed to two EMI schools (30 for one and 55 for another), and the response rate was 88.2%, which is quite satisfactory. Seventy questionnaires were given to students from CMI schools (30 to one of them and 40 in another) and 65 were returned, which amounts to 92.9% in terms of response rate.

The following table (table 4.2) gives a clearer illustration of the total number of



respondents for both interviews and questionnaires, whereas table 4.3 shows the response rate for questionnaires.

**Table 4.2****Summary of sample groups**

Method of data collection	Subjects	Total Number of respondents	Type of schools/institutions
Interview	Teacher	7	2 from 1 EMI school 5 from 3 CMI schools
	Policy Makers	3	2 from the Hong Kong Education Department 1 Legco member
	Teacher Trainers	3	Hong Kong Institute of Education
Questionnaire	Students	140	75 from two EMI school 65 from two CMI schools

**Table 4.3****Summary of response rates**

Method of data collection	Type of schools	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Response rate
Questionnaires	EMI schools	85	75	88.2%
	CMI schools	70	65	92.9%

#### 4.3.4.5 Lack of research culture in the sector of secondary education

There is a common phenomenon that I found very discouraging during the process of data collection. Most of the secondary schools in Hong Kong do not seem to understand the role of a researcher and the purpose of carrying out research study and there is a lack of research culture and environment in schools. The response rate of the letters that I sent to schools personally was zero. None of the schools was willing to help if I did not contact them through other means. Many technical problems and

unexpected events occurred during the course of collecting data. A head teacher from one of the target schools had promised to offer two teachers for interviews, and I was told to bring along the questionnaires as she could arrange a class of students to help fill them in. However, the head teacher called on the day after and said subsequent arrangements had to be cancelled as the principal was not happy to offer help with this kind of research, for the questions were too sensitive at this particular stage when the new MOI policy was just implemented in 1998. I turned to another CMI school through a friend and, having looked at the questions and sample questionnaire, the principal promised to offer assistance. I made a certain amount of photocopies of the questionnaires and brought them to the school afterwards. When the time came for real arrangements for interviews and collecting questionnaires, the principal responded by saying that teachers were too busy to be interviewed, and that he eventually decided not to help the filling in of questionnaires. That is why the number of teachers being interviewed could not meet the original target and the researcher ended up interviewing teachers from four schools only, instead of six. According to my own experience of being an educational researcher, what I feel is that school principals and teachers are very likely to complicate the term '*research*'. They usually confuse it with 'individual assessment' and misinterpret it into something very sensitive, like 'inspection'. Teachers were generally reluctant to provide long answers and therefore probes were frequent. There were a few exceptional cases where teachers were carefree and talked a lot, which provided a sharp contrast with the teacher trainers, who were more willing to elaborate on their answers and give critical perspectives on sensitive issues like the correlation between the change of the language policy and the political context of Hong Kong. I, as a researcher, was also treated in quite different ways by these two groups of interviewees. Teachers generally treated me as an intruder, though in very subtle and polite ways, and were always trying to make answers short, whereas the interaction with teacher trainers was more natural, and those interviews turned out to be detailed and thorough conversations instead of formal interviews. The access to two of the teacher trainers I interviewed was in fact facilitated by my first teacher trainer interviewee, Teacher Trainer A. I reckoned that it could be mainly because teacher trainers are more familiar with the nature of research, as they have got experiences of doing research themselves. They understood better the 'access problem' I might encounter, and

therefore they were more helpful.

Although policy-makers are supposed to be familiar with the necessity of research, access to this sample group was very difficult too. It is believed that the present research was carried out at a time when debates and criticisms about the mother-tongue policy were severe and thus, I did not get to conduct interviews with Policy-Makers A and B without the assistance of a friend. As for Policy-Maker C, only telephone interview was granted and therefore, I tried my best to record the essence of his answers to my questions as tape-recording telephone interviews was not possible.

#### **4.3.5 Pilot study**

The pilot study was conducted soon after the interview questions and questionnaires were designed, which was towards the end of 1998. The pilot study for the interview was carried out with the researcher's friend, who is an English teacher in a CMI school. The pilot study helped give a more pragmatic insight into what it is like when the real research is put into practice, and it also gave me a rough idea of the duration of the whole interview, which was a question most commonly asked by principals when I first approached them. It was found from the pilot work that teachers did not necessarily have knowledge about the MIGA, an instrument proposed by the Education Department to measure students' language abilities. The purpose and meaning of the MIGA needed further elaboration by the interviewer. When another question was put regarding the use of a bilingual model in schools, the interviewer was also requested to clarify the definition of 'bilingual model'.

As mentioned earlier in the design of interview questions, four sets of questions were prepared for four different types of interviewees, namely, CMI teachers, EMI teachers, policy-makers and teacher trainers. However, a pilot study for the present research was confined to the CMI teacher sample due to the access problems to interviewees of other groups. Great difficulty was encountered during the search for potential and appropriate interviewees in EMI schools, teacher trainers and also policy-makers, as has been pointed out in section 4.3.4.3 and thus pilot work was not possible for these three types of sample groups.

A pilot study was also carried out before all the questionnaires were distributed. I gave a questionnaire of EMI students to a F.2 student at an EMI school to try and, incidentally, it was also found that he had no idea of what the MIGA was; the subsequent consequence of this has been discussed in section 4.3.2.2. The pilot work was significant in the sense that I realised a bigger sample for pilot study would be required for a more comprehensive picture. I would not have been misled to assume that MIGA is a test if I had distributed the questionnaires to a bigger sample. However, a bigger sample for the pilot study was not possible because of the technical constraint of getting permission from schools for research. In spite of the flaw in the design of the questions in the questionnaire, an interesting point that has come as an accidental surprise is that students were apparently not well informed of the tests they were engaging in and they had mistaken the tests that they have done in their primary six for the MIGA test, which is something that did not exist.

The main lesson I learned from the pilot work was that I needed to change the primitive framework of the whole research. I expanded the type of interviewees from merely secondary school teachers to policy-makers and teacher trainers as they would be able to provide a broader source of information, representing voices from different sectors and areas of interest regarding the mother-tongue education issue; and more new ideas could be generated accordingly. In addition to sampling, I also realised the importance of tape-recording interviews as I could then concentrate more on the conversations instead of making notes so as to maintain the flow of the interviews.

#### **4.3.6 Length of time span of the study**

A vital point that should be noted is the time of implementation of the new MOI policy. It was introduced in 1998, and it has only been put forward for two years at the time when the present research was completed in 2000. The main pitfall might be the length of time for observing the impact of the new policy since both teachers and students might find it a bit too soon to feel anything. Another issue of concern is that this policy is still going through the 'transitional period' and it is subject to all kinds of criticisms mainly from the schools and from the parents. During this so-called 'transitional period' of the language policy, the Education Department is further

making different changes in the entire education system, ranging from curriculum reforms to the whole examination system of Hong Kong secondary education. Therefore, we should note that the language policy is not something discreet and on its own; it is affected by external factors which might change the design of the policy in the future.

#### **4.3.7 Data analysis**

Since two different research techniques were adopted in this study, they will be analysed separately as independent items first i.e. interviews to be analysed one by one with emphasis put on individual perspectives and inner thoughts, and grouped together in different coding frames; and questionnaires to be examined by the way of counting the number for each category to see the trend of the arguments. Audit trails were used and the emerging themes were triangulated after separate examinations of the data yielded from these two techniques were done.

##### **4.3.7.1 Analysis of interviews**

Data analysis was carried out straight after the collection process was completed. The preparation stage was time-consuming. It involved the different stages of transcriptions, organizing the data and categorization that lead to the further stage of interpretation and generation of new hypotheses. Apart from the impossibility of tape-recording the telephone interview with Policy-Maker C, all the other interviewees allowed me to tape-record interviews. The advantages of tape-recording the interviews are that transcription offers a more truthful record of the interview, as I could make references to the tone of voice, and my own way of asking questions back from the tapes when doing transcriptions, so that I would be more aware of possible distortion of answers by the use of leading questions and personal assumptions.

### *Transcription*

In order to maintain the authenticity of the interviews, I chose to transcribe the whole process instead of doing partial transcriptions for those interviews done in English (two out of thirteen altogether). I was thus able to retain the exact terms and languages used by the interviewees. However, for the rest of the interviews with local teachers, the local teacher trainer and policy-makers, Cantonese was used and that involved one extra stage of translation in addition to the transcription works. The interviewer tried to match Chinese words with English equivalents that have the closest meanings to them. The frequent use of code-mixing by the interviewees facilitated the translation process, as they tended to switch to English when it came to key terms and technical terms, and sometimes they even used English phrases.

### *Summarizing and categorization*

The next step involved summary and allocating data into different categories. Answers to each question of every respondent were summarized into a shorter text that carried the main theme. Interviewees belonging to different groups e.g. teachers from EMI and CMI schools, teacher trainers, and also policy-makers were dealt with separately. In this respect triangulation within the same approach was adopted first. What I did was that similar summaries among these three groups of interviewees were marked with a highlighter with the same colour and were put on the same side of the table. For example, when asked if all of them were in favour of the shift to mother-tongue education, those who were in favour of this change would be marked with the same colour and put on one side, and those who were not would be put on another side.

After this, different questions which constitute the elements that belong to a single research question were selected and the answers were grouped together for further analysis to discover the emerging patterns and themes. For instance, individual interview question like the views of teachers about the language standards after the change of the teaching medium was grouped under the question: the general impact of the change to mother-tongue education on language proficiencies according to respondents' views. I then looked into further elaboration to the answers as to why

they thought mother-tongue education would facilitate or hinder the learning of languages, and tried to put them into categories. As Marshall & Rossman (1995) suggest,

**The process of category generation involves noting regularities in the setting or people chosen for study. As categories of meaning emerge, the researcher searches for those that have internal convergence and external divergence (Guba, 1978). That is, the categories should be internally consistent but distinct from one another.**

(p.114)

#### *The use of audit trail*

Audit trail is in fact a concept borrowed from the nature of the job of a financial auditor, who starts the auditing of the financial accounts of a firm by “[examining] the process by which the accounts were kept” and by “[examining] the product—the records—from the point of view of their accuracy”. (Guba & Lincoln 1985 p.318-319) It means that the job of the auditor is to check the financial position of a company by checking the accounts and financial transactions thoroughly from the bottom to the top. The same concept can be applied to a social researcher who keeps track of every set of raw data and step of data analysis before jumping to conclusions. An audit trail was applied to all the interviews carried out. As Guba and Lincoln (1985) continue,

**...the auditor will wish to reach a judgement about whether inferences based on the data are logical, looking carefully at analytic techniques used, appropriateness of category labels, quality of interpretations, and the possibility of equally attractive alternatives.**

(p.323)

I prepared materials like interview transcriptions, field notes, interview guide, research questions and kept making references to the quality of the findings—to check if they were based on what the data indicated—appropriateness of category labels, quality of interpretations, and the possibility of equally attractive alternatives.

### *Formulating theories*

There are several different approaches to theorizing the data, including using the data to test on the existing theory, or “work up from the data to their generalizations and theorizing”. (Delamont 1992 p.160) I chose the former: to use the data I collected to test the existing theories that frame the MOI policy as mentioned in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2, and previous literature, and look for new findings by the use of triangulation *within method and between methods*.

There is a crucial point that I had to keep in mind when I was working in this stage—the very final stage in the data analysis process and it plays a vital part in the interpretation stage. As an argument is developing and is taking shape, researchers usually tend to ignore those negative data which are heading in the opposite direction from the mainstream, as was pointed out by Delamont (1992),

**There is always a temptation to ignore the incidents or comments which do not support the general argument that is developing. Thinking about such ‘negative’ findings and interrogating them, may lead to refining the initial theoretical position, or may reveal that the negative incident is a genuinely isolated exception that ‘proves’ the initial rule.**

(p.160)

Some new ideas or sets of categories could be generated from the answers that do not fit into the categories. For example, some interviewees might come up with insights and reasons that construct new themes and the cause-effect relationship of the issue. This kind of new perception also acts as another source of new ideas and thoughts that help formulate new theories and I had to keep in mind that “ ‘half-truths’ and ‘carefully selected quotations’ would distort the genuineness of the data.” (Gillham 2000 p.76) Cautious interpretation is the most essential part at this stage.

#### **4.3.7.2 Analysis of questionnaires**

I used questionnaires as another research tool to collect data from students to triangulate with the data collected from the interviews with teachers, teacher trainers



and policy-makers. The aim of obtaining opinions from students was that their views might generate new issues from another angle, as students are the passive party (the products) that reflect the real outcome of the new language policy.

### *Categorization*

Analysis of questionnaires was more straightforward than interviews, but considering the quantity of questionnaires, it was a very time-consuming task as well. The analysis of questionnaires was easier as answers were mostly closed-ended and structured, which saved time when putting data into pre-determined categories. The number of cases that fell into separate categories was counted, and the problems mainly arose when it came to the two open-ended questions since there was a great variety of answers that needed to be further categorized. For example, there was a question that required students to rank Cantonese, English and Mandarin in terms of level of importance, and there was a follow-up question that required them to explain the reason for their choice. There were several reasons for choosing Cantonese. What I did was write down the main theme of the answer at the top of each questionnaire, and similar answers would be put in a file. Reasons for choosing English and Mandarin in this open-ended question were dealt with in the same procedure.

### *Drawing commonality and diversity*

When the steps of analysing questionnaires and interviews were finished, I tried to explore commonality between the categories of interviews and questionnaires so that data that pertained to the same research questions could be contrasted and compared. There were some categories that could be extracted only from either one of the data collection tools, and they were treated as separate questions and issues.

Issues related to the choice of research tools and the process from data collection to analysis have been covered from sections 4.1 to 4.3. Concepts and ways of ensuring validity and reliability will be discussed in the following section.

#### 4.4 Issues of validity and reliability

Validity is defined by Cohen *et al* (2000) thus:

**...in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. In quantitative data validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data.**

(p.105)

Validity is further divided into two types—internal and external validity. Internal validity, as Cohen *et al* (2000) define, “seeks to demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data. In some degree this concerns accuracy, which can be applied to quantitative and qualitative research. The findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched.” (p.107) External validity, on the other hand, “refers to the degree to which the results can be generalized to the wider population, cases or situations.” (p.109)

Due to the inherent weaknesses in both qualitative and quantitative approaches, we have to be aware that no research study can be regarded as absolutely valid. In other words, absolute truth cannot be guaranteed. The researcher’s role is to minimise the weaknesses of the approaches adopted and to maximise the level of validity. For instance, it is hoped that the limitation of the small sample has been mitigated by the maximization of variation in sampling as mentioned in section 4.3.4.2. I have attempted to keep objectivity and reduce bias by not ignoring negative evidence.

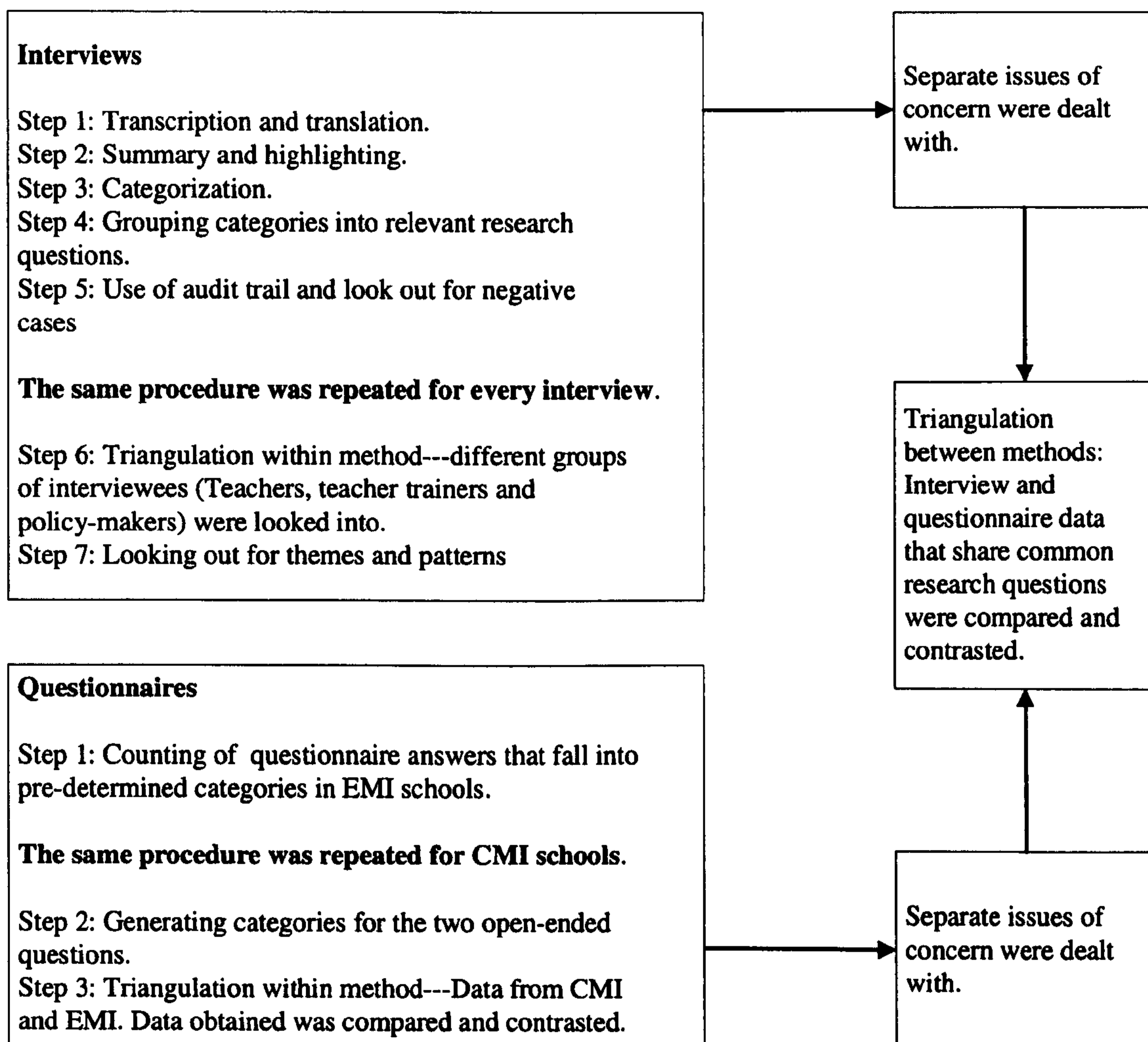
As this study is generally based on the perceptions of respondents, it should be noted that results obtained could not be generalised to the society as a whole because the data only represent the points of views of this particular group of people at a particular time. The study is confined by the limitation of time span and we should not overlook the possibility that people’s views could change with the flow of time and situations.

It is internal validity rather than external validity that is emphasised. In order to increase the degree of reliability of the data, respondents' identities and information are kept confidential, as has been discussed in section 4.3.2.4. Besides, a methodological device like triangulation has been adopted to increase the validity of the data.

As for reliability, it has been stressed several times in this research that the data reported in the findings chapters only represent what could be obtained at that time (the perceptions of this particular group of respondents at the particular time when the research was conducted). What I have been seeking is the "consistency over time and over similar samples". (Cohen *et al* 2000 p.117)

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter deals with the methodological issues pertaining to the research. It sets off by reiterating the aims of the research and listing the main research question and subsidiary research questions, which are followed by the reasons for choosing interviews for a certain sample and questionnaires for another. The designs of the interview questions and questionnaires have also been discussed, and considerations given to sampling and the pilot study are outlined. The various issues of concern arising from data collection are brought up as well: for instance, the lack of a research culture among the teaching profession that led to the access problems, which might imply that teachers' opinions had not been given much thought to when framing the language policy. The last part of the chapter draws attention to the analysis of data from scratch, with analysis of interviews from the stage of transcription onwards and analysis of questionnaires, summarizing and categorization to triangulation, drawing similarities and differences and further down to formulating theories. Issues of validity and reliability are also pointed out. This chapter ends with a summary of the data analysis in a diagram, with the aim to illustrate the process in a clearer way.

**Procedures of Data Analysis****Diagram B**

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **I—EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE 1998 MOI POLICY**

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#### **5.0 Introduction**

As suggested by the main research question—**What is the impact of the 1998 Medium of Instruction policy on the educational and cultural dimensions in secondary education in Hong Kong?**— this study attempts to explore the impact of mother-tongue education on the educational and cultural dimensions with focus on the secondary sector. The data collection was completed in the end of 2000 with interviews and questionnaires as the tools for data collection. Interviews were conducted with teachers, teacher trainers and policy-makers while questionnaires were distributed to students so that perspectives of different groups of people involved in the sector could be included and compared.

The present chapter attempts to answer the first three of the subsidiary research questions laid out in the previous chapter. They are: 1. What is the impact of the new MOI policy on language proficiencies of students according to respondents? 2. What is the impact of the new MOI policy on the teaching and learning of general academic subjects according to respondents' perceptions? 3. If a bilingual model is practical in Hong Kong, then what model should be adopted according to the views of respondents?

This chapter begins with the discussion of the first subsidiary research question: What is the impact of the new MOI policy on language proficiencies of students according to respondents? The academic profile in the present research includes Mathematics, and arts subject teachers, including Western History and Geography, are also in the sample. It should be noted that no particular academic subject is going to be looked

into in detail in the current research. Instead, a general perception of academic teachers will be obtained from teachers from both CMI and EMI schools in order to depict a more comprehensive picture of the impact of mother-tongue education on academic subjects. Discussion of each question will begin with a brief introduction of the background, which will then be followed by analysis and discussion of respondents' answers. Previous literature or research studies that are relevant to the specific question will be incorporated into the discussion. A comparison between interviewees' and students' responses will be made if they are in stark contrast with each other. Issues of concern regarding unpredictable results or points that readers should be aware of will also be raised.

The following sections, 5.1 and 5.2, will contribute to the analysis and discussion of the impact of the MOI policy on language proficiencies. The areas that are going to be covered include the relationship between mother-tongue education and language proficiency levels and factors affecting language proficiencies. Section 5.3 will present the respondents' views on the bilingual models appropriate in Hong Kong classrooms and also on the use of mixed code for teaching. Then mother-tongue education and its impact on the teaching and learning of general academic subjects will be discussed in section 5.4. The last part of this chapter, 5.5, is devoted to the analysis of the social impact behind the MOI policy and its impact on people's attitudes toward, and perception of, mother-tongue education.

### **5.1 Impact of the 1998 MOI policy**

As the main research question states: '**What is the impact of the 1998 MOI policy on the educational and cultural dimensions in secondary education in Hong Kong?**', section 5.1.2 attempts to refer to the first half of the research question (educational impact) by answering the first subsidiary research question: What is the impact of the new MOI policy on language proficiencies of students according to respondents' perceptions? Discussion and analysis of the data will be presented in the manner where past literature of the topic being discussed will be reviewed first, which will then be followed by the analysis of respondents' answers. The answers to each subsidiary question will be concluded at the end of each section before going on to the

next subsidiary question.

### **5.1.1 Literature review of the impact of mother-tongue education on language and academic performances**

The question about the extent to which the L1 acts as an essential and constructive resource for the acquisition of L2 is subject to controversy and speculation. Bilingual programmes supporters like Cummins (1996) and Krashen (1997b) refute the belief that literacy in L1 is counterproductive and irrelevant to L2 literacy, which is a perspective that many anti-bilingual education supporters hold. Another concern that arouses attention would be that even if the research results are valid and supporting evidence is adequate, could we simply jump to the conclusion that higher proficiency in Chinese could lead to higher proficiency in English? Arguments by Krashen (1989, 1997a) and Cummins (1996), which have been elaborated in section 2.5.1 in chapter two, provide a very straight-forward answer to the above questions by putting forward the input/comprehension and linguistic interdependence hypotheses.

Reports published in the Hong Kong governmental documents appear to suggest that students generally achieve better results in the mother-tongue environment and low achievers tend to benefit more from mother-tongue teaching especially in content-based and language-based subjects such as Geography and History (Press Release of the government of Hong Kong 1999). The evaluation study in 1998 as cited in section 2.4.1 also suggests that students taught in English generally encounter more language barriers, and it is specially the case for those schools that do not stick to the pure teaching medium principle.

Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 in chapter two offered a comprehensive description on the linguistic theories on which the 1998 MOI policy is based. The government assumptions of the benefits behind mother-tongue education are justified by the threshold theory, which is supposed to affirm the reliability of the assessment criteria of the MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment); and the linguistic interdependence theory, which suggests cross-linguistic transfer between languages and that the first language could be adopted as a resource of learning the second

language. The sub-sections that follow will focus on the impact on language performances of students after the implementation of mother-tongue education. Contradictions that arise from the theoretical and practical sides of the policy will also be discussed.

### **5.1.2 Data analysis and discussion of the linguistic hypotheses**

#### **5.1.2.1 Discussion on the feasibility of the linguistic interdependence hypothesis**

As stated in the government documents, one of the educational benefits of using mother-tongue as the teaching medium is that “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 (HKCEE). This shows the positive impact of mother-tongue teaching on the learning of Chinese and English as a subject.” (Hong Kong Education Department 1997b p.1) The linguistic theory that lies behind refers to the belief that there is a Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) between different languages and transfer of skills from L1 to L2 is possible, given that the foundation of L1 is consolidated. Whether positive transfer between the first language, Chinese, and the second language, English, is possible cannot be totally guaranteed due to the lack of empirical research evidence in this area.

Before moving on to the discussion of both qualitative and quantitative data, the following summary of main points and points of interest derived from the data with reference to the research question—‘perceptions on the impact of mother-tongue policy on language proficiencies’—may offer a clearer comparison between the qualitative and quantitative samples.



**Table 5.1**

**Summary of qualitative and quantitative data with regard to the impact of mother-tongue on language proficiencies**

Questions	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
1. Views on linguistic interdependence hypothesis and transfer from L1 to L2	<p>Views of teachers were generally negative because the majority did not see any correlation between L1 and L2.</p> <p>Teacher trainers held rather different views from that of the teachers. They might probably set off from a more theoretical basis.</p> <p>Interdependence of languages depends on the perceived language relatedness.</p> <p>Transference of linguistic knowledge from L1 to L2 can be affected by contextual (external) and individual (internal) variables.</p> <p>Policy-makers' views on linguistic interdependence were generally positive.</p>	<p>The majority of students thought that both of their Chinese and English language proficiencies have improved.</p> <p>Perceptions on 'improvements' can be due to improved language awareness or it might be subject to different interpretations of the term 'improvement'.</p>
2. Views on the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (threshold hypothesis)	<p>Teachers had doubt on the assessment criteria of the MIGA and the age of assessment (i.e. primary six).</p>	<p>Students' data were forfeited because of the misinterpretation of the MIGA.</p>
3. Views on the impact of decreased exposure to English language on English proficiency	<p>The majority of teachers agreed that the lack of exposure would disadvantage CMI students' English language proficiencies.</p> <p>Nevertheless, teachers also pointed out that English language proficiencies could be affected by lots of other external and internal factors.</p> <p>Teacher trainers brought up the argument of 'quality of exposure', which relates to</p>	<p>No adverse effect has been caused to the standards of either Chinese or English with the use of the mother-tongue as the teaching medium according to their perceptions.</p>

	<p>the quality of English language, instead of the quantity of English language that students are exposed to.</p> <p>Policy-makers have raised the advantage of mother-tongue education in terms of saving the time spent on teaching in a second language.</p>	
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### 5.1.2.2 Analysis of interview responses of teachers

The result of the interview analysis shows a general negative view about the correlation between L1 and L2 learning. All seven teachers expressed doubt in the concept of interdependence between Chinese and English. Teacher F from an EMI school argued against this by raising the point that if interdependence between Chinese and English really existed, then the question why certain students are proficient in one language and weak in the other could not be answered according to this logic. This probably proves that positive transfer between L1 and L2 does not necessarily apply to every learner. Six out of seven teachers held very definite views against the interdependence theory and transfer across languages. Only one teacher from the CMI group believed in transfer between Chinese and English but suggested that it was only to a certain extent that such a transfer was beneficial for second language learning. He commented,

**...the foundation might be better, since there might be some kinds of transferable linguistic knowledge. For instance, if a student's ways of expression through Chinese is strengthened, this may benefit their expression through English as well. But in terms of higher level, like fluency, L1 can't help much with L2 learning...At a certain level, there might be some kinds of linkage, but the relationship between L1 and L2 is not that directly proportional.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

According to the analysis, the hypothesis of linguistic transfer does not appear to have solid ground to stand upon. Apart from this, the linguistic areas that can be benefited depend on which level and aspects of language proficiency are under study. It seems

to be a hypothesis that cannot be totally accepted due to several external constraints that will be elaborated in section 5.1.3.

### 5.1.2.3 Analysis of students' responses

As the linguistic interdependence theory suggests, a solid foundation of knowledge in the first language is likely to benefit learning through the second language because of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). The following section is going to compare and contrast the views of interviewees' and students' responses with regard to linguistic interdependence when it is applied to the local context of Hong Kong.

**Table 5.2**

**Students' views on both Chinese and English language proficiencies after the implementation of mother-tongue education**

Situations	%
Both Chinese and English have improved	58.5%
The levels of both languages remain unaffected	27.7%
Chinese language has improved, English level remains unaffected	12.3%
English language has improved, Chinese level remains unaffected	1.5%
Both languages have declined	0
Chinese language has improved, English level has declined/vice versa	0

Surprisingly, the responses of students seem to be opposite to those of the teachers. More than half of the respondents found that there were positive outcomes on both Chinese and English subjects after the use of mother-tongue education. 27.7% found that using mother-tongue as the teaching medium did not have any impact on their Chinese and English language proficiencies, whereas 12.3% saw improvements in Chinese language but the level of English remained unaffected.

### 5.1.3 Discussion of the findings

Behaviourists argue that traits and habits developed in the first language will act as a source of interference in second language learning, whereas the interlanguage

theorists support the view of positive transfer because of their belief that “many L2 errors could not be traced to L1 influence, and were primarily concerned with discovering patterns and developmental sequences on this creative front.” (Mitchell & Myles 1998 p.14) This point corresponds to the psycholinguistic perspective of the role of interaction, which suggests that ‘negative evidence’ can enable the learner to learn from mistakes.

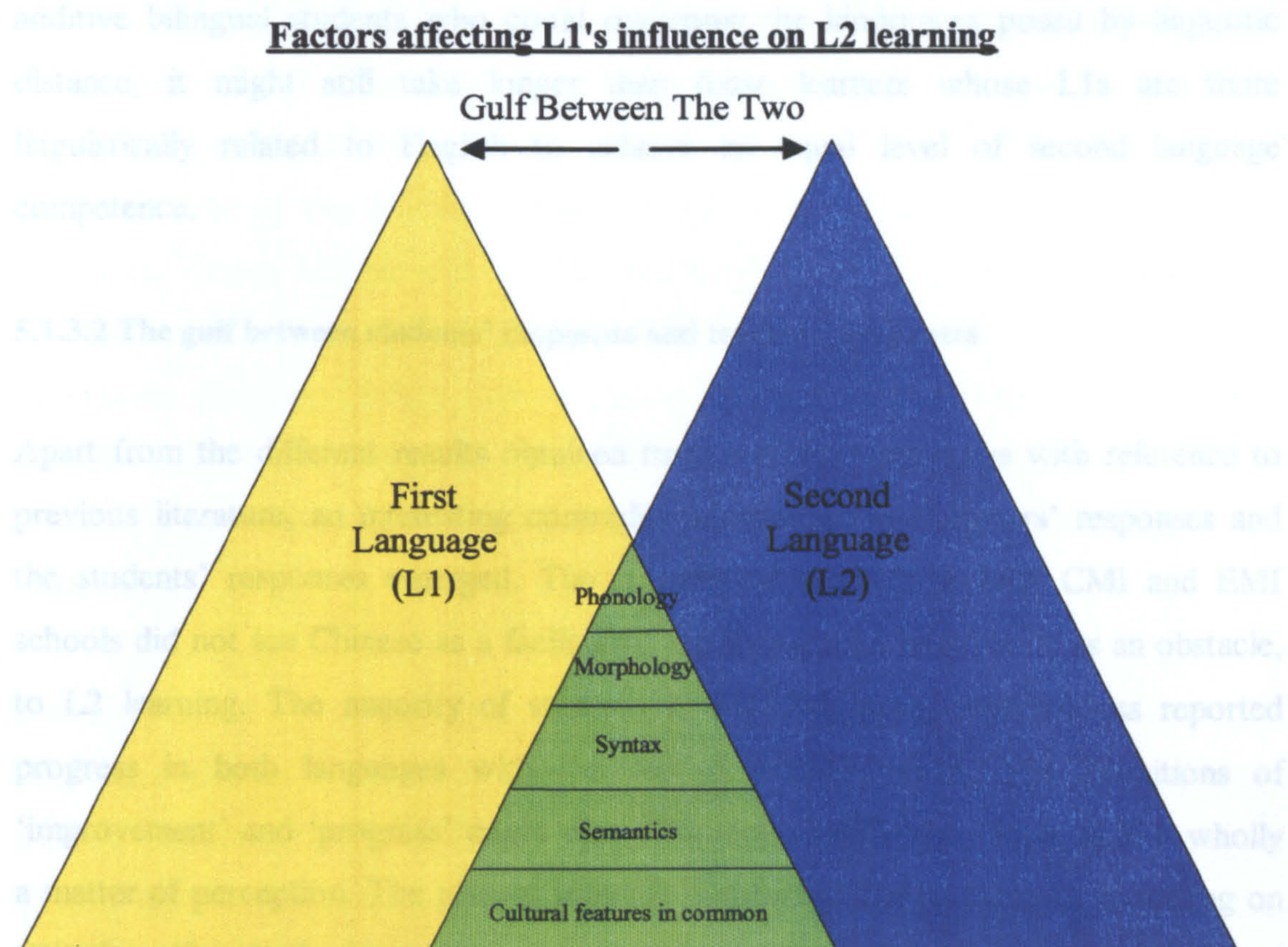
As has been elaborated in section 2.5.1 in the literature review chapter, the linguistic interdependence hypothesis suggests that L1 can facilitate the learning of or learning through L2. However, it should be noted that it is the case only if positive transfer occurs. Negative transfer might result in linguistic interference. Replacive bilingualism discussed in section 2.4.2.1 suggests the possibility that being fluent in one language may not necessarily lead to promising results in the second language. The government’s adaptation of the linguistic interdependence hypothesis in the 1998 MOI policy may have relied heavily on linguistic interdependence as a natural process i.e. it has probably assumed that positive transfer would take place on its own. When we review the statement about language transfer by Cummins (2000), which was discussed in section 2.5.1, we have to be aware of the fact that linguistic interdependence and transfer do not come as a natural outcome in bilingual education. In fact, other factors such as learners’ language awareness and students’ motivation also play significant roles and should not be overlooked.

Data in this study do not provide solid evidence of whether positive transfer occurs with the introduction of mother-tongue education, because the results obtained depend entirely on respondents’ perceptions. However, the Hong Kong Education Department might have overlooked factors other than L1 foundation that may contribute to positive transfer between languages. Apart from the language relatedness derived from the respondents’ answers, several other variables may contribute to the transference of languages. As Brice *et al* (2001) summarise, they include “...the person’s first language background, educational level, and personal background” (p.11), while non-linguistic factors such as cultural and psychological factors play vital roles in the notion of linguistic transference. A mere focus on linguistic factors and an inflexible approach of strengthening students’ L1 without paying attention to

external variables will not be able to bring positive transfer.

### 5.1.3.1 Perceived relatedness between L1 and L2

One of the reasons for not showing agreement with the linguistic interdependence model, as suggested by the majority of teachers and Teacher Trainer A, is the unrelatedness between Chinese and English. The research by Ringbom (1986) that has been discussed in section 2.5.1.1 may provide a frame of reference for the correlation between language relatedness and positive transfer.



**Diagram C**

As illustrated in the diagram above, the larger the common area (the intersection area in the middle), the narrower the gap will be between the two languages. The belief of mutual benefits and the operation of linguistic interdependence resulting in positive transfer of cognitive knowledge seem to have neglected the factor of 'perceived relatedness' between different languages. It may be logical to assume that there is a

direct and causal relationship between linguistic corresponding equivalents and the speed and ease of L2 learning. Therefore, the factor of perceived language-relatedness/distance explains why teachers did not see any correlation between the two totally distant languages and did not believe that L1 is a facilitative source for L2 learning. This point is supported by Gass & Selinker (1994) as referred to in section 2.5.1.1. Teacher C's response mentioned above might have illustrated this particular point of linguistic relatedness as he saw that knowledge in L1 might facilitate and operate on the cognitive level, which would in turn help the 'receptive competence', but would not necessarily help improve the fluency (productive) level since Chinese is likely to be more of an obstacle and interference to English learning. Even for those additive bilingual students who could overcome the hindrances posed by linguistic distance, it might still take longer than those learners whose L1s are more linguistically related to English to achieve an equal level of second language competence.

#### **5.1.3.2 The gulf between students' responses and teachers' responses**

Apart from the different results obtained from students' responses with reference to previous literature, an interesting contradiction between the teachers' responses and the students' responses emerged. The majority of teachers in both CMI and EMI schools did not see Chinese as a facilitative aid, though not necessarily as an obstacle, to L2 learning. The majority of students in the CMI group nevertheless reported progress in both languages with the use of mother-tongue. The definitions of 'improvement' and 'progress' might vary according to different people as it is wholly a matter of perception. The present research approaches the problem by focussing on attitudes (for both interviews and questionnaires) and respondents' individual experiences. Teachers expressed their views with reference to the situations they perceived in the classrooms, whereas students might believe that they have made progress and they might perceive that the use of mother-tongue in the classroom has acted as a positive factor contributing to improvements on language standards, with which the teachers did not agree. It should also be noted that while 12.3% of students reported that only Chinese language has improved (while English has remained unaffected) with the use of mother-tongue, only 1.5% regarded that English has

improved (with Chinese standards remaining unaffected). It might reveal the point that more students perceived that the use of mother-tongue is more beneficial to the learning of Chinese language, rather than English language only.

### **5.1.3.3 The gulf between teacher trainers and teachers**

As suggested in the previous section, teachers generally did not see mother-tongue as a resource that benefits the learning of a totally unrelated language—English. Some teachers pointed out that it might be possible that the Chinese language could be elevated with the use of mother-tongue education. However, three out of seven teachers recognised the fact of individual differences, which are highly dependent on several internal and external variables. The totally contrasting point of view between the teacher groups and the teacher trainer groups reflects the possibility that what has been shown to be theoretically plausible might not be the case in real and authentic situations. Among teacher trainers who are also educational researchers, only one out of three expressed his disagreement regarding the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. Compared to the teacher trainers' sample, the information obtained from teachers might be of a higher degree of credibility because they reported according to their daily encounters and teaching and learning experiences with students in real classrooms.

Research about cross-linguistic transfer largely covers cases of inter-European languages. Studies with specific focus on Chinese and English are rare. Krashen (1997b) suggests that “The ability to read transfers across languages, even when the writing systems are different.” Nevertheless, there is not adequate evidence showing that the L1 of Chinese learners facilitates the acquisition of English, if we assume that the interdependence model referred to by the Education Department holds true.

Views of the teacher trainers presented quite a contrasting picture to those of the teachers. Only one of the teacher trainers did not see the possibility of any possible transfer between Chinese and English. He contended that,

**...I think it is a very simplistic notion to suggest that there is link between**

**languages, given that I know that how the languages (meaning Chinese and English in the context of Hong Kong) are learnt and acquired...I don't see students transferring knowledge from Chinese to English.**

(Teacher Trainer A)

However, this particular opponent in the sample showed some hesitation by concluding that positive cross-linguistic influence between Chinese and English was worth looking into and he was not certain about its impact at this particular stage.

Two out of three teacher trainers concluded that transfer from Chinese to English was possible:

**Interdependence between languages and positive transfer is probably true. If you are good at one language, then it certainly has positive effects on another language at the same time, and it does not matter that it is differently structured, or if it is written in a different form. In fact there is a universality about languages, that applies to all languages.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

**Naturally, if you already know one language, then it normally is the source of assistance in learning another language. L1 might be assisting L2 learning, personally, I think that L1 is more of a source of assistance than interference.**

(Teacher Trainer B)

However, even if it is assumed that interdependence theory and positive transfer could work on the theoretical level, both interviewees brought up the concern of contextual variation and that positive transfer would not work properly in the present linguistic context in Hong Kong. One of the factors, as suggested by Teacher Trainer B, relates to the lack of second language learning environment for students, and that students' only opportunities to use English are confined to schools. It inhibits the consolidation of the knowledge of the second language.

The context under study in the current research is Hong Kong, where the first language acquired by all the student subjects is Cantonese. With English being the



language from the West and Chinese being the language of the East, the influence of L1 (Chinese) in learning English can be more significant than for those whose first language also falls to the same language group as English, which is Indo-European. Due to the profound differences between Chinese and English at levels such as phonetic, syntactic and sometimes even semantic features, learners whose first language is Chinese are likely to carry with them the L1 accents, and the structural traits of L1 when they are acquiring L2. This particular form of English has been termed –‘Chinglish’, which symbolizes the kind of English that unsuccessful learners have acquired during the learning process.

Apart from the linguistic gap between Chinese and English, the general higher respect for English language over Chinese (as illustrated in section 2.9.1 about the CMI schools’ and the parental opposition against Chinese-medium education) in the local society also accounts for the feeling of inferiority among the CMI group (as shown from the social divisive impact of the streaming policy in section 5.5 of this chapter). This might exacerbate the position of Chinese and people’s respect for it will remain lower than that for English language. Diagram D displays the different variants that take part in the inter-relationship between factors affecting linguistic transference.

Diagram D illustrates that positive transference is not only the result of how close the linguistic features of the two languages are, and how solid the learner’s L1 foundation is; it is also influenced by non-linguistic factors such as psychological state of the learner, which is then affected by the social respect for the first language of the learner. Positive attitude and respect towards the mother-tongue is likely to raise positive language awareness. The general contempt and low respect of Chinese-medium education (as can be seen from the slow development of Chinese-medium education) in a place like Hong Kong, where around 90% of the population is made up of Cantonese-speaking people, has obviously had a detrimental effect on the learning of Chinese. The low status of the Chinese language is shown by findings of the Language Fund Project. It reports,

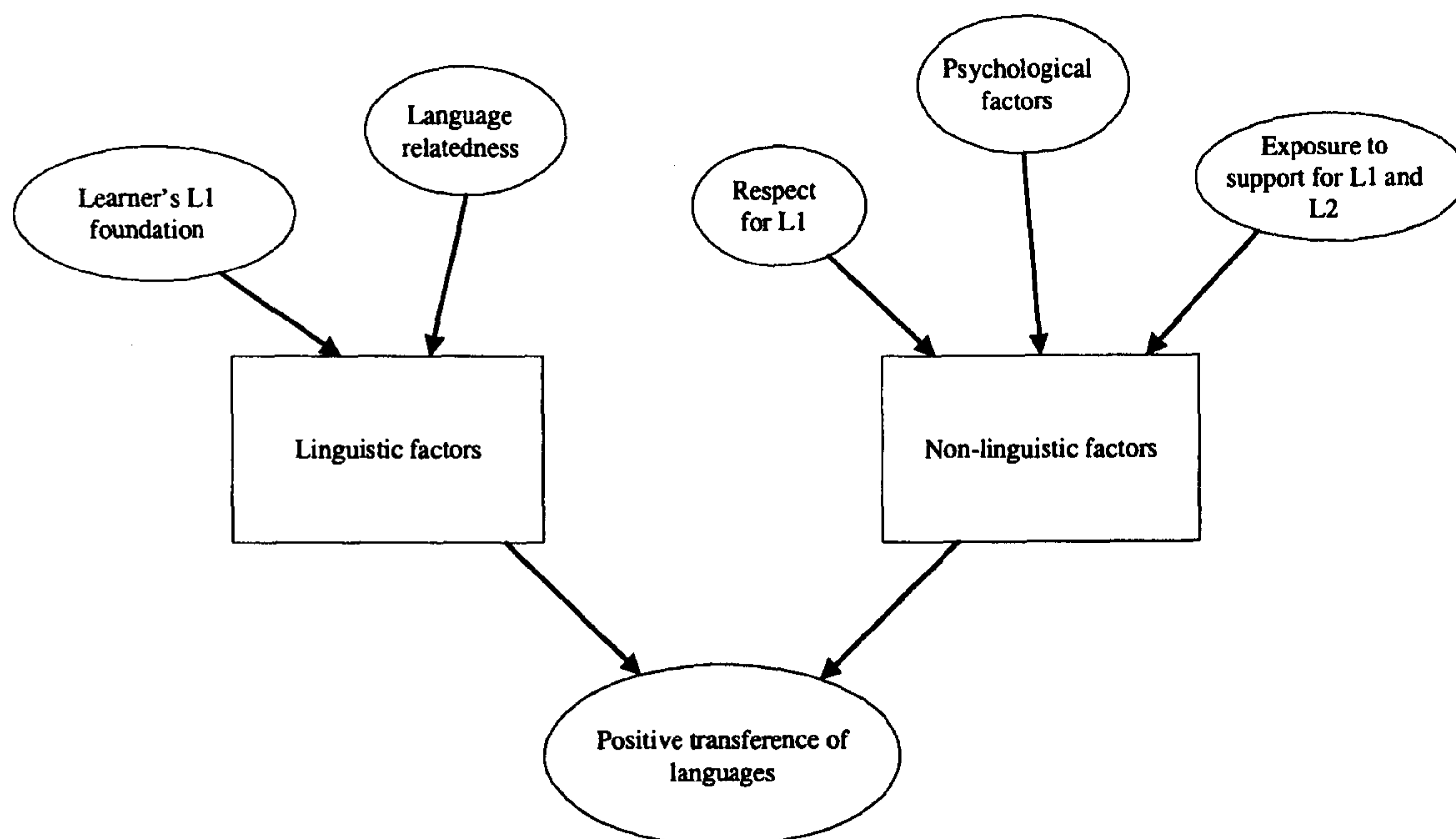
**Many of them [the public in general] are not aware of the principles of interdependence of L1 and L2 and importance of having a solid foundation in**

**Chinese literacy for the successful development of English literacy. They seem almost willing to sacrifice Chinese for the acquisition of an English medium education...**

(Language Fund Project (E/07/98-1)1999 p. 45)

What people might not have expected is the adverse effect on the learning of the L2 that low respect to the L1 may have brought.

Cummins (2000) reiterates that interdependence of languages operates on the grounds that there is adequate contextual support for the L2, which has to do with positive exposure and general support for it. This point apparently echoes what Teacher Trainers B and C suggested as the importance of 'contextual variables'. The society of Hong Kong itself does not provide a promising linguistic environment for students to develop their L2 language proficiency. As illustrated from the results of section 6.4.2.1 in chapter six with regard to the use of languages in different domains, English is rarely used as a communicative tool in the societal level (on the streets and among friends and peers). The failure of the social context to provide support to the learning of L2 would apparently be one of the constraints for positive cross-linguistic transference. Diagram D illustrates the inter-relationship of various linguistic and non-linguistic factors that contribute to the degree of cross-linguistic transference from L1 to L2, or vice-versa.

**Factors affecting linguistic tranference****Diagram D****5.1.4 Issues of concern regarding the results obtained****5.1.4.1 The time element**

Results from students reveal that mother-tongue education probably has a positive impact on both Chinese and English proficiency levels. Nevertheless, a conclusion as to whether there is positive transfer from the mother-tongue to English cannot be drawn at this level due to the lack of evidence. Due to practical constraints on access to students' academic profiles, as they are kept confidential by schools, statistical comparisons regarding students' Chinese and English languages results cannot be made. Even if the outcomes are positive, there may be a number of reasons for the progress. Policy-Makers A and B both did not see the importance of the interdependence of languages matters that much. As Policy-Maker B put it,

**...some schools adopt mother-tongue as the teaching medium and therefore students could learn better in different academic subjects, which also means that they could spare more time to learn English.**

(Policy-Maker B)

The time element enables students who are weak at English to spend more time on the subject because of the time saved from mother-tongue education. Regardless of the interdependence theory and positive transfer between languages, it is nonetheless reasonable to say that with mother-tongue education that makes learning and understanding easier, students have extra time to improve on what they have been weak at. As we can see from table 5.2, no one reported a decline in either English or Chinese proficiency level. The responses of students may indicate that at least mother-tongue education does not have any harmful impact on language learning.

Students' responses in this study do not seem to be consistent with the findings of Poon (2000) who found that the amount of English that teachers used during lessons was a significant factor affecting students' language development. Her fieldwork focuses on four schools with an aim to looking at the relationships between the use of mother-tongue education and students' motivation to learn the English language. The result is that students' motivation to learn English is apparently lower after the school has switched to mother-tongue education, because students no longer regard English as that important to them as they do not have to obtain a high proficiency level to understand the Chinese texts and to answer questions in English. Poon (1999) criticises the new MOI policy by pointing out the negative impact Chinese-medium education will have on English language learning because learning English will be made more effective with using English to teach content-based subjects. The point raised here is that learning English would be more interesting as students would have content and materials to relate to when they are acquiring English. This belief may hold true for those who are capable of learning through English and whose aim is to achieve an even higher level of English proficiency. It may be correct to assume that 'learning other subjects through English' would make the whole English learning environment more authentic. What Poon (1999) may have overlooked here is whether the majority who fail to learn through English successfully would still find 'learning English throughout the whole curriculum' that interesting and enjoyable and would still be able to benefit from English language learning if they stick with English-medium education.

In response to the question of whether the mother-tongue policy will affect English

language proficiency, Policy-Maker A defended the use of mother-tongue by saying that

**Cantonese is a means of communication, and in fact, our aim of putting forward mother-tongue education is that we hope students can understand the content of the subjects better, the main aim is not actually to pull up the language standards. It is just to help students learn effectively.**

(Policy-Maker A)

Policy-Maker A stressed that the main aim of implementing the mother-tongue policy is for the sake of higher educational benefits rather than pulling up language standards. It might suggest the point that critics of the mother-tongue policy might have emphasised too much on the negative impact that mother-tongue policy may have brought to the learning of English, which has covered up other educational benefits of mother-tongue education in teaching and learning. The argument of whether the use of mother-tongue is appropriate boils down to the question of what education really is: Is the aim of education merely to enhance the English language proficiency of students? What are students supposed to get from the education at schools?

#### **5.1.4.2 Perception of the concept of improvements on language proficiencies**

The answers of students that pertain to 'improvement' are vague in the way that areas that they believed have been improved were not specified, and there is no statistical evidence to illustrate the results and act as a yardstick to measure the degree of 'improvement' that students claimed to have made with the use of mother-tongue education.

#### **5.1.4.3 Improved language awareness**

As a matter of fact, students' perceptions regarding the improvements illustrated in this current research showed that their improvements on language proficiency levels in both Chinese and English might be a result of their improved awareness of

languages as well. Hawkins (1987) quotes from Halliday (1971) the concept that “the development of awareness in the pupil will have a positive effect on his competence, though this effect is likely to be indirect and may not show up immediately...the development of awareness has a marked effect upon a pupil’s ability to cope with the whole range of his work, because he comes to see that many problems are not so much problems in grasping the content of what he studies, but problems in handling the language appropriate to it.” (p.14) The implementation of mother-tongue education in Hong Kong is likely to have brought about a focus on languages as a whole—both Chinese and English language—and this improved awareness may have a positive impact on students’ language competence because they are more aware of different aspects of languages, and aspects which students would not have noticed before e.g. the improved awareness of mother-tongue, which is the focus on written forms of Chinese instead of merely the verbal communicative skills. The stress on the insights into language patterns may not only help improve the L1 but may also “bridge the space between the different aspects of language education” (Hawkins 1987 p.4), including the acquisition of L2.

One of the strengths of implementing mother-tongue education is, as argued in the report of the Language Fund Project (E/07/98-1)(1999), “...the development of additive bilingualism entails the potential of positive academic, linguistic and cognitive consequences. It seems reasonable to surmise that a greater focus on developing language awareness in the instruction program would increase the likelihood of these positive effects.” (p.40) Apparently, discussion on the correlation between L1 and L2 did not obtain a positive feedback as the majority of the respondents did not see any cross-linguistic relationship or that L1 could serve as an assisting tool for L2 learning. One of the reasons why teacher respondents and policy-makers’ views with regard to linguistic interdependence diverged is because the two sample groups were looking at different aspects of the language. Teacher respondents cast doubt on the possibility of L1 acting as a linguistic resource for learning L2, arguing on the point that the two languages are too different in terms of syntax and grammatical structure. In other words, what they focus on is linguistic feature rather than anything else. On the contrary, policy-makers tended to support the hypothesis of the linguistic interdependence between L1 and L2 because they were looking at the

Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) between languages, which has to do with the metacognitive skills of thinking and learning. Nevertheless, it has unexpectedly raised a thorough discussion on variants that play a part in affecting L2 learning in Hong Kong. The results obtained from interview responses in relation to second language learning also do not show consistency with the research studies carried out by the government. Mother-tongue as the medium of teaching does not seem to bring any concrete and significant benefits to the learning of languages according to teacher respondents. The overall result of the implementation of mother-tongue education on language learning is not as promising as the government has expected.

The theory of linguistic interdependence and the linguistic transfer as an impact on language proficiencies have been discussed in the above sections. Further elaboration of the impact of mother-tongue policy on, and other factors affecting, English language proficiencies will be discussed in sections 5.1.5 to 5.2. It is worth noting that the change to mother-tongue education does not only bring impact on language proficiencies, but also on academic teaching and learning in classrooms which will be looked into in section 5.4. The following section will first move the focus to the impact of the decreased exposure on English language standard as a result of mother-tongue education, and then to the factors affecting English language proficiencies in Hong Kong in section 5.2.

### **5.1.5 Impact on English language standard in relation to the exposure to English**

#### **5.1.5.1 Brief introduction on the maximum exposure theory**

Before going into further details of the impact of mother-tongue education, one definite result of its implementation is that students in CMI schools will not be given as much exposure to English language as they were used to. What concerns people most is the decline of English standards if mother-tongue instead of English is used. As has been discussed in section 2.5, the theory of maximum exposure suggests that exposure directly relates to the standard of the language learned. The standard of the second language will definitely drop if the learner is not being exposed to it. If we look closely at the principle/assumption on which the new MOI policy put forward in 1998 is based, then we would find that it has been under quite profound influence

from the linguistic interdependence theory and threshold theory which refute the hypothesis of maximum exposure and suggests that no matter how much the learner is exposed to the L2, he or she could not benefit or improve the proficiency in L2 unless the threshold level is attained.

In order to facilitate the understanding of how the factor of 'less exposure to English' has become one of the elements that affects students' language proficiencies, it is essential to elaborate briefly on the teaching culture in Hong Kong.

Although Hong Kong had been a British colony for almost 157 years, the teaching tradition of Hong Kong falls into the category of 'Confucian-heritage culture' (Biggs 1996 p. 46). Watkins (1996) summarises the general style of learning for Chinese students and divides them into four stages:

**Table 5.3**

**Tentative stage model linking learning intention and strategy with personal and context variables [of Hong Kong secondary school learners]**

Stage	Intention	Strategy	Assessment	Locus	Metacognitive level	Workload
1	Achievement through reproduction	Rote memorizing	Rewards reproduction	Teacher dependent	Low	Reasonable
2	Achievement through reproduction	Rote learn important things	Rewards reproduction	a)Teacher dependent b)Self-selections	Low	Too much to rote learn
3	Achievement through reproduction	Understand then memorize	More flexible exam questions	Self	Medium-high	Still increasing
4	Understanding and achievement	Combines understanding and memorizing OR focuses on understanding	More flexible exam questions	Self	High	Still increasing

(p.115)

The results refute the general misconception of the West that students in Confucian-



heritage classrooms tend to rote-learn without understanding the essence of the texts that they are studying because it is shown that rote-learning and selective rote-learning is only common among junior high school students, whereas senior high students realise that understanding and memorizing should be combined to form a more appropriate learning strategy to deal with the senior high curriculum. Nevertheless, students' language foundation is likely to be formed throughout junior secondary education and since students tend to rote-learn and rely heavily on teachers<sup>12</sup>, teachers' delivery of knowledge and the quality of input from teachers are therefore particularly crucial for language learning of students in their early years of secondary education. Students' learning strategy forms on the basis of rote-learning at the junior level, which may imply that the learning of English depends to a large extent on the exposure to inputs from external variants such as teachers and the environment. It may imply that decreased exposure brought about by mother-tongue education would adversely affect the basic foundation and the proficiency of English language.

#### **5.1.5.2 Discussion of the impact of decreased exposure to English language**

The immediate worry that arises in the public pertains to the decreased exposure to English language with the use of mother-tongue as the teaching medium, which is assumed would hence result in unsatisfactory performance in English. The Hong Kong government tries to legitimate its implementation of mother-tongue education by proposing the interdependent relationship between languages and stresses that the teaching of English in CMI schools would not be undermined despite students' decreased exposure to academic English language. This section is going to explore whether the subjects involved in the education field feel that less exposure to English as a result of the mother-tongue policy has brought such an impact on English language learning.

Five out of seven teachers interviewed believed that there is a direct relationship

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<sup>12</sup> The view of heavy reliance on teachers in English language learning has been affirmed by Johnson (1997b), "When students are required to write, they rely heavily on copying from textbooks, or notes provided by the teacher or copied from the blackboard, and on stringing together memorised holophrases or even complete sentences and discourses. Memorisation of key phrases and summary statements is an important survival strategy in this context, not as a substitute for understanding...but as an aid in expressing through English what has been understood." (p.180)

between the proficiency of English and the exposure to it, and that the relationship is positively proportional. It means that the more you are fully exposed to English, the more your English will benefit. The various comments cited from the teachers that indicate the positive relationship between exposure and language standards are summarized as follows:

*The family factor*

If students come from a background with well-educated parents, then it is very likely that the extent of their exposure to English since an early age is large, and naturally their English is better. Students from this stratum of the society probably tend to be positively exposed to English and are therefore more likely to perform better in English. This hypothesis relates highly to the causal relationship between the social background and class of students and their language proficiencies.

*The school factor*

One teacher from the CMI group pointed out the fact that students in EMI schools have more exposure to English and their English standards tend to be generally higher. She quoted from her practical experience of being a teacher at an EMI school then and being a teacher at a CMI school now:

**I used to teach in EMI schools. Obviously the exposure to English in CMI schools is much less than in EMI schools. In EMI schools, students are exposed to a set of English vocabulary in, say, Science, History, Geography, even Home Economics. But this school is a CMI school, so their knowledge of vocabulary is less. I do not teach Chinese and I cannot be sure if more exposure to Chinese will help improving the Chinese language, but the impact is most likely to be positive.**

(Teacher B English CMI)

This factor suggests that the degree of exposure to English in the academic field produces a sharp distinction between the CMI and EMI students in terms of the use of vocabulary. Mother-tongue education might accordingly disadvantage CMI students' English standards because they cannot exercise English vocabulary as flexibly as their

EMI contemporaries.

*The social factor*

Another aspect that relates to exposure is that Hong Kong society does not provide the context or environment to enhance the learning of English, and the linguistic input of L2 is mainly from schools. Students are rarely exposed to English because of its low use value in everyday life and because of the lack of motivation. As Teacher C suggested,

**If a school belongs to CMI, then the exposure, or I should say the quality of input is limited. But the assumption of Education Department is very interesting. They think that the English standards of students won't fall even with the switch to CMI. They believe that in Hong Kong society, there are lots of other means of input for learning English. But I don't really think so—for Hong Kong students, who are locally born here, the only exposure to English is from teachers, schools and textbooks.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

Teacher Trainer A and Policy-Maker A both shared a common point of view regarding the environment of Hong Kong, and they both offered Singapore as a comparison and showed how the language standards are different because of the lack of exposure to English in Hong Kong. Teacher Trainer A commented that the reason why Singapore could place English up to a societal level was that language was positively promoted to the public—TV, newspapers, the media, people are immersed in the English speaking environment and comprehensible inputs are available everywhere. Teacher Trainer A continued by saying that,

**We don't have the awareness of culture of English. Well, the average of students would not by choice come to the university, having watched English TV programmes...what I found most depressing in the context that the two public stations which are English, is that essentially the programming tends to be more and more Chinese-oriented. This limits the exposure of students to Chinese, and to English. My own research shows that students coming to universities do not**

**read for enjoyment, and that means exposure.**

(Teacher Trainer A)

However, Policy-Maker A concluded that the speech environment in Hong Kong could not offer a similar kind of reinforcement and exposure to the kind that Singapore could offer to its people in terms of using English.

**...Singaporeans are able to master the skills of English to the level of daily communication. But Hong Kong students, except for learning in the class, they haven't got the chance to use English. English is not used in supermarkets, people are not watching English channels, they don't even have the exposure.**

(Policy-Maker A)

### *Quality of exposure*

All the three teacher trainers saw a positive relationship between exposure and the standard of the language. They also believed that exposure is one of the crucial factors that contribute to English proficiency. However, two issues of concern were brought up: the first one is the motivation of students to be exposed to English, raised by Teacher Trainer A and Teacher G; and the second one relates to the quality of exposure.

**...I think it [relationship between exposure and language standards] is a more complex question than it seems to be. If you want a short answer [to the question of exposure and language standards], then yes. But that has to be active exposure...well, you don't see the other language even though you are exposed to it. I think the key to this active exposure is the willingness to recognize what you are saying and to use it.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

**...maybe there will be a certain level of negative influence on students' English language if they are no longer exposed that much to English. However, if the students' English is not good enough but is always under the pressure of memorizing English terms and grammar, his/her results will turn out to be**

**unsatisfactory too however much he/she is exposed to English.**

(Policy-Maker B)

The point that Policy-Maker B made explains that the amount of exposure does not necessarily correlate with the levels achieved in the L2. The answer of Policy-Maker B implies that the motivation of learners, and how the learners are exposed to the L2, are more important.

**Actually it depends on how you define “being exposed to English”. If it only involves incomprehensible inputs, then it does not help at all. Many students have been exposed to English since kindergarten, but their English is not that good. Why is that? Because most of the inputs are incomprehensible, which do not help with the standard of English language. The most important thing is that if a student wants to learn, then that knowledge should become part of the person, which involves the learning process of the student. If the knowledge has already gone through the thinking/learning process of the student, then it has become part of the person.**

(Teacher Trainer B)

The quality of exposure (the quality of inputs) involves the types of English language materials and contexts that students are exposed to during their learning process. Both Teacher Trainer B and Teacher Trainer C raised the point that the importance of exposure depends to a large extent on the ‘quality’, instead of ‘quantity’.

### ***Motivation of learners***

Only two teachers out of seven did not see that exposure to a language is directly related to the standard of it. A very interesting point of concern was raised by Teacher G, an English teacher at a CMI school. She claimed that she has taught students who are new immigrants from China whose exposure to English was obviously much less than their Hong Kong counterparts, who have been exposed to English since kindergarten. However, they could outperform the Hong Kong students in the same class after a short while, and she believed that the standard of English has more to do with individual motivation rather than exposure. This argument coheres with the point

made by Policy-Maker C earlier about the “willingness to recognize what you are saying and to use it”. There are always means to expose oneself to English but the problem is that one might not look out for those resources if he/she is not self-motivated.

### *Teaching strategy*

The quality of teachers’ English standards and also the teaching methods are main determining factors, since they play important roles in the construction of the quality of input, and also influence students’ motivation to learn.

**...Many Hong Kong teachers are actually not able to teach effectively in English in the class...whether the teachers can speak pure English, we put a big question mark and I have reservation about this.**

(Policy-Maker A)

The discussion of the impact of ‘decreased exposure’ on language learning indicates that English language proficiencies would undoubtedly suffer because of less contact with academic English. Nevertheless, the extent to which English learning will be affected is subject to the interaction of various factors. Analysis of respondents’ answers showed that quite a sizeable proportion of the interviewees pointed out that apart from ‘exposure’, or more specifically, the ‘quality of exposure’, the English language standards of students in Hong Kong are under the influence of multiple variants. These will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.2.

As described in section 2.9.1, the Education Department has introduced the NET (Native English-speaking Teacher) scheme to improve the English learning environment. Despite the effort of enriching the English learning environment, we should note that having a NET at school would not necessarily generate a speech environment that is appropriate for learning English. As a matter of fact, using a NET as an English teacher in schools may involve extra effort on the part of the native speaker teacher to make the scheme effective. The data in the current research have implied that mere exposure to the L2 is inadequate. The quality of inputs depends to a

large extent on teachers' attitude and teaching strategies and this has consolidated the points of view suggested in Randolph (2001) and Swain and Johnson (1997) in section 2.9.1. The personal involvement with the learner's culture and enthusiasm of the NET is crucial because learning of English requires something more than just exposing oneself to the speaking environment of the target language. It is the quality rather than the quantity of the language inputs that counts.

## **5.2 Factors hindering the learning of English language in Hong Kong**

### **5.2.1 Literature on second language learning**

Another argument about second language learning goes back to the debate on nature or nurture regarding second language learning. Behaviourists believe that language acquisition takes place in the form of imitating and copying the language behaviours in the surrounding environment, which suggests that language learning is a totally environment-oriented act. Chomsky, on the contrary, argues that language is too complex to be imitated and copied and proposed the concept of 'Universal Grammar'. 'Universal Grammar' is defined as "the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages not merely by accident but by necessity...UG [Universal Grammar] can be taken as expressing the essence of human language." (Chomsky 1976 p.29) Cook (1988) states that "UG theory holds that the speaker knows a set of principles that apply to all languages, and parameters that vary within clearly defined limits from one language to another. Acquiring language means learning how these principles apply to a particular language and which value is appropriate for each parameter."(pp.1-2) It is argued that the ability to acquire language is innate and the basic language structure comes naturally with the learner. 'Universal Grammar' is believed to apply to all human beings, irrespective of their mother-tongue.

The present research is not making any attempt to refute the hypothesis of 'innatism' with regard to language learning. The focus is drawn to the question that if this hypothesis of 'innatism' can be applied to any person and any languages, then what are the factors accounting for different levels achieved by different learners in language learning?

## **5.2.2 Discussion of respondents' answers**

### **5.2.2.1 Consideration of social and environmental factors**

The lack of appropriate environment in using the second language in the social domains pointed out before makes it extra hard for learners to master English effectively in Hong Kong. The change to mother-tongue education might have further aggravated the situation of second language learning because the English lesson is the only time that remains for exercising the language. The psycholinguistic perspective stresses the importance of interaction between the learners and native speakers because it is through this interactive process that learners can actively produce meaningful utterances. As Mitchell & Myles (1998) summarize,

**This ensures that the input is well adapted to their own internal needs (i.e. to the present state of development of their L2 knowledge) What this means is that learners need the chance to talk with native speakers in a fairly open-ended way, to ask questions, and to clarify meanings when they do not immediately understand. Under these conditions, it is believed that the utterances that result will be at the right level of difficulty to promote learning; in Krashen's terms, they will provide true "comprehensible input".**

(p.16)

The point of interaction raised here coincidentally adheres to the view of Teacher Trainer B about the quality of exposure mentioned earlier. The essence of interaction lies in the fact that learners' errors could be corrected immediately through interaction. The packed schedule for English lessons, the heavy workload of teachers and also the over-balanced teacher/student ratio (which is 1 to over 40 in most classes) make it almost impossible to provide students with an appropriate environment to learn English effectively.

### **5.2.2.2 Language anxiety**

Another reason that prevents positive transfer from L1 to L2, as suggested by Teacher Trainer C, is the psychological barrier of students in using English and this is what



linguists refer to as 'language anxiety'.

**...in Hong Kong, people avoid speaking English unless they really have to. They generally have the societal barrier using English and students don't want to be said to be showing off if they use English...my own research shows that the language anxiety for students is greater than it is for many other language learners.**

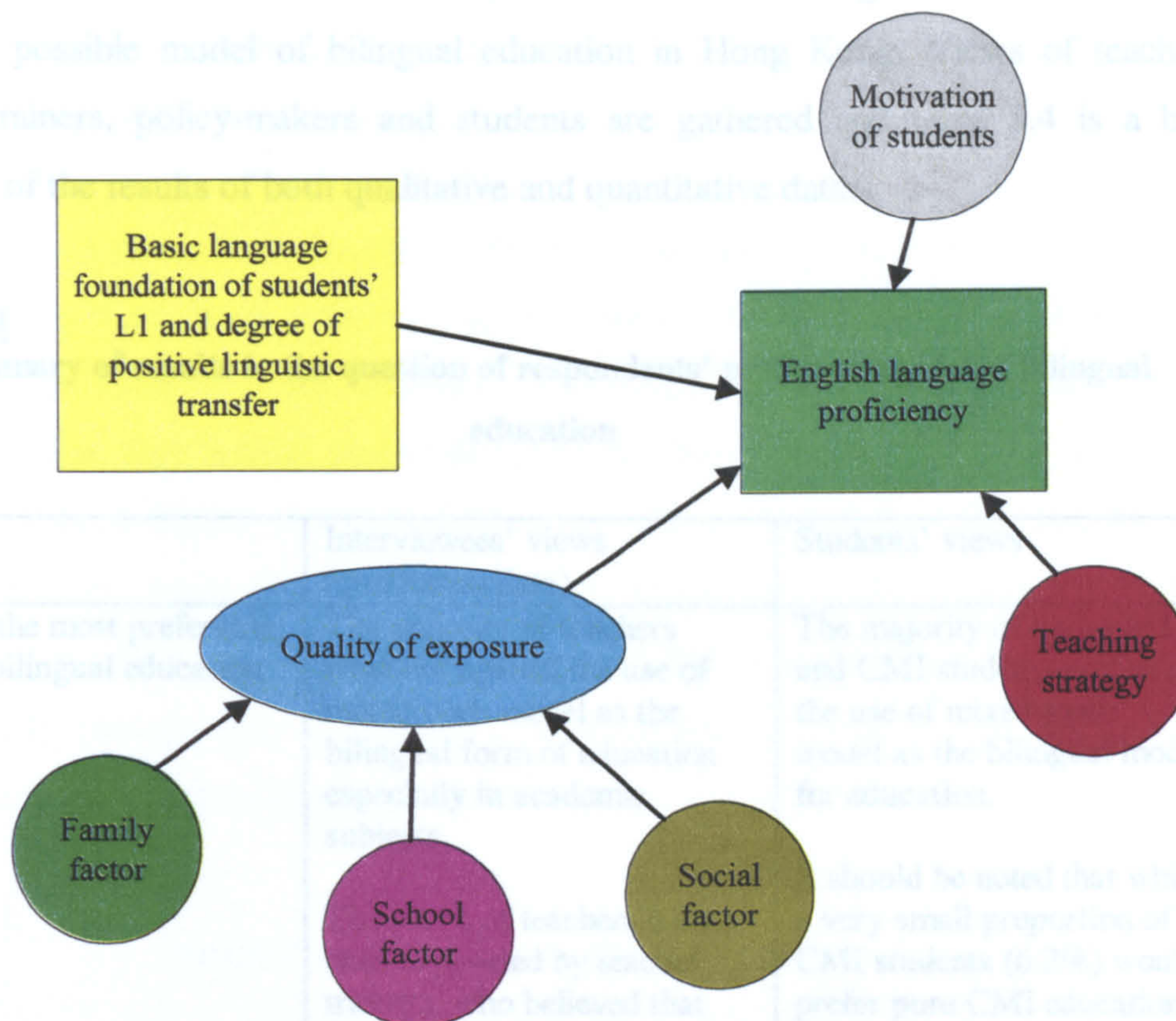
(Teacher Trainer C)

As most of the contexts in Hong Kong are Cantonese-oriented, students might not feel the need to use English unless they really have to. Their fear of making mistakes and of being regarded as 'showing off' are two reasons for anxiety, which may act as a hindrance for second language learning.

According to the analysis of data, a hypothesis is made that English language proficiency is in fact a compound formed by a combination of various elements such as the learning motivation of students, the teaching strategies, the basic foundation of student's language proficiencies in L1, the degree of positive transfer and the quality of exposure.

As we may notice from the diagram below, the quality of exposure is only one of the main factors that contribute to the English language proficiency level of a student. Diagram E is made up of the summary of these several factors that affect English language proficiency as these factors can be divided into intrinsic factors, such as the self-motivation of learners to learn the target language, and the learner's basic foundation in his/her L1. External factors such as the quality of exposure which is influenced by social, school and family variants have been elaborated in section 5.1.5.2.

### Factors affecting students' English language proficiency levels



**Diagram E**

The implication this diagram may have on the current MOI policy refers to the interaction of mother-tongue education with all these variants in relation to the learning of English. Therefore, the assumption of the Education Department that mother-tongue education will yield a positive impact on the learning of the second language may be an over-simplification of the whole question. Besides, the assumption of the general public that exposure to English is the main determinant of English language proficiency is likely to be a misconception, since the existence of all the other variants that affect English language proficiency should not be overlooked.

As pointed out in the introductory section at 5.0, issues such as the impact of mother-tongue education on language proficiencies, factors affecting language transfer and language proficiencies, were dealt with in sections 5.1 and 5.2. Reference has been

made to one of the underlying hypotheses behind the 1998 MOI policy, the linguistic interdependence theory. Discussion on the threshold theory in relation to the new MOI policy will be done in the later section, 5.5.2.3. The following section 5.3 discusses further a possible model of bilingual education in Hong Kong. Views of teachers, teacher trainers, policy-makers and students are gathered and table 5.4 is a brief summary of the results of both qualitative and quantitative data.

**Table 5.4**

**Summary of results to the question of respondents' preferred model of bilingual education**

Question	Interviewees' views (qualitative data)	Students' views
Views on the most preferable model of bilingual education	<p>The majority of teachers were not against the use of mixed-code model as the bilingual form of education especially in academic subjects.</p> <p>The views of teachers have been supported by teacher trainers, who believed that mixed code could act as a facilitative tool if used appropriately.</p> <p>Policy-makers were not against bilingual education. One of them suggested the use of 'two-mode instruction' as a possible alternative.</p>	<p>The majority of both EMI and CMI students preferred the use of mixed-mode model as the bilingual model for education.</p> <p>It should be noted that while a very small proportion of CMI students (6.2%) would prefer pure CMI education, only 1.3% of the EMI students would opt for pure CMI as the teaching medium, as compared to 25.3% for pure EMI education.</p>

### 5.3 Views on the use of bilingual models

Debates over mother-tongue education stem mainly from the criticism that the implementation of Chinese-medium education would pull down the English levels of students and are in stark contradiction to the goal of the government in promoting biliteracy and trilingualism. The following section sets out to discuss views of interviewees and questionnaire respondents about the ideal form of bilingual education that they have in mind in order to answer the subsidiary question: If a bilingual model is practical in Hong Kong, then what model should be adopted

according to the views of respondents? It hopes to draw a picture of possible alternatives and ways of framing bilingual education in the future.

### 5.3.1 Discussion of respondents' answers

#### 5.3.1.1 Analysis of students' responses

The preference of students for the choice of the medium of instruction projected quite a different picture from what the policy makers thought was best for them. As illustrated in table 5.5, for students from English-medium schools, only 25.3% expressed that they would prefer the pure English medium, and only 6.2% from Chinese-medium schools would vote for a pure Chinese medium if they had the right to choose their most favourite medium of instruction. Only 1/75 students from English-medium schools preferred to have pure Chinese as the medium of instruction; interestingly enough, only 1/65 from Chinese-medium schools wished to have pure English as the medium of instruction in classroom.

**Table 5.5**

**Students' choice of their preferred teaching medium**

Type of School	Bilingual (mixed code)	Chinese medium of instruction	English medium of instruction	Other models	No answer
Chinese-medium schools	87.7%	6.2%	1.5%	0	4.6%
English-medium schools	69.3%	1.3%	25.3%	4%	0

In fact, the vast majority chose the bilingual medium as the best alternative in lessons and the rates for both Chinese-medium and English-medium schools are similarly high (69.3% in English-medium schools and 87.7% in Chinese-medium schools).

#### 5.3.1.2 Analysis of teachers' responses

Regarding attitudes towards bilingual education, one of the teachers from the English-medium schools favoured it. As for the five teachers from Chinese-medium schools, three had a positive attitude towards bilingual education. All three teacher trainers

being interviewed welcomed bilingual education and none of the policy-makers opposed it.

However, there is a difference in the way of interpreting the term 'bilingual education' between students, teachers, teacher trainers and policy-makers. What the students define as bilingual education is in fact the use of both languages in the same lesson, which is what we have referred to as 'code-mixing'. This issue falls into another category which is to be discussed later in section 5.3.2.

A significant note that has to be made is that although the rate of teachers and teacher trainers who favoured bilingual education is slightly higher than those who are not in general (half against half in the case of English-medium schools, and 3/5 vs 2/5 in the case of Chinese-medium schools), all of them stressed that it depended on the kind of bilingual model that might be adopted because bilingual education is too broad to be understood as a term with a single meaning. One of the teachers made the following suggestion:

**Well, I believe the medium of instruction should vary according to subjects. Some subjects can be taught in Chinese, like Home Economics, Art. But for other subjects, either English or Chinese is to be used. Using English poses difficulty for some of the subjects. So I think using different languages for different subjects can work.**

(Teacher D Geography CMI)

This suggestion was supported by two other teachers, and one of the teacher trainers:

**I think that [bilingual education] is quite a good way to operate. Also like the model they use in schools like international schools where they spend most of the day in one language but the rest of the day in another.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

This view also coheres with the future possible trend of language policy development, which Policy-Maker A commented on as something that is under consideration but is not yet approved.

**We are thinking that perhaps teachers can teach some subjects in Chinese, and some in English. But you should note that we are not talking about the division by class. If teachers are available, and students have the ability, then we would allow some subjects to be taught in English.**

(Policy-Maker A)

Analysis of teachers and policy-makers indicate that the majority of them are in favour of bilingual education. Both Teacher D and Teacher Trainer C have proposed that the bilingual model could be based on the 'by-subject approach' (the use of different languages in different subjects). Issues that relate to the future development of the language policy have arisen from the answer of Policy-Maker A as another area that is worth investigating. The following section will explore further on the bilingual model prevalent in Hong Kong before 1998—mixed-code teaching—and try to look for the bilingual model that may be appropriate in the local context and is in accordance with the subjects' general attitude towards teaching medium.

### **5.3.2 Analysis and discussion on the attitudes towards mixed code**

#### **5.3.2.1 Discussion of students' responses**

Due to the bilingual nature of the education system and the stress on the importance of both Chinese and English, the section on the MOI issue has briefly outlined the phenomenon of the flood of EMI schools in Hong Kong, with the result that many students were not able to cope with pure English in lessons which resulted in the emergence of mixed-code teaching. Due to the unique cultural condition of Hong Kong, mixed-code teaching is included in the repertoire of bilingual education within the Hong Kong context and was a prevalent mode of teaching in the EMI schools, before the new policy on medium of instruction was introduced.

**Table 5.6****Students' attitude towards mixed code**

Attitudes towards code-mixing	EMI students	CMI students
1. Lessons are made easier with the use of mixed code	72%	69.2%
2. Lessons are made difficult with the use of mixed code.	0%	13.8%
3. It makes no difference whether mixed code is used or not	28%	17%

As we can see from table 5.6 about the attitudes of students towards the use of mixed-code teaching, 72% of students from EMI schools found that lessons are made easier with the use of mixed code, whereas a very close percentage of CMI students (69.2%) preferred the use of mixed code if they are taught through EMI for the same reason as the EMI students. None of the students from EMI schools felt that lessons would be made difficult if mixed code was used, which is quite a contrast to the 13.8% of CMI students who were asked the same question. Although this is the case, the proportion of students who made this choice (that lessons are made difficult with mixed code) still occupies the smallest percentage out of the three choices. The remaining 28% of the EMI students claimed that it makes no difference whether mixed code is used or not, while 17% of students from CMI schools shared the same attitude with them.

The results of the students' questionnaires reveal the fact that mixed code was seen as a facilitative tool for teaching and learning by the majority of students, and it did not make much difference regarding the medium of instruction they were having in schools. Students from both streams also chose mixed-code teaching as the most ideal form of teaching medium, and they would have opted for this alternative if they were given the chance to choose.

### **5.3.2.2 Discussion of interview responses towards code-mixing**

When asked about their attitudes on the use of mixed code in lessons, teachers did not show strong opposition to it. Although none of them suggested that it was an appropriate teaching medium, and most of them said that it had a negative influence

on student's language proficiency development, none of them held very strong opinions against the practice of mixed code. One of the teachers from EMI schools agreed that mixed code would harm the learning of both L1 and L2, but just to a very small extent, and the most important point is that it makes teaching through English more convenient. Another teacher from EMI did not regard that mixed-code teaching is problematic at all:

**I don't think mixed code is necessarily a problem. If we trace back the origin of mixed code, it is in fact emerging out of convenience for both teachers and students, and I don't think the standards are pulled down because of this reason.**

(Teacher E English EMI)

In fact, only one English teacher (out of five) from the CMI schools expressed dislike of mixed code in teaching language, whereas the rest of the teachers (four) from CMI schools believed the impact of mixed code on students varied according to subjects. They had a similar perspective that mixed code should be prohibited when teaching either one of the languages. Nevertheless, they doubted the real need to use a pure medium when teaching other content subjects such as Science, History and Geography and held a more neutral position regarding this matter.

A teacher from a CMI school even claimed that what the teachers have been doing is just following the trends and needs of the society. She agreed with the hypothesis that mixed-code teaching would do harm to students' acquisition of languages, but thought that mixed code should not be blamed for pulling down the academic standards at the same time.

**If it [mixed code] is something to blame, I think not only the education system should be criticized. Hong Kong is in fact a mixed-code society, and even for a newspaper like Ming Pao, nearly the whole of it uses mixed code. Therefore, instead of having teachers to bear the criticisms, the whole society should be blamed for intimidating the language culture of the next generation.**

(Teacher A Maths CMI)

Most of the teachers did not deny that mixed-code teaching would affect adversely the



language learning of students, though they did not think it does much harm on learning subjects other than language-oriented ones. Two out of three teacher trainers, as opposed to the teachers, did not put the blame on mixed code for bringing all those negative effects on language learning. As trainers of teachers, two of them expressed that they were not against anything that works effectively, and their concern lay within the misuse of mixed code and the quality of teaching method rather than merely the use of mixed code, since it is just a means of transmitting knowledge to students verbally. Teacher Trainer B clarified this by saying that,

**If there is no active learning at all, then it is not the problem of mixed code only, but also the problem of teaching strategy as well, since students cannot learn without active participation, without anything challenging them. Perhaps I should say that if a person is good at both languages and he wants to play around with two languages, it is not a problem at all...So in a way mixed code is not a problem, but it depends on who uses it, and how it's being used.**

(Teacher Trainer B)

Therefore, 'who' uses mixed code and 'how' it is being used are the key questions, which coincides with what Teacher Trainer A explained as the main cause for those detrimental effects brought by code-mixing,

**...they [bad teachers] put the burden on students to bridge the gap in languages. The teachers are not effectively filling in the gaps...one of the problems with mixed code is that the teachers are confused and frustrated, because of the materials and the language difference. Teachers are not trained to deal with language issues. Whatever approach they use, they have to develop strategy to deal with mixed code.**

(Teacher Trainer A)

Comments from teachers and teacher trainers seem to suggest that mixed code itself does not engender problems on its own. Misuse of mixed code in academic contexts is where the core of the problem of the teaching medium lies.

### 5.3.2.3 Mixed-code teaching as a form of bilingual education

Interview respondents including the majority of teachers and teacher trainers are generally not against the use of mixed code, though some teachers have pointed out that it would be better to confine its use in content-based subjects only. Data collected from student respondents have illustrated that they prefer bilingual education to the ideology of purism, and they also regarded mixed code as the most appealing form of bilingual teaching medium. The Hong Kong government has attributed the linguistic retardation and falling academic achievements to mixed-code teaching, because students learning through this non-standard model would be disadvantaged linguistically and would not be able to follow either of the languages used. Mixed code is non-standard in the way that it only serves the communicative function and mixed code as a written form is not allowed in standard writing. Lin (2000) researched further on the bilingual strategies that could fit into local classrooms (please refer to appendix XX for further details). Review of literature by Lin (2000) has shown that even the pure medium policy (the use of French only as the teaching medium in the early immersion programme in Canada) requires assistance from the students' first language, English, as the teaching aid to facilitate the use of a foreign tongue in the classrooms.

The practice of forbidding Cantonese completely would probably do more harm than good. If students' first language is used properly, then it can not only bridge the language gap between teachers and students, and hence lighten the psychological barrier of students, but also students' resistance to the use of the foreign tongue can be reduced when they realise that their first language is also integrated into the teaching medium. It may be viewed with cultural respect by students, thus enhancing their language awareness.

Second language linguists like Lin (2000) and Cummins (1999) have also emphasized the need to explore the extent to which the first language can serve as a facilitative tool in English-medium classrooms. All these researchers have reservations about pure-medium education: some argue on the socio-cultural basis (Lin 2000) and some on the grounds of yielding higher educational benefits. Mixed-code instruction, which

is so much discouraged by the Education Department, should not be totally ruled out since certain case studies have illustrated that mixed code may also stand out as an effective bilingual medium if being used with appropriate techniques.

The Education Department argues that mixed code is a reason for the declining Chinese and English standards from a purely linguistic perspective. Its argument is apparently in favour of pure-medium of instruction, which is set against the principle of bilingual education. Tang's (2000) study of the use of mother-tongue in English classes further suggests that mixed-code teaching may not only facilitate general academic subjects, but also the learning of English. Tang (2000) researched students' and teachers' perceptions on the use of Chinese in English classes in a university in Beijing and found that both students and teachers viewed the application of Chinese in English lessons positively, for the reasons that

**...it is sometimes necessary to use the mother-tongue for language tasks such as defining vocabulary items, practising the use of phrases and expressions, explaining grammar rules, and for the explanation of some important ideas.**

(p.53)

However, Tang's study concluded that the role of Chinese should be supplementary and its use should be limited to the extent that it does not twist the principle of English language teaching.

Section 5.3.3 emerges as a sub-section to check out the situation of classroom language use after mother-tongue was put into practice. It aims to see how far the authentic situation of language use in classroom follows the regulations of mother-tongue policy listed in government documents.

### **5.3.3 The language patterns in both CMI and EMI classrooms after the new MOI policy**

#### **5.3.3.1 Literature on language patterns in classroom after 1998**

The use of languages in both the former English-medium schools (FEMS) and the

EMI classrooms have been illustrated by the research by Evans (2002), which has already been discussed in section 2.8. The findings of Evans's (2002) study indicates that teachers and students are not very consistent with the kind of languages they use during the classes and the principle of using a single language in classrooms has been violated as code-mixing is still prevailing.

### **5.3.3.2 Analysis and discussion of respondents' answers**

#### ***Discussion of students' responses***

None of the respondents from EMI schools in my current study said that Chinese or Cantonese was used in English lessons, and all had chosen English as the only medium in English classes. It might be reflective and true, but we have to be cautious when interpreting answers to this specific question. Language pattern is just part of the focus of the current study and only a general pattern has been obtained in this respect. There might be the possibility that students may have overlooked certain interactive aspects between themselves and the teachers, and the picture presented in Evans's work may be more authentic in this case.

Findings of CMI respondents also illustrate that English teachers in CMI schools do not stick to the single-language principle when giving English lessons. Although a high percentage of students (69.2%) suggested that only English was used in English lessons, 18.5% reported the use of code-mixing when teachers conducted English classes, and another 12.3% said only Chinese was used in teaching English.

Evans's (2002) report has shown an increase in the use of English in higher forms (e.g. the A-Levels). Nevertheless, the figures in tables 2.8 and 2.9 might imply that the brand new pure language classroom environment that sounds ideal theoretically does not seem to have made much difference to the language use in classrooms in reality. The single-medium era that the government has opened up for students has not totally eliminated code-mixing. This situation has turned out to be another example of a wide gulf between theoretical proposal and genuine practice in authentic situations.

As shown from the firm approach of the Educational Department when introducing

pure-language medium, it is very clear that the government has attributed the lowering of students' language standards to code-mixing and code-switching in the classroom. Therefore, the eradication of code-mixing and code-switching is stated as one of the aims of putting forward the new MOI policy. In the 75 questionnaires returned by EMI students two years after the implementation, it is surprising to note that only 28% of them reported that English was the only teaching medium for all the subjects they took. The remaining 72% said that Cantonese was used in various practical and cultural subjects which are not content-oriented, such as Art and Physical Education and Home Economics, when active participation of students and group work are involved. We should note that the use of Chinese in these cultural-based subjects does not violate the rules set up by the government because it has been stated that Chinese medium is permitted for teaching these subjects even in the EMI schools. As for those more content-based subjects, pure English was reported to be in use in the EMI schools.

The data about the language pattern used in classrooms also reveal that Cantonese was broadly used in religious education classes in EMI schools. Religious education (Bible study in this context of research) is a relatively more content-based subject than those cultural and artistic subjects, though it is not counted as a core subject in the whole curriculum. One of the main reasons for its low level of importance is that not every school in Hong Kong is religion-based and religious education is restricted to those schools founded by the missionaries. Besides, even though Bible study is also counted as a full subject in the HKCEE syllabus, its level of recognition varies from one school to another because some schools are reluctant to, or they simply do not, consider it to be a subject that can reflect students' academic abilities. After the 1998 MOI policy was put forward and English is supposed to be the sole medium in the EMI context for all the subjects except for those that are Chinese-related, students' responses in the current study reveal that it is not totally the case in all EMI schools. For Physical Education and Art lessons, the use of Cantonese can be explained by the possibility that teachers are giving instructions most of the time during the lessons. The lack of textbooks to build on and the exemption of written exams also make verbal instruction in English more difficult and unnecessary. As for religious education, it is also one of the subjects that can be taught in Chinese within the EMI

context according to the regulation. Therefore, the conclusion is that EMI schools generally follow the regulations of pure medium of teaching; however, the permission for the use of mother-tongue in religious education was criticized by Policy-Maker B as a distortion of the original goal of pure English medium of instruction in EMI context. He pointed out that:

**Some students obviously cannot learn through English, but the schools have to label themselves as EMI schools. In this case they use English textbooks and use Chinese to explain...when it comes to teaching bible and some particular subjects, EMI schools normally use Chinese because they want their students to understand religion and also to be motivated to learn. They therefore turn to Chinese.**

(Policy-Maker B)

It should be stressed here that the policy-maker has never been apprised of the students' responses in this research study. His saying that "EMI schools teachers also use Chinese when it comes to teaching particular subjects" may also imply that using Chinese for religious education in EMI schools is not uncommon even after the implementation of the new MOI policy.

A point that is worth noting is that the EMI student respondents in this research all happen to be from the top elite schools in Hong Kong, where English-medium has become a traditional practice in schools. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that these EMI schools have stuck to the use of pure English medium in almost all content-based subjects. When analysing this question, we will have to take into consideration those other EMI schools that fall towards the lower end of the elite scale. i.e. those schools that have passed the criteria for EMI teaching but have been more flexible with the teaching medium because of the larger variation in terms of students' abilities.

It can be concluded here that five out of seven teachers interviewed indicated that the effect of code-mixing on academic subjects, apart from language subjects, is very indirect and minimal, and code-mixing consists of certain advantages that can balance its weaknesses. Therefore, they did not oppose the use of mixed code in content-

oriented subjects but all of them would opt for single medium when teaching languages. Therefore, what is suggested here is that the use of mixed code can be accepted in content-oriented subjects. The majority of teacher trainers (two-thirds) reported that they were not against mixed code in language teaching as long as it was used properly with appropriate teaching strategies. One of the teacher trainers shared a similar view with most of the teachers that code-mixing has negative effects on language learning, but mixed code is also an indicator of one's socio-economic status as it is usually well-educated people with high socio-economic status who could make good use of two different languages at the same time.

*Use of mixed code in relation to the threshold theory*

Policy-Makers A and C favoured bilingual education as the majority of teachers and students did. However, they justified the policy of pure medium by pointing out the problem from a linguistic perspective. They both reckoned that many students have developed the habit of writing in mixed code even in public examination. The main cause of the problem is that most of them have not attained the threshold level when they receive education through L2—a point at which L2 is adopted when the development of L1 is still immature.

**When students are in such a crucial stage of language development, I don't want the teachers to ruin them through mixed code. I don't oppose the use of English in particular cases. But when the phenomenon turns out to be that this kind of method affects students' learning and language proficiency, then I think we should interfere. We are not against EMI teaching, but we should stick to pure language until students attain a particular threshold level.**

(Policy-Maker A)

In fact, we can see that the explanation from the Education Department representatives like Policy-Makers A and C have related the MOI policy with the threshold hypothesis proposed by overseas linguists like Cummins. As Morris (1993) defines, it is a "...level below which a student cannot come to terms with the curriculum. If such students are admitted to the English-medium stream, they are

likely to damage not only their own educational development but that of other students who may be affected by their presence in the class, and by the modifications that a teacher may introduce in order to accommodate them.” (p.25)

Policy-Maker A put great emphasis on the threshold level, saying that mixed code could in fact be accepted on the communicative level, and once students have attained the particular threshold level, they would be able to cope with the use of either one of the languages. Therefore, control over the MOI is loosened when it gets to the higher forms since it is believed that students would have reached the threshold level by that stage of education. In other words, mixed code as a form of bilingual programme may possibly be applied to senior forms and to content-oriented subjects.

Results generally reflect respondents' preference for mixed code as a possible alternative for bilingual education. One of the main contradictions reflected from the data regarding the issue of mixed code is the conflicting views between teachers (who are supposed to practise the policy) and policy-makers (who design policy according to the basis of linguistic theories and international research studies).

The mother-tongue policy not only affects students' language proficiencies through the factors previously mentioned in 5.1 and 5.2. It also impacts on academic subjects by changing the ways teachers teach and students learn in classrooms. Points that pertain to the impact of mother-tongue education on teaching and learning will be discussed in the following section 5.4.

#### **5.4 Impact on teaching and learning**

Teacher trainers and teachers from both CMI and EMI streams were interviewed with regard to the educational impact derived from the use of different media of instruction. The question was raised to shed light on the issue of whether mother-tongue education, apart from eradicating the language barriers, has engendered any positive and constructive impact on teaching and learning in authentic classrooms. This section presents the answers to the subsidiary question of the impact that mother-tongue education has on teaching and learning. The following table summarises teachers' and



students' views on this question.

**Table 5.7**

**Summary of the data with reference to the views of impact of mother-tongue on teaching and learning**

Questions	Qualitative and quantitative data
<p>1. Views on the impact of mother-tongue education on teaching</p>	<p>More games can be played and activities can be used with the use of Chinese as the MOI because of better communication according to the teacher respondents.</p> <p>Subject teachers generally held positive views towards mother-tongue education, but the majority of them insisted on the use of pure English in English lessons.</p> <p>Mother-tongue education has the advantage of the economy of time because teachers do not have to explain ideas too as compared to the EMI environment.</p> <p>Teacher trainers believed that it was the teaching strategy rather than the teaching medium that should arouse people's awareness. The teaching strategies used by teachers generally are not effective, irrespective of what medium they are using.</p>
<p>2. Views on the impact of mother-tongue education on learning</p>	<p>The majority of students agreed that it is better and easier to learn in the mother-tongue.</p> <p>Teachers felt that students are willing to talk and express themselves with the use of mother-tongue.</p> <p>Teachers know better what levels their students are at with the use of mother-tongue education. Some teachers claimed that sometimes they might have underestimated students' potentials in the English-speaking classrooms.</p>

## 5.4.1 Teaching side

### 5.4.1.1 Variation among subjects

Teachers' responses generally emphasized greater varieties in the way to teach as a result of mother-tongue education. Five out of seven teacher interviewees pointed out that there were changes in the teaching method after the implementation of mother-tongue as the teaching medium. The positive impact was more significantly felt by those teachers who had experiences teaching in EMI schools but are now using Cantonese to teach. The remaining two were neutral instead of showing any negative opinions due to their inadequate experiences of using mother-tongue to teach. They are both English teachers and claimed that their teaching medium has not changed since they have to use English to teach English as a subject regardless of the medium of instruction the school is using. However, Teacher B, one of the teachers who remained neutral, revealed that CMI teaching might have helped students to realise their real potentials. The answers of the other five could be divided into the change in teaching methods and also the difference in relation to the learning strategy of students.

With regard to the teaching methods, all five teachers reported the practical convenience and time being saved from elaborating and explaining English terms and phrases after the use of Chinese medium. However, the change in teaching methods is highly related to the subject nature and content. The Mathematics teacher considered that even in Mathematics, which is not heavily loaded with English language, she had to spend lots of time explaining the questions, and to make sure that students would not misunderstand what he or she was required to answer before she could further teach them the calculating steps. She analysed that the teaching method has not changed much with the use of Chinese medium in her subject. As she put it,

**What we (Mathematics teachers) mainly do is to find the way to guide the thinking of students, to keep them on the right track and teach them appropriate problem-solving skills. With the use of Cantonese to teach, the main difference is perhaps the ways to motivate students to solve problems. I no longer need to translate those terms and explain those formulas so thoroughly, like what I used**

**to do with English. Instead, more time could be spent on doing exercises to strengthen their understanding in the subject.**

(Teacher A Maths CMI)

Her view was supported by two others, Teachers D and F. However, we should note here that Teacher D is a Geography teacher and Teacher F is a History teacher respectively, whose subjects are more heavily loaded with language. As Teacher D said,

**We could not play as many games before as we do now. It was too difficult for students to make presentations and this constraint has limited the types of activities that could have been adopted in the CMI context. If we teach in English, we could only do the simplest things. But now with the use of Chinese, more varieties are available. I used to teach in an EMI school, and what I did in the lessons was to explain the technical terms in classes.**

(Teacher D Geography CMI)

The situation in the CMI classrooms, as we could have a rough idea of what the two interviewees have described, is in stark contrast to that of the EMI schools. Despite the fact that Teacher F has been teaching in an EMI school and has not experienced any significant change in terms of the teaching medium, her views may nevertheless be able to project the difficulty of sticking with English throughout the class:

**In fact, lots of time is spent on explanations...my impression is that their [students] standards are generally low, but they are required to write in English. I spent lots of time explaining the content and specially the technical terms, which does restrict the kinds of activities that I could do in class. There are even lots of cram classes going on after school, and time is limited. This kind of cram classes have greatly reduced the students' interest in learning. If more activities that involve their participation could be done, more knowledge could be delivered and this could in a way increase their motivation.**

(Teacher F History EMI)

The general picture and difference regarding the teaching strategy with the use of

Chinese lies in the fact that with more time available as a result of the time saved from explanations, teachers could introduce more activities to the classes. The issue of some significance here is that teachers have to spend lots of time explaining English terms and extra cram classes have to be organised to lift the language barrier even in the selected EMI elite schools.

## 5.4.2 Learning side

### 5.4.2.1 Better communication and understanding between teachers and students

**Table 5.8**

**Students' views on whether mother-tongue education is better for understanding in classes**

Mother-tongue is better for students' understanding in classes	%
Yes	81.5%
No	4.6
No comments	10.8
Unanswered	3.1

Teaching would not have meant anything if it did not involve the interactive process. Students in the CMI schools were asked if they felt that mother-tongue education is better for learning and understanding according to their own learning experiences. Table 5.8 illustrates that the vast majority of them regarded mother-tongue as better for learning, while only 4.6% did not agree with the statement. 10.8% of them chose 'No comments'. Three teachers out of the five who felt a positive impact on teaching with the use of mother-tongue also considered there is a higher level of participation and better communication with students with the use of mother-tongue. Both Teachers C and D felt that students were more willing to present and to get involved, which is consistent with Pennington's (1999) survey about bilingual classrooms discourse in Hong Kong. As she summarises from one of the excerpts after classroom observation, "...when students speak in the mother-tongue, their participation may be high and the content of their talk creative and even humorous." (Pennington 1999 p.60) What Teachers B and C clarified was that students' cognitive thinking and absorption of knowledge was more clearly articulated. Teachers know better where the students really stand with their higher participation rate. Teacher C acknowledged the fact that,

**...their achievement can be more clearly seen if mother-tongue is used. Actually, they might have some kinds of cognitive learning going on in their minds, but due to the use of English, they were suppressed and refrained from expressing themselves freely, but it does not mean that they have not acquired the knowledge. The result is only more visible with the use of mother-tongue.**

**(Teacher C English CMI)**

Teacher B made the same point by saying that students in fact might know more than the teachers expected. It is only the use of English that has covered up students' potentials because they are less likely to express themselves and to articulate their knowledge and they would rather hide what they already know. This point conforms to the educational benefits of mother-tongue education suggested by the Education Department as outlined in section 2.7.1.1 and the MOI Working Group survey in 1999, as mentioned in section 2.4.1.1. Mother-tongue education seems to be beneficial in the aspect of teaching and learning, and it might encourage a deeper approach to learning due to improved understanding and higher motivation in learning.

Analysis of teacher trainers' responses, however, illustrates that they are looking at the question from another angle. Instead of focussing on the possible differences in terms of teaching and learning that a different medium of instruction would bring, they were more inclined to criticise the present teaching strategy prevalent in the schools in Hong Kong. Teacher Trainer B thought that:

**...if proper training is provided in English classrooms, there can be lots of varieties in terms of teaching too. Many people are hoping to see that with mother-tongue education, lifting the language barriers, more activities could be used in classrooms. However, I'd doubt the effectiveness of mother-tongue if teachers still rely highly on the transmissive teaching methods. Some teachers might have greater varieties in teaching but some do not. It does depend to a large extent on proper teacher training, and the teaching strategy, rather than the teaching medium.**

**(Teacher Trainer B)**

Teacher Trainer A agreed with Teacher Trainer B regarding the negative influences of

the transmissive teaching tradition on students' learning. They both believed that with this kind of spoon-feeding-oriented approach being ingrained in teachers' minds, the medium of instruction would not have made any difference with regard to teaching methods. Teacher Trainer A expressed his pessimism about the general teaching methods in Hong Kong. The so-called communication and activities proposed by the teacher interviewees might not help much to change the spoon-feeding teaching tradition. Teacher Trainer A suggested, with a sense of sympathy and hopelessness, that the change of teaching methods would involve something more than just the teaching medium. In fact, real innovation in teaching methods could not occur without a change of people's conceptions about what teaching is. In other words, it involves a whole attitudinal change of what education really means. As he continued,

**A lot of the teachers' autonomy in Hong Kong is reduced by the principals. Principals have incredible influence on teachers' teaching. Students do assessment tasks. The common threat is that in these schools, principals regard reputations, examination results as the most important thing. But they are looking back and said teachers can't teach...we know exactly that, at the end, it is the exam results that count. If we did not get pressure like this, pushed to be famous, to get high grade, of course we would relax and we might get new approaches and methods in teaching. What we can do is continue to compromise with the Education Department...we have got kids trying to pass exams, we have got kids being streamed into schools with different medium. They've got incredible pressure from kindergarten to tertiary education. So if we want changes we have to change the exam system, change the thinking, the curriculum. But it involves too many things, and might challenge the whole [set of] Chinese cultural values.**

(Teacher Trainer A)

The impact of mother-tongue education on teaching and learning in classrooms is generally positive. The main benefit lies in higher motivation to learn academic subjects, because no more translation is required. There is also a shift from monotonous classroom learning to more activity-based learning. With better communication between teachers and students, teachers know better where students stand in terms of academic level. Nevertheless, it was also revealed that the teaching

culture and method could be of more significance than the teaching medium, as it has been pointed out that the traditional transmissive teaching strategy would overrule whatever educational benefits might be brought by mother-tongue education.

## **5.5 Social impact of the 1998 MOI policy**

### **5.5.1 Literature on the impact of streaming**

After only four years of genuine implementation of the new language policy, it might be tempting to jump to the conclusion that students who are less proficient in English benefit from mother-tongue education only according to the preliminary data presented by the government. However, we should not overlook the possibility that a certain impact or effect might take up to five or more years to be observed. Putting aside the educational goals, some social implications of the policy are already obviously brought about by such a move.

Long before the 'Guidance on Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools' was published in 1997, the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (1992) warned the Hong Kong government about the socially divisive effect of the new language policy. Some principals strongly came out against it and queried the motive of the policy, asking the question: If mother-tongue education is so good for the majority of students, then why should a small proportion of schools be still allowed to continue with the English-medium tradition?

English proficiency has undoubtedly emerged as one of the most important sources of human capital in a fast-growing economy like Hong Kong. Nevertheless, its importance might have been overrated. As Lin (1996) notices, English proficiency might have made a contribution to the flourishing economy but people's obsession with the language has led to other factors like diligence going unnoticed. Companies and commerce, it is suggested, have probably put too much emphasis on English. Needless to say, the symbolic interaction of political, economic, social and educational factors shapes the educational practices which cause the imbalance between the business demands and the language policy. As Lin (1996) puts it,

**This arbitrary and unhealthy one-sidedness of educational policies and practices**

**is concealed or justified in an array of intermingled economic half-truths, government policies, and foreign business interests' demands, which continue to mutually perpetuate and legitimate one another.**

(p.58)

Lin (1996) continues to make it clear that streaming would only segregate the CMI group and the EMI group into further extremes, and recommendations from bilingual experts of other countries would not work under the specific context of Hong Kong because of the uneven wealth distribution in Hong Kong. Students' access to learning of English depends to a large extent on their class background. Students belonging to working class families, which is the case of the overwhelming majority in Hong Kong, are deprived of opportunities to get in contact with the second language except in the domain of schools, whereas their middle-class counterparts, who live in a more print-rich environment, receive help through the second language learning process (Lao and Krashen 1999).

A number of linguists regard Education Department as slapping its own face since there is apparently a contradiction between what it has stated as its aim and motives with regard to language i.e. to "implement the policy of biliteracy and trilingualism to enable students to be proficient in both Chinese and English" (Hong Kong Education Department undated a) and what the policy itself is actually encouraging.

Researchers like Poon (1999) and Lin (1996) express a negative attitude toward the present streaming policy and urge for its revision or even its abolition. They both maintain that a bilingual model of education is the prevalent trend, and is exactly what the government should promote with careful and cautious attention. Poon (1999) proposes "the use of both Chinese and English as the medium of instruction in the entire curriculum...The thresholds level (Cummins, 1976) ought to be set for students of different abilities at various points of the curriculum based upon research conducted in local classrooms". (p.142) The question that was set to find out the choices of teaching medium of both CMI and EMI groups with data presented in table 5.5 was looked into again, with the hope to getting a clearer picture of the linguistic inclination of students, thus getting a step closer to see if the two groups have particular



preferences. Reasons accounting for their choices will be explained in section 5.5.2.

**Table 5.9**

**Summary of results of the social implications of the mother-tongue policy**

Question	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Social implications of mother-tongue education	<p>The age of segregating students into CMI and EMI streams was subject to controversy.</p> <p>Labelling effect on CMI students and it might draw them to the disadvantaged end of the society.</p> <p>The criteria for segregation are also problematic according to teachers' views.</p> <p>There seems to be a tendency that more EMI students come from well-educated family background as compared to their CMI counterparts.</p>	<p>Impact of streaming could be felt from the students' choice of preferable teaching medium.</p> <p>Elite EMI culture has been developing or might be further reinforced because of the clear divisive line between CMI and EMI schools.</p>

## **5.5.2 The impact of linguistic segregation in the present study**

### **5.5.2.1 The choice of students from the EMI group**

An interesting issue was raised with only 1.3% (1/75) of the EMI subjects who chose pure Chinese-medium teaching, which is even lower than the 4% who recommended other forms of bilingual education like 'English-French bilingual education' (1.3%) and 'English-Japanese bilingual model' (2.7%). Given the social and linguistic contexts of Hong Kong where Cantonese-Chinese dominates the majority of the population, students still tend to go for the language which is not so widely used in their daily lives. The contrast is even more remarkable when a comparison is made between the proportion of EMI students who selected pure English-medium teaching (25.3%) and that who chose pure Chinese-medium teaching (1.3%).

The mixed-code teaching model which is now eradicated with the introduction of the 1998 language policy eventually turns out to be the first preferred choice in both CMI

and EMI students' priority list. One of the reasons is likely to be that mixed-code teaching is seen as the substitutes for English-only/Chinese-only models of teaching. With this type of bilingual model, there would not be such a clear-cut distinction between EMI and CMI schools and the division line between both groups would not be so obvious. For students receiving education through English only, 72% of the sample found it easier to learn with code-mixing, which suggests that there might be a legitimate part played by the mother-tongue when the medium of instruction is supposed to be solely in English.

#### **5.5.2.2 The culture of EMI schools as shown by linguistic preference**

The difference in the choices for the next most preferable teaching medium between the EMI and the CMI students brings up an issue which may deal with students' psychological states and the diversity between the culture of EMI and CMI schools. The fact that many more EMI students opted for pure English instead of pure Chinese (with 25.3% vs 1.3%) reflects the general language attitude in the elite group (the top 1/3 of the whole school population). The functional importance of English language may explain their choice for English over Chinese, but there is also the possibility that the specific linguistic culture of EMI schools also results in such a choice. As indicated earlier, the EMI group represents the selected and the upper rank of the academic stratum, which tends to take pride in the fact that it receives pure English medium of education which appears to be an advantage over students from the CMI group. Although the issue of a possible EMI elite culture is a speculation without adequate research evidence, this choice at least shows the comparatively lower status of Chinese-medium education among students in Hong Kong. Even students from the CMI group did not seem to be particularly keen on a Chinese-only model, as indicated by the small percentage (6.2%) of CMI students who chose this option. Nevertheless, EMI students are comparatively more resistant to the Chinese-only model than the CMI group.

#### **5.5.2.3 Issues of concern regarding the linguistic segregation criteria**

The social impact of streaming is, without any doubt, very hard to evaluate. It has

been stated very clearly that despite the educational benefits of mother-tongue education, “government fully appreciates that some schools have been operating successfully with English-medium teaching and have achieved good results. These schools may continue to teach in English if they wish to do so and satisfy the requirements.” (Hong Kong Education Department 1997b p.3) Although the original motive of implementing the new MOI policy was not in any way to impose a divisive wall between the CMI and the EMI groups and the labelling effect is in fact an unexpected by-product, several issues regarding the criteria of assessing EMI schools are subject to question.

### *The reliability of the MIGA*

As mentioned in section 2.9.1, the MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment) is used to categorise secondary schools into either CMI or EMI. According to the assessment criteria, the top 30% of the pyramid are allocated to Groups I and III and every individual school has to show an average percentage of not less than 85% of MIGA Groups I and III (i.e. the top 30%) students in secondary 1 intake for the past three years in order to be qualified for EMI teaching (Hong Kong Education Department 1997c p.5). Being the system of allocating students to different language streams of learning, it seems that people involved in the education sector were nonetheless not very well-notified of the MIGA. Three out of seven teachers said that they had no idea about the MIGA, and therefore they were not in a position to make any comments because of the lack of knowledge and information about the assessment criteria. Considering that it is one of the most important assessment criteria, it is surprising to find that its level of reliability has not been given too much attention by the government.

Of the seven teachers interviewed, four of them thought that the whole MIGA system is not an appropriate measuring apparatus for measuring language proficiency. The rest of them (3/7) said that they had not heard about the MIGA and were therefore not able to give any comments on it. Two teachers said that streaming students into two separate ends with regard to the teaching medium by looking at their results in primary six was not fair for students. Teacher C concluded:

**...I don't think the language standards of primary six students have already taken shape...I mean should their standards be really judged at that stage? What I mean is that it is too early to judge their language development. Even if they didn't do well in primary schools, it doesn't imply that they can't do well in secondary schools. I think the Education Department has labelled them too early.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

A similar view was expressed by Teacher F, who also believed that,

**...they (the Education Department) judged the students too early. Perhaps this is not the suitable stage to assess students. Are their standards really that consistent? I don't think it [the MIGA] can really reflect their standards, and the most appropriate MOI for students.**

(Teacher F History EMI)

### ***Age of assessment***

The 'age of assessment' may therefore be the main concern and it makes the assessment of students even more problematic. As mentioned earlier in section 2.9, the MOI of an individual school is largely determined by the quality of the secondary one intake. However, the extent to which students' language proficiency levels are illustrated by the MIGA, and the consistency of the performances of students when they are assessed, are controversial. Besides, teachers' responses also indicated that the element of 'value-addedness of language proficiency' of students (i.e. the fact that some students may make tremendous progress in languages during the first one or two years of secondary schooling because of the possibility of late language developers) was not taken into serious consideration when the policy was designed.

### ***MIGA in relation to the threshold theory***

The new MOI policy has been under severe attack due to the possibility that MIGA is not necessarily a reliable tool for determining the most suitable medium of instruction for students. The 4/7 of teachers who have learned about the MIGA system criticized

the outcome of the whole grouping assessment by saying that according to their practical teaching experiences, not all the students belonging to Group I/III (i.e. those who are qualified to be admitted to EMI schools) are suitable for learning through English. The point that there may be a mismatch between students' language proficiencies and their MOI stream that they have been placed into might also be supported by the majority of EMI students as they perceived that lessons have been made easier with the use of mixed code, as presented in table 5.6. This may affirm the arguments proposed by Tung (1992) discussed in section 2.5.2 with regard to the misinterpretation of the threshold theory by the Hong Kong Education Department. As Teacher E, an English teacher of an EMI school, suggested: "They [the EMI students] may be more able, but learning all subjects through a foreign language is another matter."

Even if the accuracy and reliability of the MIGA is confirmed, teachers were not very well-informed of the whole grouping assessment system. Although two out of three policy-makers defended the lack of thorough consideration with regard to the value-addedness of students by stressing that the whole MOI policy, including its assessment criteria, would be reviewed in three years' time, the social impact and costs that streaming and labelling have brought, criticisms and opposition from parents with regard to the whole issue, are perhaps uncountable.

#### *Educational background of parents in relation to students' stream of MOI*

One controversial point that was obtained from the answers of teachers with regard to the issue of 'exposure' relates to the family background of students. A question was included in students' questionnaires to look at the relationship between the educational background of the students' parents and the stream of MOI they belong to.

**Table 5.10****Students' streams of MOI with regard to their parents' education**

Education Level \ Stream of students	Primary Level	Secondary Level	A-Level to University Level	No education
CMI Group	23%	56.9%	15.4%	4.6%
EMI Group	17.3%	64%	18.7%	0

The above table shows that the vast majority of students' parents in both streams have finished secondary 5 level (HKCEE) of education (which is equivalent to GCSE level). The rates of parents from both groups who have received education level up to A-level to university are very close, amounting to only 3.3% difference with parents of EMI students having a higher percentile than the parents of the CMI students. However, the gap gets larger when it comes to secondary 5 level, with 64% of parents of EMI students having completed Form 5 level compared to 56.9% of their counterparts in CMI schools. It amounts to a 7% gap. When we look at the number of parents who have reached only primary education level in both CMI and EMI streams, there is another slight difference between the two streams—with 17.3% for the EMI group as opposed to 23% for the CMI group. It is revealed from the figures of the sample that more parents of the EMI students received secondary education than the parents of the CMI students, and we also have to acknowledge the fact that while all the parents of the EMI sample have received education up to various levels, 4.6% of CMI parents have not received any education at all. The figure is undoubtedly very small and the evidence here may not be adequate enough to illustrate or generalise the phenomenon and validate the point that there is a positive connection between parents' educational background and the stream of secondary schools students go to. However, there could be a possible correlation between parental influence on education and the students' English language proficiency. The better the parents' educational levels are, the more likely the students are conscious about their English language proficiency, which would more or less have a role to play regarding their social mobility, especially in a place like Hong Kong where English still has a very strong economic standing despite the changing situations in relation to the relative status of the three languages.

The phenomenon that English still remains a language with high status even after British colonial rule seems to be universal (e.g. Singapore, India). High English language proficiency plays a vital part in determining one's upward mobility in the society of Hong Kong. Lee (1997) has quoted a number of studies that draw correlations between the language proficiency of students and their academic achievements and social background. Surveys by others such as Lai (2001) illustrates the relationship between the social class background of students in relation to their language proficiencies. Middle-class students are likely to be more proficient in English, which is claimed to be a linguistic capital privileged to the elite middle class. The result of the current study happens to cohere with the previous literature in the way that students from EMI schools, whose English language proficiencies are better than those from the CMI setting, are generally from families with better education. At least none of their parents are uneducated and nearly 1/5 of them have received A-level to tertiary education. The level of parents' education, which is one of the variables that contributes to the makeup of students' social background, determines to a certain degree the quality of language exposure as well as the cognitive construct of students. As Lee (1997) concludes,

**It seems that in Hong Kong, children of lower classes are still disadvantaged in their acquisition of English proficiency, in terms of their social distance from native English speakers and their attitudes towards the language. It is in this sense that they are deprived in English proficiency, and thus are in a relatively disadvantaged position in competing with their upper-middle-class counterparts on the educational path. However, to what extent this is deterministic of their educational success is arguable.**

(p.171)

Despite the small sample size, the present study may somehow reflect the correlation between English language proficiency and one's social background, which indicates the unfairness of the whole schooling system which is determined by language.

## 5.6 Summary

Chapter 5 has explored the implications of the change of teaching medium in 1998 on the educational aspect. The tentative findings show various factors affecting English language proficiency, which in turn bring about the discussion of the linguistic hypotheses such as the linguistic interdependence principle and the threshold principle behind the mother-tongue teaching policy. Interview respondents generally did not support the linguistic interdependence hypothesis in the current study. Research studies in relation to linguistic interdependence are mainly developed in the context of European-based languages, and empirical evidence that supports positive transfer between Chinese and English is insufficient. Positive linguistic transfer requires both internal and external variants, as shown in diagrams C and D. In other words, the claim that high proficiency in the first language can benefit the development of the second language could not stand on solid ground in the context of Hong Kong. Various factors (internal and external) contribute to the attainment of English language proficiency, as summarised and illustrated in diagram E.

According to the data, 58.5% of the CMI students have found that their Chinese as well as English proficiencies have improved. The perceived improvements could be due to the difference in terms of perceptions or the improved language awareness. 12.3% of them reported that their Chinese language has improved while their English level has remained unaffected. Although it is speculated that the standard of Chinese language could be pulled up with more focus on Chinese, the actual situation might not turn out to be as satisfactory because of the linguistic gulf between Modern Standard Written Chinese (MSWC) and the spoken teaching medium, Cantonese.

The research carried on to explore the views and suggestions of both interview respondents and student respondents on the possible bilingual model that could be used to make students 'biliterate' and 'trilingual', and their views on mixed-code teaching. It was found that code-mixing was generally seen positively by both the teacher interviewees and questionnaire respondents and was regarded by teacher respondents to be acceptable in teaching content-based subjects, while pure language was preferred in teaching language subjects.



The question of threshold hypothesis with regard to the current MOI policy has also been raised in this chapter, and it was suggested that the 'age for assessment' and the actual 'assessing criteria and tools' should be carefully reviewed.

Positive impact on teaching and learning have also been recognised because of the elimination of language barriers and better communication between teachers and students. The last part of chapter five has contributed to consideration of the social implications such as linguistic segregation, the formation of the elite EMI culture engendered by the streaming policy and the possible impact of parents' educational level on students' MOI stream.

Perceptions of the four groups of subjects, which included teachers, students, teacher trainers and policy-makers, are analysed and compared. The differences regarding their views are briefly discussed and some related issues of concern are outlined. More in-depth implications will be raised in the concluding chapter. Chapter six that follows will be devoted to the more sophisticated dimension which involves the cultural aspect with reference to the subjects' language attitude.

## CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS AN DISCUSSION II— CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE 1998 MOI POLICY

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### 6.0 Introduction

The notion of 'culture' binds people of the same ethnic group together by cultural norms and values that are commonly shared by the social group. Language is an entity almost inseparable from culture. Language inevitably carries connotations of identity. For instance, English has emerged as a global *lingua franca* that even people who have not been subjects of the British empire have to acquire in order to strengthen their linguistic capital (e.g. Japan). However, its use in former colonies like Hong Kong still raises a concern of the weakening of Hong Kong Chinese identity because of the hybridized culture of the metropolis. As elaborated in chapter two, the evolution of the Hong Kong identity has been under great influence of historical, social and economic developments during the colonization period. Despite the rather diverse dialect groups (as a result of the influx of immigrants from China in the early 1940s) when we look at the composition of the Hong Kong population, Cantonese has been widely used in Hong Kong. The birth of the second generation of the immigrants from Mainland China acts as a catalyst that speeds up the spread of Cantonese due to the loss of their mother dialects, like Shanghainese, Chiu Chau and Fujian dialects. It can be summarised that Cantonese has stood out as one of the most influential and powerful dialects in China due to the following reasons:

1. The large number of Cantonese speakers in the Canton Province.
2. The traditional strength of Cantonese culture and the strong belief of Cantonese people that they have to maintain the Cantonese language, which also acts as an obstacle for the Chinese central government's attempt to undermine regionalization.
3. The early economic take-off of Hong Kong and the financial success of the southern regions in China also help the consolidation of Cantonese as the identity

symbol.

This chapter will investigate the changes in teaching medium and its impact on cultural construct of the subjects by checking their choices of languages in different domains, their values about the three most popular languages in Hong Kong, Cantonese, Mandarin and English and their choice of mother-tongue. It is based on the assumption that people's cultural and identity make-up could be reflected through their language attitude and perceptions. It should be noted that cultural identity is formed through several single elements and is dynamic in the sense that every single individual factor will change or evolve with time. This chapter is going to address the remaining research questions: "What is the impact on language attitude after the implementation of the 1998 medium of instruction policy?" and "What are the cultural implications of the new medium of instruction policy on students according to the views of respondents?" in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4. Apart from this, the final subsidiary question listed in the methodology chapter: "What are the political implications of implementing mother-tongue education according to the perceptions of respondents?" will be elaborated in section 6.3.

The following section attempts to analyse respondents' language attitude and language preferences in order to draw a general picture of their cultural and identity construct after the implementation of the 1998 MOI policy.

### **6.1 Respondents' choice of mother-tongue and teaching medium**

The first question deals with respondents' choice of mother-tongue and their choice of teaching medium if *only* Mandarin or Cantonese are on the choice list. The following table 6.1 summarises the qualitative and quantitative data with reference to this particular question.

**Table 6.1**

**Summary of results with reference to the question of choice of mother tongue**

Questions	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
1a. Choice of mother-tongue	Cantonese was chosen as the mother-tongue though Mandarin is culturally less foreign than English.	100% of EMI students selected Cantonese, while 15% of CMI students opted for Mandarin, which might have to do with their family background.
1b. Cantonese/Mandarin if either one has to be the teaching medium	<p>Cantonese should not be replaced because it may lead to communication breakdown in the social group.</p> <p>Replacing Cantonese with Mandarin will result in retraining of in-service teachers, which will involve high cost.</p> <p>The scenario may turn out to be code-mixing/switching of Mandarin and Cantonese.</p> <p>One policy-maker was in favour of Mandarin as the teaching medium for the sake of its linguistic benefits for learning Modern Standard Written Chinese. However, the question of when the use of Mandarin is ready requires further consideration.</p>	<p>The majority of both CMI and EMI students selected Cantonese instead of Mandarin, though the percentage of EMI students who chose Mandarin was slightly higher than those who did the same in the CMI group.</p> <p>A minority of CMI students still wrote 'bilingual medium' instead of choosing either Cantonese or Mandarin.</p>

### 6.1.1 Analysis and discussion of teachers' and students' responses

#### 6.1.1.1 Analysis of teachers' answers

Teachers' perceptions of what the mother-tongue in Hong Kong is do not reflect any significant difference from that of the students. Only one out of seven teachers defined Mandarin as the mother-tongue of Hong Kong people, while the rest selected Cantonese instead. Although Cantonese remains the mother-tongue in general, two teacher interviewees pointed out that the status of Mandarin has changed simultaneously with the political handover. As Teacher C pointed out,

**Well, of course it is Cantonese even though Mandarin is the official language of China. But the difference is that the status of Mandarin has changed obviously. It is undoubtedly culturally less foreign to Hong Kong people when it is compared to English language and it is easier to master as well. For most Cantonese people who cannot speak very good Mandarin, at least they would be able to listen and understand the language.**

**(Teacher C English CMI)**

The variation in terms of teacher interviewees' answers might indicate how contrastive and different teachers' attitude could be. According to Teacher F, Cantonese is the mother-tongue of Hong Kong people, because Mandarin is widely spoken "only among Mainland Chinese people" (Teacher F History EMI). This teacher of the EMI school, either consciously or unconsciously, drew a clear distinction between Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese by indicating the different languages these two groups of people are generally adopting. This point of view juxtaposes the view of Teacher D, who is teaching in a CMI school. She proposed that Mandarin instead of Cantonese should be learned as the mother-tongue in Hong Kong. As she commented,

**I think it [our mother-tongue] should be Mandarin...well, but maybe it is not possible within these two years. Since Hong Kong is part of China now, Mandarin should be learned as an official language in the HKSAR. It does not mean that we have to stop using Cantonese. It is only that more focus should be paid to Mandarin and we have to learn it as our first language.**

**(Teacher D Geography CMI)**

Apparently, the general choice of teachers' mother-tongue was Cantonese, despite the fact that they were aware that Mandarin is the national language of China. However, the answers of both Teacher C and Teacher D may have reflected their 'unreadiness' for having Mandarin as their mother-tongue. The following section will address the same question of the choice of mother-tongue, and will report the data obtained from students.

### 6.1.1.2 Analysis of students' answers

**Table 6.2**

Percentages with regard to students' choice of mother tongue

Stream of MOI	Cantonese	Mandarin	English
EMI Group	100%	0%	0%
CMI Group	83.1%	15.4%	1.5%

Hong Kong differs from her neighbouring Chinese hinterland because of her colonial background. Concerns have arisen as to whether Mandarin is going to take the place of Cantonese in the future. A question was put to both students of CMI and EMI schools, teachers as well as policy-makers with regard to the definition of mother-tongue from their points of view. The number of students in both streams of schools who thought that Cantonese is their mother-tongue accounts for an overwhelming majority, with 100% of EMI students and 83.1% of CMI students selecting Cantonese. However, it should be noted that 15.4% of the CMI group chose Mandarin as their mother-tongue, though they should be fluently conversant in Cantonese as they study in a Cantonese-medium school. The most unexpected aspect from the data is that 1.5% of the CMI group (which is 1/65) regarded English as his or her mother-tongue. There could be several possible explanations for this choice, though all the subjects in the CMI schools are native Chinese speakers.

## 6.1.2 Discussion of the implications of the results

### 6.1.2.1 Family background

More than 15% of the CMI students chose Mandarin instead of Cantonese as their mother-tongue, which contrasts with the 100% of the EMI group who chose Cantonese. The result may suggest a slight difference in terms of the language attitude between the CMI and EMI groups with regard to their choice of mother-tongue. However, another possible reason is that students of CMI schools might be more likely to come from families who are new immigrants from China. Students of this background tend to identify themselves with Mandarin, which symbolises their Mainland Chinese identity. It may also reveal that they are not readily prepared to

identify themselves with Cantonese, which is the linguistic symbol of Hong Kong. In contrast, all the subjects in the English-medium group might have grown up in Hong Kong, and therefore are more resistant to the Mainland Chinese identity due to the hybrid learning environment that they have been exposed to. In other words, they are more likely to identify themselves with Cantonese only, though it is not the officially recognised language throughout the motherland. The majority of students who identified themselves with Cantonese instead of other languages shows that, without any doubt, Cantonese was still regarded as the mother-tongue in Hong Kong when the research was conducted.

As aforementioned, the student subjects in both the CMI and EMI schools are native Chinese. It should be noted that one of the CMI students chose English as the mother-tongue. Due to the small percentile of this category, it does not seem to carry any significance of being a piece of negative evidence.

#### **6.1.2.2 EMI school culture vs CMI school culture**

Although highly representative results could not be drawn from the small sample, analysis of teachers' answers does provide us some plausible insights to the general attitude towards Cantonese and Mandarin as the mother-tongue in Hong Kong. The most conceivable speculation is the context in which Teacher F and Teacher C work. Teacher F, who teaches in one of the prestigious English-medium schools in Hong Kong, was apparently more resistant to identifying Hong Kong people with Mandarin, which only represents Mainland Chinese. This attitude appears to cohere with the results of the previous part about EMI school culture, in which questionnaire respondents from EMI schools might be more pro-English. Despite the limited level of representation of the sample, it is striking to see that two different extremes of opinion can be obtained in the small sample.

#### **6.1.2.3 Length of time span**

The short length of time span also limits the possibility of obtaining any obvious change in terms of attitude. It should be noted that the research interviews and

questionnaires were conducted only three years after the handover and two years after the implementation of the mother-tongue policy, while it is essential to know that change in people's mentality is a long-term ongoing process. Two years might not be enough for a change in people's attitude, as cultural values usually take more than decades to evolve.

This section continues with a deeper analysis of respondents' attitudes towards Cantonese and Mandarin, which are believed to be in rivalry in the Hong Kong linguistic scene especially after the political handover. The contradiction between the two languages occurs because of the change of sovereignty, which equips Mandarin as a language with 'an army and a navy' in Hong Kong; while people's mentality and cultural construct are still very used to having Cantonese as their demotic language and it is unlikely that Cantonese can be replaced by Mandarin in the short run.

### 6.1.3 Cantonese vs Mandarin if 'Chinese' has to be the teaching medium

In order to avoid confusion, it is necessary to reiterate the fact that 'Chinese' is the umbrella term for more than 200 dialects in China. Students in both streams were asked which 'dialects' of the Chinese language they would prefer if it was assumed that Chinese was to be used as the sole medium of instruction in schools. This question was asked with an aim to specify students' exact preferences, and it was expected that students would mainly choose between Cantonese and Mandarin.

**Table 6.3**

**Choices of medium if 'Chinese' remains the only choice available**

Teaching Medium Streams	Cantonese	Mandarin	Others	Bilingual	English	Chiu Chau dialect
EMI Group	93.3%	5.3%	1.4%	0%	0%	0%
CMI Group	89.2%	3.1%	0%	4.6%	1.5%	1.5%

#### 6.1.3.1 Analysis of the results at EMI schools

As we can see from table 6.3, Cantonese persists to be the most popular language in



classroom. 93.3% of EMI students chose the Cantonese dialect as the medium of instruction if it is assumed that Chinese has to be the general teaching medium in the schools. Only 5.3% of the group chose Mandarin, and 1.4% (1/75) of them selected the option of 'others' but did not specify what languages he/she preferred.

### **6.1.3.2 Analysis of the results at CMI schools**

The percentage of students in CMI schools who selected Cantonese as the teaching language if 'Chinese' is the sole medium of instruction is very close to that of the EMI group. 89.2% of the CMI students chose Cantonese and only 3.1% regarded Mandarin as the most appropriate teaching medium if Chinese has to be used. The most crucial note is that a minority of students, though it only represents a very small group of the subjects in the CMI schools (4.6%), wrote 'bilingual medium' rather than either one of the Chinese dialects, and one of the students wrote 'English' as his/her most favourite teaching medium even it was stated very clearly in the question that "If 'Chinese' has to be used as the only medium of instruction". Another student of the CMI group wrote 'Chiu Chau dialect'. According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department (2001b), the total percentage of Hong Kong people who speak a Chinese dialect as a usual language is only 5.5% (Please refer to appendix XXI for the usual language use in Hong Kong) and 'Chiu Chau dialect' is only one of the dialects in Chinese. With the tendency of the dying out of home dialects such as Chiu Chau, Shanghainese and Hokkien, it is predicted that even a smaller proportion of the population would be proficient in their own dialects in the coming decades.

### **6.1.4 Discussion of the results**

#### **6.1.4.1 Significance of the voices of the minority**

The 4.6% who opted for 'bilingual medium' and the 1.5% who wrote 'English' as the most preferable choice with regard to this question could be interpreted as having misread the question, as it was again very clearly written that "if Chinese has to be used as the only medium of instruction..." in the beginning of the question. However, it might also indicate the hidden or unconscious awareness of the importance of English among the CMI students. It might not be a complete coincidence that 4.6%

would write 'bilingual' as the teaching medium if they had not realised their inadequate exposure to English in Chinese-medium schools. It is obvious that they are aware of the importance of being additive bilinguals because of social and parental pressure. However, due to the limitation of the questionnaires, they did not specify clearly what form of bilingual teaching medium should be carried out.

The small proportion of student subjects in CMI schools (4.6%) who preferred bilingual medium, the 1.5% for English and 1.5% for Chiu Chau dialect with regard to this question still do not change the general picture that a vast majority of both the CMI and EMI subjects still viewed Cantonese as their mother-tongue, and thought that it should be used as the teaching medium if they had to choose between Cantonese and Mandarin. This phenomenon might at least shed positive light with regard to the status of Cantonese language in Hong Kong during the post-colonial era. This choice of students reflects their general attitude towards Cantonese and Mandarin. At least it shows that Mandarin still does not receive a very warm welcome as a teaching medium in the Hong Kong context. Perhaps as a result of the generally higher status of English in the community, students might treat Mandarin as only an extra subject in addition to English. Despite the emphasis given to the rising importance of Mandarin in Hong Kong, Mandarin lacks the emotional and cultural attachment label that Hong Kong people have for Cantonese, and Mandarin does not serve the need for immediacy in spontaneous speech for the Hong Kong Chinese. These factors inhibit the emergence of Mandarin as the common speech in the local school context.

Pro-Cantonese attitude does not only exist on the students' side, but is also illustrated by the answers of teachers in both EMI and CMI schools. Six out of seven teachers did not agree with the idea that Cantonese should be replaced by Mandarin as the teaching medium. The answers obtained from both student respondents and interviewees could be categorised into different dimensions including language difficulty, consideration of cost-effectiveness and the perceived role of Mandarin in the field of education.

#### 6.1.4.2 Cost-effectiveness of using Mandarin as the MOI

The point that replacing Cantonese with Mandarin as the teaching medium might not be cost-effective was raised by Teacher A, a Mathematics teacher in a CMI school. She mentioned that due to their lack of knowledge in Mandarin, teachers who are currently in the profession would encounter great difficulty teaching in this language. She suggested that if Mandarin had to be used as the teaching medium, retraining and re-educating teachers in Mandarin would have to be carried out in every school, and it would not be economically and linguistically desirable.

**If Mandarin has to be used as a teaching medium in secondary schools, the first prerequisite is that in-service teachers should be able to speak fluently in Mandarin as well. Actually, for those teachers who are older, they might not be able to speak Mandarin. And it is likely that they might have passed the age for retraining and for learning another language because absorbing new knowledge could be too much a burden for them. If they are not proficient enough to teach in Mandarin, then it is very likely to turn out to be mixed-code teaching again, but in the form of Mandarin and Cantonese instead of Cantonese and English.**

(Teacher A Maths CMI)

Teacher Trainer A's attitude contrasted with that of Teacher A. Teacher Trainer A expressed his preference for using Mandarin as the medium of instruction but at the same time he also pointed out it might not be practical in the next few years because both students' and teachers' Mandarin proficiencies might not be ready for learning through Mandarin.

**Personally, I am totally in favour of it [using Mandarin as the teaching medium]. But generally speaking, the Mandarin of Hong Kong students is poor as well, and perhaps I should say it is as poor as their English standards. Therefore, I don't think students are prepared for Mandarin education. Another problem involves teachers' training. Will they be proficient enough to teach students through Mandarin? Hong Kong is different from China in the sense that China has been introducing Mandarin for so many decades and it has become the *lingua franca* of the country, whereas Hong Kong is still too immature to exercise Mandarin in different domains.**

(Teacher Trainer A)

#### 6.1.4.3 The perceived role of Mandarin

The general unpopularity of Mandarin in the society makes it even harder for Mandarin to replace Cantonese as the teaching medium. The majority of teachers did not see the necessity of switching Cantonese teaching to the standard language, Mandarin. Teacher A said that Mandarin would have to get really popular in the society before it could be used as the teaching medium, and apparently there is still a long way to go. Teacher C suggested that Mandarin could in fact be learned as an additional language on top of Cantonese, like English. He contended that,

**Cantonese is still used in most of the domains, and it shouldn't be replaced. What I think is that it would be better if students learn it [Mandarin] as something extra. I think in this way they have more choices and can do more things with different language skills. If Cantonese was replaced, people's communication would be hindered since they cannot communicate so proficiently in Mandarin.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

This point of view was shared by Policy-Maker B, who suggested that Mandarin should be introduced as an extra skill and should be learned in a relaxing way. He did agree that Mandarin should be included in the syllabus, but the outcome of learning a language would not be good if it is forced on the learners. He therefore did not see the necessity of replacing the current mother-tongue teaching medium, Cantonese, with Mandarin.

#### 6.1.4.4 Analysis of students' answers

Table 5.8 in the previous chapter shows that more than 80% of CMI students felt that mother-tongue is better for their understanding of the lessons. A table was used in the questionnaire to follow up the reasons for their answers, and the answers are elaborated in the following table 6.4. Analysis of their answers may help to explain their choices of Cantonese over Mandarin for learning if Chinese medium is the only

choice available.

**Table 6.4**

**Advantages of the use of Cantonese as the MOI**

Reasons for choosing mother-tongue as the MOI	Percentage of students who agree with the statement
I could understand the lessons better with mother-tongue	80%
Cantonese is easier to master	72.3%
The use of Cantonese can enhance better communication with teachers	72.3%
Cantonese has a higher use value in the society than English and Mandarin	35.4%
Cantonese can represent my identity better as a Hong Konger	21.5%

Students were given 5 choices to choose from and students could select more than one choice. A matrix was adopted and therefore the total of the frequency rate for each choice does not sum up to 100%. It is based on the assumption that students may have more than one reason for their selection. The results indicate that 80% of CMI students reported that they could understand their lessons better through Cantonese, 72.3% of them shared similar ideas and believed that Cantonese is easier to master. The same proportion of students thought that Cantonese could enhance their communication with teachers. The other two reasons apparently did not enjoy as high popularity as the other three. 35.4% thought that Cantonese is better than the other two languages, English and Mandarin, because it is more useful in the society. 21.5% selected the statement that ‘Cantonese represents my identity better as a Hong Konger’ and thus Cantonese is better for enhancing learning in schools.

The data may reveal that the main reason why Cantonese could triumph over the other two languages as the teaching medium is that it makes the lessons easier to understand, and Cantonese also enables students to communicate with the teachers better. The reason for their choice basically lies in its higher use value as the *lingua franca* of Hong Kong. However, interestingly enough, the general perception of its low exchange value in the society indicates the mismatch and self-contradiction within Cantonese language itself because the language that students regarded as better for learning in school does not possess a high exchange value in the society.

In general, the majority of both student respondents and interviewees expressed their preference for Cantonese as the teaching medium. Replacing Cantonese with Mandarin was not seen as an appropriate alternative by them because of various reasons mentioned above, including the high use value of Cantonese, the cost-effectiveness involved with the use of Mandarin, and also the unpopularity of Mandarin in Hong Kong, though it has been pointed out by Policy-Maker A that learning through Mandarin may be linguistically more beneficial to students.

## **6.2 The balance of power among the three languages in Hong Kong**

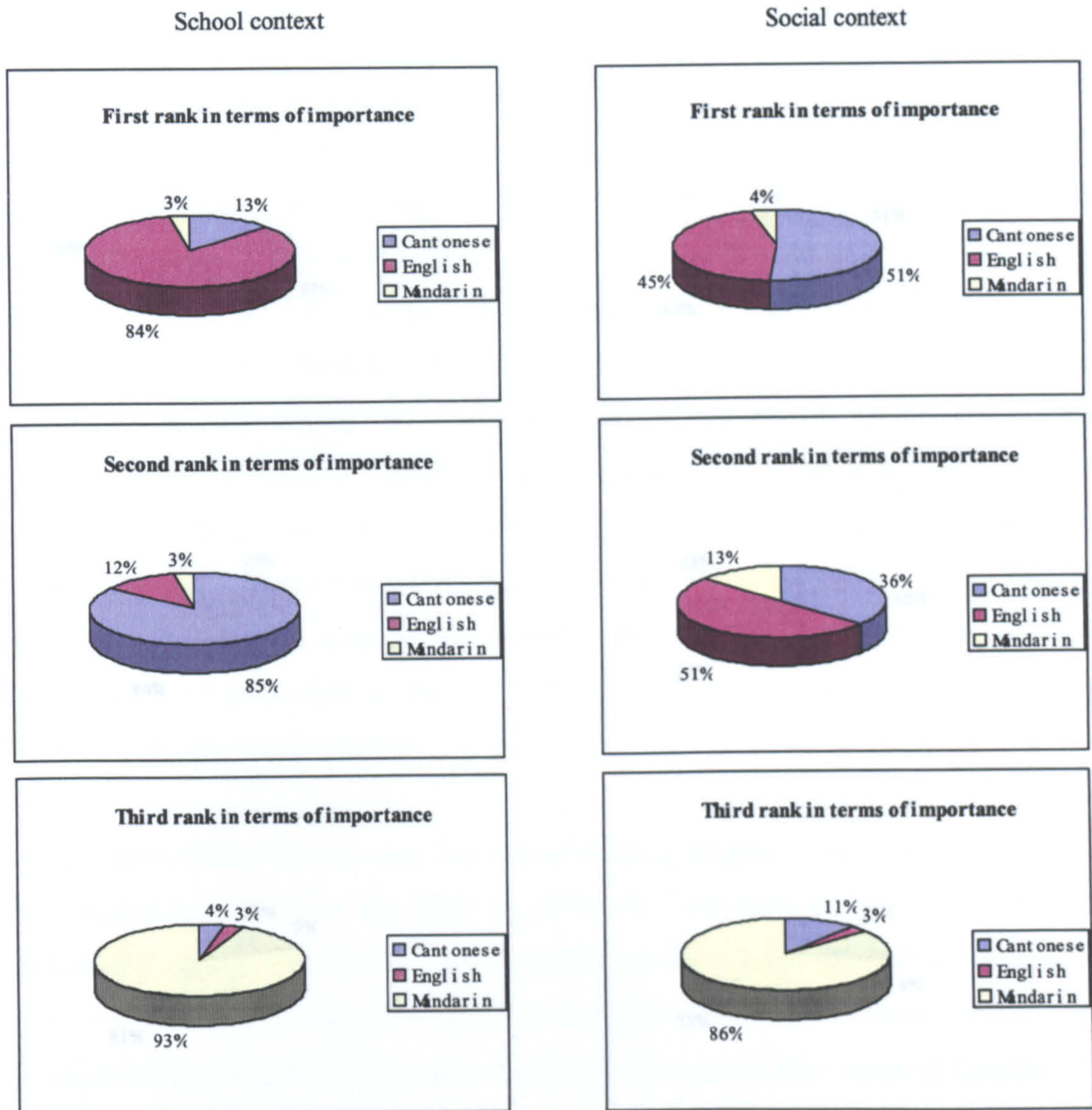
With the change of sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997, the speculation of a change in the balance of power among the three languages also arises. English had been the only official language in Hong Kong until the mid 1970s, when Chinese was made official. This act aimed at promoting the equal status of both languages, but the level of importance of both languages is still different. English was still more widely used in official and formal domains than Chinese until around a decade ago. In the aspect of international trade and commerce, English still flourishes and the addition of the Chinese language in the scene is unlikely to pose a threat to its well-consolidated position. Has the scenario changed after the handover? With the promotion of mother-tongue education and Mandarin in schools, does its rise in importance in the contexts of both the society and schools change the attitude of people's perception on the language issue? Respondents' answers have been divided into the school context and the societal context, so that their choices of language would be extended to the social level, with an aim to sketch how, if at all, people's perceptions of the three languages have changed as reflected in their ranking.

The question was set with an aim to comparing the perceptions of both EMI and CMI students with regard to the status of the three languages in two different contexts. The concept of using 'schools' and 'Hong Kong society' as the two frames of reference is based on the assumption that school is generally regarded as a miniature of the society, where students are equipped to serve the needs of the society once they graduate.

**Table 6.5****Summary of results with reference to the ranking of languages in Hong Kong**

Question	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Ranking of languages in social and school contexts	<p>Most of the teachers (5/7) believed English still enjoyed more superior status in society, and its importance had to do with its economic value, historical and social reasons.</p> <p>Mandarin ranked very low in the minds of most interviewees, because of its low use value in the society, and the low status of Chinese may have been ingrained in the minds of people, who have gone from the colonial to post-colonial era.</p> <p>Cantonese has very high use value but low exchange value.</p> <p>There is the need to identify oneself with Cantonese language because of the self-defensiveness about Hong Kong culture and their regional pride as Cantonese.</p>	<p>Mandarin ranked the lowest in both school and social contexts according to the perceptions of both CMI and EMI groups.</p> <p>EMI students ranked English the most important language in schools, while the majority of CMI students ranked Chinese as the most important at schools. It might have to do with the influence of the teaching medium. However, EMI students thought that Cantonese would rank the top in the social context, with English at the second rank.</p> <p>The majority of CMI students (67%) thought that English ranked the highest in the social context.</p> <p>The general high status of English attributes to social, economic, historical and cultural considerations.</p>

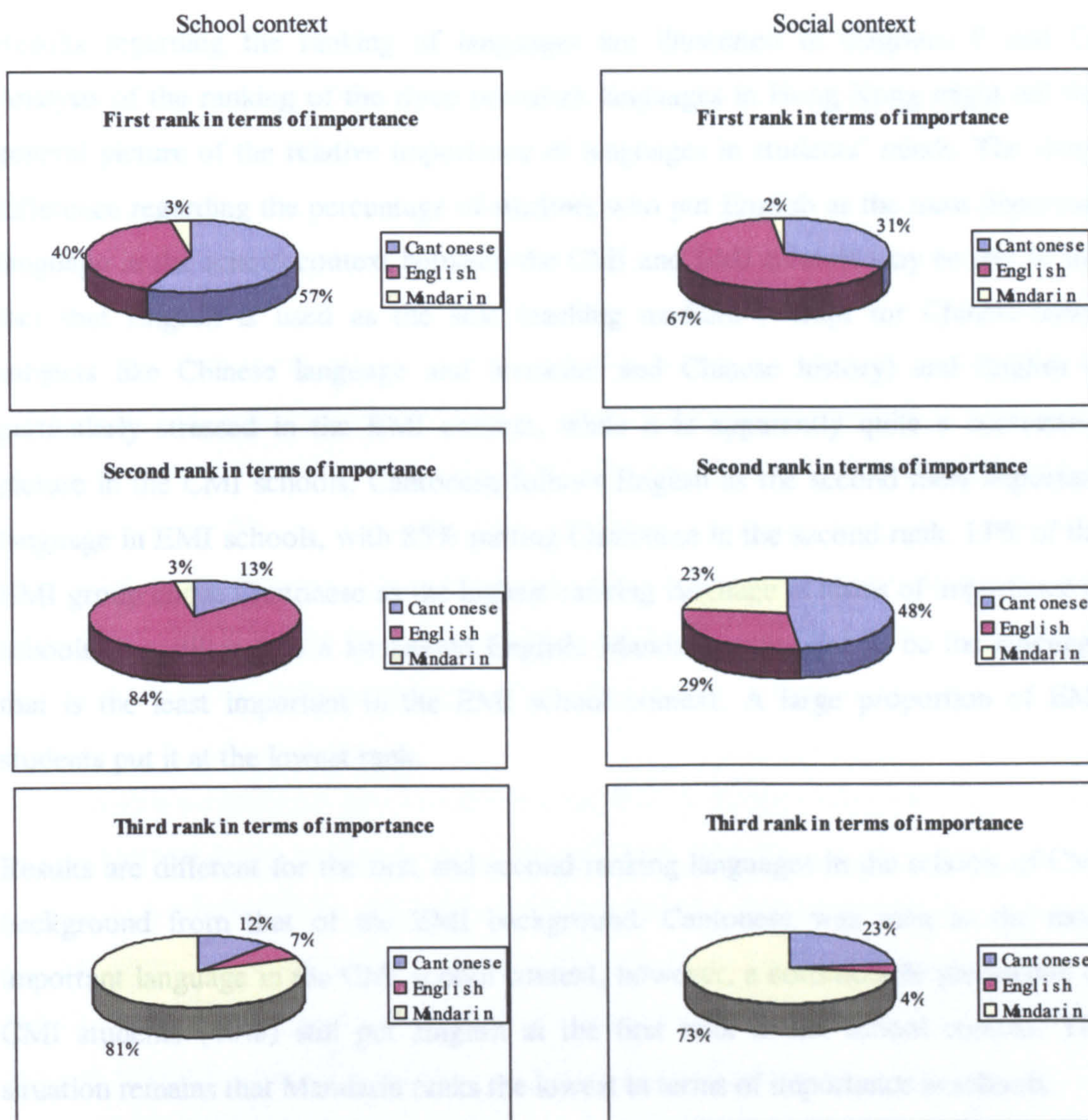
**EMI students' ranking of the three languages in the school and social contexts**



**Diagram F**



**CMI students' ranking of the three languages in the school and social contexts**



**Diagram G**

The most striking finding is the contrast between the two groups of students' attitudes towards both English and Cantonese in the two contexts. The number of EMI pupils who put Mandarin at the second rank in the social context is obviously lower than that of the CMI group (23% in the CMI group and 13% in the EMI). More English-medium students tended to choose Cantonese instead of English as the most important language in the social context (31%), which projected a different picture from what

## **6.2.1 Students' ranking of the three prevalent languages in Hong Kong**

### **6.2.1.1 In the school context**

Results regarding the ranking of languages are illustrated in diagrams F and G. Analysis of the ranking of the three prevalent languages in Hong Kong might tell the general picture of the relative importance of languages in students' minds. The sharp difference regarding the percentage of students who put English as the most important language in the school context between the CMI and EMI schools may be due to the fact that English is used as the sole teaching medium (except for Chinese-based subjects like Chinese language and literature and Chinese history) and English is particularly stressed in the EMI context, while it is apparently quite a contrastive picture in the CMI schools. Cantonese follows English as the second most important language in EMI schools, with 85% putting Cantonese in the second rank. 13% of the EMI group chose Cantonese as the highest-ranking language in terms of importance in schools, but still it falls a lot behind English. Mandarin turns out to be the language that is the least important in the EMI school context. A large proportion of EMI students put it at the lowest rank.

Results are different for the first and second-ranking languages in the schools of CMI background from that of the EMI background. Cantonese was seen as the most important language in the CMI school context, however, a considerable proportion of CMI students (40%) still put English at the first rank in the school context. The situation remains that Mandarin ranks the lowest in terms of importance in schools.

### **6.2.1.2 In the social context**

#### ***Responses in EMI schools***

The most striking finding is the contrastive views both groups of students have towards both English and Cantonese in the two contexts. The number of EMI pupils who put Mandarin at the second rank in the social context is obviously lower than that of the CMI group (23% in the CMI group and 13% in the EMI). More English-medium students tended to choose Cantonese instead of English as the most important language in the social context (51%), which projected a different picture from what

they thought was the case in the school context (13%). However, it is very clear that English ranked after Cantonese in the social context for EMI students, but there is only a 6% gap between the number who selected Cantonese as the most important (51%) and those who selected English (45%) as the highest-ranking in the society. 51% of the EMI subjects shared the view that English is the second most important language in the social context.

### *Responses in the CMI schools*

As we can see from the pie charts in diagrams F and G, more than half of the CMI students' sample put Cantonese in the first rank in terms of importance in schools, but the number has dropped down to only 31% when the frame of reference has turned to Hong Kong society as a whole. The percentage between the number who put Cantonese in the first rank as compared to those who chose English accounts for a 36% difference, with over half of the subjects in the CMI group perceiving English as the highest-ranking language in terms of importance in the social context.

There is also a significant gap between the number of students who put English as the most important language in schools (40%) and those who thought the same way in the society as a whole (67%). The 27% gap may indicate that students in CMI schools did not seem to regard that the level of importance of English language in schools (which is not as high as that of Cantonese) coincides with the situation in the social context, where English obviously has a higher level of importance.

### **6.2.2 Discussion on the possible reasons for students' choice**

The conflicting views of CMI and EMI students with regard to the importance of English and Cantonese in the society as a whole might possibly be a result of approaching the question from two contrasting grounds. The result obviously indicates that Cantonese obtained a higher level of importance in the society context among the EMI students, while the language with the highest-ranking was English among the CMI group. It is speculated that CMI students might set off from the economically pragmatic point when they were ranking the three languages. Languages have been

ranked largely in terms of their economic exchange value as most of the professions that tend to be more wealth-seeking generally require higher English standards. In other words, importance of a language may rely highly on its usefulness for upward social mobility. That may explain why Cantonese has turned out to be the second most important language in the society in the view of CMI students, even though it has been widely spoken by the Hong Kong population.

#### **6.2.2.1 Influence on perception in relation to the teaching medium**

The perception and yardstick that students in both groups used to measure the importance of a particular language appears to be highly relevant to the teaching medium of the schools they are in, and therefore the results reveal the logic that Cantonese is more important in the CMI school context, whereas English is more crucial in the EMI context. However, we should note the overall unpopularity of Mandarin in EMI and CMI schools, though its level of importance seems to be slightly higher in the CMI schools than that in the EMI stream. It might be due to the reason that Chinese in general has received greater emphasis in the CMI school context than it has in EMI schools.

#### **6.2.2.2 Backwash of the streaming policy**

The priority ranked by the two groups is significant in the sense that they generally adopted different approaches when prioritizing the importance of languages in the society, and the approach of CMI students might more or less be reflective of their unconscious impression of their disadvantaged position as being students in the CMI schools. This may again reflect the sense of inferiority that is inherent in the medium of instruction streaming policy. The mismatch of the level of importance in the school context and the society context according to their own perceptions might be telling since it shows the feeling of trapping in the disadvantaged group where the extent of English language provided in schools fails to meet the demand of the society, whereas EMI students are apparently advantaged because the emphasis on English in schools is adequate for meeting the social demands.

### **6.2.2.3 Unanswered questionnaires**

The questions of ranking the importance of the three languages in schools and the social contexts in Hong Kong received nearly 100% response rate from the EMI group, whereas 7.7% of the CMI group left the question with regard to the school context blank. 20% of them left the ranking question with regard to the society context blank. These questionnaires have not been counted when I was doing my analysis.

It should be noted that for the CMI group, almost all the students made their choices of the language they thought should rank first, however, there are many cases in which they did not prioritise their choices for the second and the third important languages. The result is that the pie charts have illustrated the proportional property precisely on the horizontal dimension, but not on the vertical dimension.

### **6.2.3 Analysis and discussion of teachers' and teacher trainers' answers**

When teachers in both streams were asked about their points of view regarding the ranking of the three languages (Cantonese, English and Mandarin) in Hong Kong, five out of seven teachers suggested that English still ranked first in the context of the schools, but one of the teachers out of these five suggested that Cantonese would rank first if the frame has extended to the society as a whole. It projected a contrast to another teacher, who put Cantonese in the first rank in the context of schools, but English in the context of the society. The contrasting perception is probably due to the ability differences in terms of language between the students in these two schools. The two teachers who held contrasting views both teach in CMI schools, in which all the subjects except English are taught in Chinese. However, a point that might account for the difference is the regional location of these two schools. One is located on the Hong Kong Island, where students are more likely to meet westerners than students in the New Territories, in which most are newly developed districts. The difference in point of view could perhaps be explained by the consideration of location. The teacher who commented that Cantonese is the most important in the context of school teaches at a school in the remote area of the New Territories. He was aware of the regional variation as well when he explained his answer:

**Cantonese is more important in schools. Students are required to make Chinese presentations in Cantonese, not in Mandarin. The use value of Cantonese is very high...When you are talking about the region our school belongs to, I think it is quite unique, since we have more contacts with students from the Mainland. So students in this region might be able to use more Chinese than those students from Hong Kong Island. It has much to do with daily encounters, since they [students from Hong Kong Island] come into contact with tourists mainly, but what the students in this region come across are immigrants from China. I believe regional variation is one of the factors that affects the importance level of languages.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

Five teachers out of seven believed that English still enjoys more superior status in the society, though there are two who rated the importance of both English and Cantonese according to the level of schools and the level of families. Only one of them thought Cantonese should rank first in both the societal and education domains, because of its high use value. As she suggested,

**Cantonese is the *lingua franca* in the society, and we need Cantonese when we are bargaining in the market. Nobody will understand you in English.**

(Teacher A Maths CMI)

Obviously the conflicting view regarding the ranking of Cantonese, English and Mandarin is mainly the result of the different emphasis being put on the value dimension. Most of the teachers put more stress on the exchange values of the language, and used exchange value instead of use value as the basis of comparison. In a society where one's status relies heavily on income and career prospects, the high exchange value attached to the global and commercial language, English, is more likely to guarantee higher monetary rewards and therefore it naturally enjoys a more superior status than other languages.

Two teacher trainers out of three ranked English as the most important language in Hong Kong, and the remaining one measured the level of importance by the use value instead of the exchange level for the society as a whole. He carried on to clarify that in

terms of exchange value, English is still the language at the higher rank. The way of prioritising languages with reference to their exchange value by the teachers was shared by the teacher trainers, who also selected English as the highest ranking in the society.

The ranking question in the questionnaires has been followed by an open-ended question which was designed to investigate further into the reasons of the subjects' choice. However, 9.3% of EMI students and 36.9% of CMI students have left the question blank. The most likely reason is the unpopularity of open-ended questions in questionnaires. Respondents simply might not have an answer or they do not bother to think of one. Reasons for their choices of ranking have been classified into different categories and there is an interface of categories between the CMI and EMI groups, which will be elaborated in the following section.

#### **6.2.4 Status of Mandarin**

##### **6.2.4.1 Background information on the status of Mandarin in the Mainland**

As pointed out in the 'Hong Kong culture' section, the regional culture variation in the Canton Province is made more distinct from the other parts of China mainly because of the economic success along the southern coast of China. The distinctiveness of the Hong Kong context is attributed not only to the early economic take-off but also the diverging political paths that it follows. As we can see from the case of Guangzhou, one of the major cities in Canton Province which is close to Hong Kong, Cantonese is spoken all over the city except in a few major schools and universities in spite of the attempt to centralise the power of the central government at the expense of regional uniqueness and independent developments. The spread of Cantonese has once set the Chinese central government to legally standardize language use in China (People's Daily 2000), as has been discussed in section 1.4.1.1.

The relative importance of the three languages in general has shown that Cantonese and English are the languages in competition because the level of importance of these two languages appears to rely on the contexts, and their status has obviously been recognised by the overwhelming majority. Mandarin's status is undoubtedly in sharp

contrast to Cantonese and English, with only 3% of EMI students putting it in the first rank and also 3% of them putting it in the second rank in the school context. 86% of the EMI subjects put Mandarin in the third rank (which is the lowest) in the social context. Mandarin remains the lowest-ranking among the three in either of the contexts, despite the effort of raising its status and importance by making it one of the core subjects in schools.

The promotion of Mandarin programmes in schools does not appear to work very well, as Mandarin ranked the lowest among the student respondents. The majority of teacher interviewees also claimed that the popularity of this language was still low. Despite the fact that Hong Kong has become the Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and Mandarin has been made the official language, the Cantonese dialect still holds a very important place in the society. Teacher Trainer C has revealed some truth in what he reckoned as the contradiction within Hong Kong identity.

**...it [Hong Kong] seems to be externally moving towards China linguistically and culturally then but worldwide business might become concerned, maybe China needs Hong Kong to be economically prosperous...Hong Kong people are very proud of being Cantonese. They are proud of their own Cantonese culture. And they are little bit defensive because Cantonese is not such a standard language, and they know that people in China do not value Cantonese very much. So they are a bit defensive.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

The inherent conflict of cultural identity of Hong Kong people, as suggested by Teacher Trainer C, takes its root from the rivalry between the central mainstream culture in China, that represents Mainland Chinese identity, and the regional Hong Kong Cantonese culture, that symbolises the identity of Hong Kong people. The notion that Hong Kong people tend to be defensive of their own regional culture coheres with the literature regarding the Hong Kong culture, that was reviewed in chapter two. Hong Kong people's pride in Cantonese has obviously complicated the question of promoting Mandarin in the city.



#### **6.2.4.2 Limited exchange value of Mandarin**

Student respondents have listed that the growth of China trade has also led to the rise of the economic value of Mandarin, and it is exceptionally crucial for Hong Kong businessmen to be proficient in Mandarin due to the role of Hong Kong as the mediate broker between China and the rest of the world. A few have also noticed the penetration of Mandarin because of the growth of tourism from Mainland China, which has been flourishing since the political retrocession.

However, 4.4% of the EMI group raised the concern that Mandarin is 'only' spoken in some Asian countries, that it is not popular in Hong Kong and is not known to westerners, which was agreed by 7.3% of CMI students. This proportion of CMI students stressed that Mandarin was used in limited areas and 'only' in China. The point that some of the students in the CMI schools have confined the use of Mandarin in China shows their ignorance of the fact that Mandarin is also widely used in many other Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Apart from their ignorance, it nevertheless indicates their indifferent attitude towards Mandarin, and this indifferent attitude is obviously stronger among the CMI group. Interestingly, more EMI students tended to be more nationalistic in terms of language attitude as 10.3% of them have recognised the status and social importance of Mandarin due to cultural, political, economic and academic reasons. When the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997, it is both culturally and politically important to learn Mandarin. Some EMI students even suggested that English was not as important because Hong Kong was no longer a colony of Britain. Nonetheless, the awareness of the need to learn Mandarin because of the integration of Hong Kong with China was not strong at all in the questionnaires for the CMI group. It might cohere with their general attitude about Chinese as the more inferior language and therefore Mandarin, which is the standard spoken form of Chinese, does not enjoy much attention either.

#### **6.2.4.3 Background of respondents in sample**

The generally low status of Mandarin in the social context may attribute to the

possibility that student subjects may not realise the rising status of Mandarin in the workplace, especially in those professions which have to deal with China trade. The career composition of the sample has obviously contributed to the difference of their choices, which might as well explain why the gulf between the attitude towards Cantonese and Mandarin is particularly sharp in the present research, since all the interviewees and questionnaire subjects come from the field of education and they might not have realised the importance of learning Mandarin.

The effort of increasing the status of Mandarin in schools does not seem to be very successful because the general result indicates that its status in schools is even lower than that in the social context, which might imply that not much attention has been paid to the teaching of Mandarin as compared to English language in schools.

### **6.2.5 Status of English**

The reasons why the majority of student respondents believed that English still ranks top in the society after the political handover and the introduction of mother-tongue education could be categorized into three groups, namely, social, economic as well as historical and cultural.

#### **6.2.5.1 Social reasons: the worldwide popularity of English**

Analysis of students' answers for their choice of languages ranking does not show any profound difference from those provided by the teachers and teacher trainers. The results of the languages ranking in both the school and social contexts illustrate a sharp tendency in favour of the English language and it remains as the most superior during the post-colonial era, while views regarding Mandarin have been rather contrasting. However, Mandarin's general unpopularity in comparison with English and Cantonese has undoubtedly been shown by people's attitudes, and has illustrated the essential criteria that constitute the importance of a language. The first reason that occurs most frequently is that English is ranked as the most important because of its nature as a financial and social *lingua franca* in the world. Almost half of the EMI and CMI groups wrote that it is because of the international nature of English that

accounts for its importance. The awareness of learning English well to communicate with people in the western world was shared by 45.6% of the EMI students, which might perhaps illustrate the rather globalised outlook of the school teenagers.

### *English as the language for high technology*

Apart from the need to communicate with westerners and to facilitate outward mobility, the use of English as a tool to keep in pace with the high technology and computing knowledge, which have been largely dominated by the English language as discussed by Crystal (1998) in section 1.2.1.2, has been mentioned by the questionnaire respondents as well.

#### **6.2.5.2 Economic considerations**

As suggested earlier, the international status and worldwide popularity of English attributes largely to its economic value as a universal business language. 27% of the EMI and 19.5% of the CMI students pointed out the fact that English facilitates them in developing their future career. This perspective coheres with the predicted trend of the language status of teacher trainers and teachers during the post-1997 period,

**Financially speaking, Mandarin is important in terms of China trade, which has been flourishing recently, but at the same time we should not forget the extensive market overseas. English is important for international business, and for communicating with other countries.**

(Teacher Trainer B)

**I believe English is the most important, then I think it should be followed by Cantonese, and Mandarin comes last. English could still be kept after 1997 largely because of economic reason.**

(Teacher D English CMI)

#### **6.2.5.3 Historical consideration**

The business dimension increases the exchange value of English. Due to the

globalization of Hong Kong business market, English has to be kept as an important language to enable Hong Kong to merge into the global world. However, the economic dimension is not the only cause for this. In fact, the cultural and historical aspects should not be wiped away with the change of rule. Teacher F pointed out that English had been a more important language according to the school tradition:

**English is still more crucial at this stage. We have more campaigns in school with the aim of promoting the use of English. For instance, we have got posters, saying that when you see teachers, you should address them in English. And we have got English speaking day...we have activities of Mandarin too, but it is still not widely used, at least not as popular as English.**

(Teacher F History EMI)

**After all, the status of English is still high because the majority of people have gone through the colonial rule for such a long time. They undoubtedly have some kinds of irrational preference for English. It is obvious that parents still prefer to send their children to EMI schools, and would love their kids to continue learning with the ex-master's language, irrespective of the change of sovereignty and the rising importance of Mandarin. I think it can be understood since people's minds and concepts are accumulated through one's history and past experiences too. One's past cannot be discarded and the history should count too.**

(Teacher Trainer B)

The perceptions of historical influence was shared by Teacher D, who argued that historical reasons would play a crucial role in constructing the mentality and values of people.

It is perhaps not surprising to see that English still ranked the top in the society three years after the change of sovereignty (in year 2000 when the research was conducted). Three years are probably too short to 'brainwash' people, who have spent most of their lives living peacefully in the colony. As Teacher Trainer B contended, mentality constructs have most likely matured and values have taken shape as well throughout their upbringing. A minority of EMI students (3%) raised the point that the people in Hong Kong code-mix a lot in their everyday conversations, and people prefer to use

English more. This pro-English attitude seems to develop from the deep-rooted mentality, which is very likely to be the backlash effect of the colonial nostalgia.

### **6.2.6 Status of Cantonese**

#### **6.2.6.1 Cultural attachment**

The importance of Cantonese is clearly seen but the reasons for its importance are much simpler than the other two languages being discussed. Cantonese is crucial due to one main reason. It is the mother-tongue of the majority in Hong Kong and is the easiest and most comfortable language to communicate with. This can be categorised as the cultural tie to the language, which is the need to identify oneself as belonging to a particular community through the use of a common language. This reason was reiterated by 24.4% of the CMI students and 39.7% of the EMI group.

### **6.2.7 Issues of concern regarding students' responses**

#### **6.2.7.1 Significance of unanswered questionnaires**

The most astonishing result might probably be the generally lower interest in Mandarin among the CMI group. Apparently, being taught in Chinese medium does not necessarily imply that the students' awareness of learning Mandarin would be higher. In fact, the general picture is contrastive to what has been predicted. It seems that not many people in the sample have the awareness of relating the teaching medium and language orientation together.

However, the proportion of subjects who did not answer this open-ended question might draw our attention to the point that the reasons/answers outlined in the questionnaires may not be representative enough to reflect the whole picture of people's attitude. As pointed out earlier, 9.3% of the EMI questionnaires regarding this open-ended question were unanswered, while 36.9% of the CMI group left this question blank. It is worthwhile to mention that answers to this particular question are less comprehensive in the CMI group in comparison with their EMI counterparts, and some other reasons that might weigh in their ranking preferences might have been left out because of the considerable proportion of respondents who did not answer the

question.

#### **6.2.7.2 Change in language attitude after the implementation of mother-tongue education?**

The general result of this attitudinal study with regard to the importance of the languages in Hong Kong is very similar to Littlewood *et al's* (1996) survey. The subjects for their study are tertiary students instead of junior secondary. However, it is significant to note that 97% of the subjects in Littlewood *et al's* (1996) study regard English as an important world language and 93% have pointed out the need to learn English to improve career prospects. These two points could be categorised as the instrumental and pragmatic reasons, which score as the most important for their ranking preferences. It can be concluded from the current research that English still remains an indispensable language in the post-colonial era and it is likely that the pragmatic value of English as a global language is the most significant reason for the choice of the subjects in both Littlewood *et al's* (1996) study and the present study.

One point that should be considered is that results might vary according to the samples' background differences. As this study is mainly confined to subjects in the education field, their perceptions of the three main languages in Hong Kong (English, Cantonese and Mandarin) might have been partly influenced by the backwash of the mother-tongue streaming policy as has been discussed in section 5.5. The next section 6.3 is going to explore, via a subsidiary question, the political implication the new MOI policy might have brought. It is going to look at one of the most frequently-debated topics: is there a causal relationship between the political handover and the propaganda of mother-tongue education?

### **6.3 Political implications of the MOI policy**

The majority of respondents, including teachers, teacher trainers and students, all saw a correlation between the 1997 factor and the implementation of mother-tongue education because of the 'timing' selected for such a shift (which was one year after the handover) and the sudden change of attitude of the government regarding

education, from a *laissez-faire* approach to interventionist. All these elements have set people to relate educational policy to political motives.

### **6.3.1 Literature on the political agenda and the development of MOI policy**

The question of the extent which the political agenda contributes to the new mother-tongue education policy is too subjective to be answered in a fully comprehensive way. A documentary review by Tsui *et al* (1999), that has been elaborated in section 2.7.1.1 in chapter two, reflects that little sign has been shown that educational policy could evolve without the influence of the interaction between the various dynamics of the society. The development of educational policy in Hong Kong has shown that there has in fact been a tremendous shift of orientation that education policy is geared towards in the past few decades (Sweeting 1997).

A closer look at the educational history in Hong Kong has shown that the language policy had been under great colonial influence since colonization as it had been very English-oriented. Education used to be the privilege of the elite few who obtained a high level of English proficiency. Several government documents over the past two decades, for instance the Llewellyn report (1982) and the Education Commission Report No.4 (Education Commission 1990), had all shown the sign of the awareness that Chinese language plays a crucial part in maintaining the linguistic foundation of the local population and that not all the students could benefit from EMI education. However, the government has always put forward economic and social (parental) agendas to justify English-medium education. If the assumption that mother-tongue education obtains high educational benefits holds true, the fact that the continuous adoption of English as the medium of instruction has illustrated that economic and social agendas have overridden educational consideration.

After a series of riots in the 1960s and the 1970s and the search for Hong Kong Chinese identity, the language policy has shifted a great deal, from an attitude in favour of English-medium teaching to a slight emphasis on the benefit of using mother-tongue as the medium. Nevertheless, the *laissez-faire* attitude had continued and resulted in the one-sided preference on English-medium education and the

phenomenon had been going on until very recently when the abrupt change towards mother-tongue education occurred. In fact, the Education Commission Reports in the past decade (e.g. Education Commission Reports No.4 in 1990 and No.6 in 1996) have apparently been paving the way for mother-tongue education. We could learn from the evolution and past educational reforms that whenever an educational policy, especially those pertaining to language and teaching medium issue, is put forward, different forces other than educational agendas are usually at play. The recognition of the impact of political handover and pressure from the motherland has refuted the speech of the education director of Hong Kong, as mentioned in section 2.7.1.1, that there is no political agenda behind the mother-tongue approach.

**Table 6.6**

**Summary of the results with reference to the question of the political implication of mother-tongue education**

Question	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Perception of whether mother-tongue policy was put forward out of political concern.	<p>Almost all teachers from both CMI and EMI schools agreed that the political motive behind the mother-tongue policy was strong.</p> <p>Educational policy always goes hand in hand with other policies and it usually carries strong political connotations.</p> <p>Only one teacher from the CMI school believed that mother-tongue policy was carried out because of educational benefits only.</p> <p>One teacher trainer proposed the point that relating educational policy with politics was risky because of the limited time frame allowed for the policy to yield its best result.</p>	<p>The majority of the CMI students (40%) related the implementation of mother-tongue education highly with political considerations.</p> <p>However, the majority of the EMI group (47.7%) believed that the political handover had little impact on the implementation of the mother-tongue policy.</p>



### 6.3.2 Discussion of respondents' answers

The results illustrated from the data have shown that respondents have more or less related political consideration to the formulation of the new medium of instruction policy. Historical evolution and political factors play a crucial role in the design of language policy, for the motive behind the policy is usually beyond the scope of educational concern. The development of medium of instruction indicates that language policy has undergone changes from 'English-based' to 'Chinese-English-oriented', and from 'Chinese-English oriented' to the present situation of pure 'mother-tongue'.

#### 6.3.2.1 Discussion of teachers' responses

##### *Mother-tongue education as a means to spread Chinese culture*

The guidelines in the education documents (e.g. Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools) do not contain any words or phrases that would suggest a political motive or consideration behind the new medium of instruction policy. The language and academic standards in secondary education appear to be the chief areas of concern, and worldwide research evidence and empirical research conducted by the SCOLAR research group also support the implementation of mother-tongue education for the sake of pure educational benefits. Nevertheless, evidence provided by the Education Department does not seem to be able to convince the participants, who are directly involved with the practice of education—students and teachers—of the educational benefits of mother-tongue education. When asked if the political handover in 1997 had any effect on the mother-tongue policy, 4/7 teachers expressed quite definite and firm views over the political motive behind the new medium of instruction policy. Two out of these four teachers criticised the government's attempt to relate politics with educational policy. One of the teachers said that education policy had never been implemented on its own ground without political influence. As she explained,

**Actually when we look back at the history of education, why did most of the schools in Hong Kong belong to the EMI group? Obviously it is because of**

colonial reason as well, and the government had to strengthen the status of English. English was the official language and it still is, it helps to spread their culture as well. But after 1997, Hong Kong has become the Special Administrative Region and Chinese has become an official language, and the government thus requires its people to be proficient in Chinese.

(Teacher B English CMI)

Teacher A agreed with the claim that the introduction of mother-tongue education is a means to promote the culture of the motherland, as the government has shifted from a soft-handed approach to direct intervention regarding the language policy after 1998. In fact, she contended that it was just the 'first step' to assimilate Hong Kong with the hinterland gradually.

...In fact, apart from education, the government is trying to make Hong Kong more like China. They start by making changes on daily life culture in order to convert and assimilate local people's mentalities with that of the Mainland Chinese. For instance, do you realize what they did about the print title they put on 'rubbish bins'? They have changed the titles to 'Fruit skins bins', which is the same as what they call it in Mainland China. Mother-tongue education is one of the first steps, and perhaps the time has also come for us to solve the problem of MOI. However, looking at the strong move and attitude of the Education Department, I do believe that it is due to political rather than pedagogical reason.

(Teacher A Maths CMI)

### *Time of implementation*

The time that the HKSAR government has chosen to intervene in the previously 'intervention-free' field of education also arouses suspicion for possible political motives. It does not seem to have been the case that mother-tongue policy is a purely educational concern.

I think the political motive is strong. The whole implementation was carried out in great haste and hurry, and it does have to take a long time for the schools to

**adapt to such a change. As you can see, the government is still going its way despite all those voices of protests and critics from different sectors.**

(Teacher C English CMI)

The only teacher interviewee who did not see any connection between the language policy and political consideration was Teacher D. She, on the contrary to what Teacher C said about 'implementation in haste', recognised the fact that the government had been promoting mother-tongue education since the early 1990s. As she put it,

**I remember I left the teaching profession in 1996, and the schools were advised to promote mother-tongue education. e.g. to promote the combination of Geography and civic education into one subject to be taught in Chinese. At that time it was stated very clearly that mother-tongue education would be promoted a few years later, and so political motive has not got much to do with this, since it was promoted a long time ago.**

(Teacher D Geography CMI)

Apart from the conflicting view on the question of the '1997 factor' and its impact on policy planning, it is also interesting to see that while Teacher B interpreted that the motive of the new language policy is to strengthen the political agenda by increasing the influence of Chinese culture, Teacher D only saw that the new language policy as a pure educational tool to reduce the negative backwash effect of the mass education after 1979, that has resulted in great diversity in students' academic and language performances.

Analysis of teacher trainers shows that they did not indicate much difference from that of the teachers in terms of opinion with reference to the political motive behind mother-tongue education. The majority of both groups drew a direct relationship between the handover and the implementation of mother-tongue education because of the 'timing factor'. The majority view was that picking such a politically sensitive time to make a strong approach more or less shows that the language policy carries political connotations. As Teacher Trainer C put it,

**...after the handover it became politically attractive to choose education as an area to be improved. Language is an obvious aspect...it is both pedagogically and politically attractive.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

The general attitude towards the change of the medium of instruction at a time that was politically sensitive can be classified as 'negative'. Teacher Trainer C continued with the criticism about the whole implementation process and it corresponds with what Teacher C described as 'implementation in haste and hurry'. Teacher Trainer C drew attention to the possible far-reaching impact such a dynamic and changing policy might pose in the field of education. He showed his concern over the possibility of success for mother-tongue policy in Hong Kong. He commented,

**The worry that educationalists have is that the politicians have short attention spans, so they throw a lot of money for language education for...about 5 years. They think, well, we will give extra money. If you can't show good results, then they turn their attention elsewhere and say well, they have given money to language education and so it's the turn for something else, perhaps to build the roads or something. The changes in education traditionally take about 20 years to see the result. So that's the problem here. For 5 years they haven't been given a fair chance. So people like me are a bit uneasy about politics and education. I don't think education should be a political weapon. It's too important for that.**

(Teacher Trainer C)

The concern of associating politics with educational reforms might be due to the reason that developed societies tend to be running in the form of economic enterprises, where people might be too short-sighted and are expecting returns in the short run. This conflict of interests between the educational side and the economic and political side may explain why educational reforms tend not to be able to yield the expected possible outcome.

### 6.3.2.2 Discussion of students' responses

**Table 6.7**

The impact of the '1997 factor' in relation to the mother-tongue education policy

Streams	Big impact	Little impact	No impact	No answer
CMI Group	40%	29.3%	22.7%	8%
EMI Group	29.2%	47.7%	23.1%	0

Both CMI and EMI students were given three options to choose from regarding the question of political connotation. It was designed to obtain opinions from both groups as in whether they felt that the change of sovereignty had a big, little or no impact at all on the change of MOI. About ¼ of both samples believed that political change had no impact on the language policy and the figures for both samples are very close (23.1% for the EMI group vs 22.7% for the CMI group). The issue that is worth further investigation is the opposite views the two groups possessed with regard to the extent to which the political factor acts as a determinant in education policy-making. The proportion of EMI students who regarded that the '1997 factor' has little impact on the change of medium of instruction (47.7%) was almost the same as the proportion in the CMI sample who saw the same factor as having a 'big effect' over the language policy (40%). In other words, a considerable proportion of the CMI students felt that the '1997 factor' is highly related to mother-tongue education, while fewer subjects in the EMI group expressed the same point of view. Nearly half of the EMI subjects, on the other hand, thought that the '1997 factor' only has minimal impact on the language policy.

### 6.3.2.3 Issues of concern in relation to 'negative evidence'

#### *Personal background of individual interviewee*

The general picture that could be drawn is that all three groups of interviewees in the sample (teacher trainers, teachers and students) related political reasons to the implementation of mother-tongue education, although the degree to which this factor played a role varied according to personal perspectives. The only opponent of this view, Teacher D, supported her position by pointing to the fact that the idea of

mother-tongue education had been written down on government documents a few years before the handover. Nevertheless, the background experience of Teacher D might offer extra insights and explain why her perspective was the only one exception from the rest of the majority. Teacher D reported that she had been away from Hong Kong since 1996 for emigration and did not join the teaching profession again until 1999, which was already a year after the implementation of mother-tongue education. The rest of the interview subjects and the questionnaire subjects had gone through the whole policy change and experienced it. This may have made a difference in terms of attitude towards the influence of the '1997 element' on language policy.

#### *Difference of background experiences between the CMI and the EMI students*

Personal experiences may account for the gulf between the EMI student sample and CMI sample. After all, the change of medium of instruction has not exerted much influence on EMI schools. As the EMI schools have passed the official criteria to get the 'franchise' to teach through the medium of English, the new medium of instruction policy has not brought any apparent changes to their teaching medium and textbook materials. The psychological dimension of CMI students might have some weight here, as they belong to the group which has been mostly affected. This might suggest why the great majority of the CMI group recognised that the political factor is highly related to the new language policy.

#### *Significance of unanswered questionnaires*

It should also be noted that 8% of the CMI sample did not answer this particular question on the political implication of the MOI policy. Although the proportion of this 'unanswered group' was not big enough to distort or alter the general results, this 'vacuum' might reveal the sensitivity of any questions that might link with political considerations at this particular time. Although anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, a minority of subjects might still have been hesitant to express their personal views on anything that has to do with political concerns.

Investigation on the relationship between political agenda or influence on the

language policy indicates that people did not see the change to mother-tongue a result of pure educational concern. The data seem to suggest that political considerations have a certain degree of influence on language planning.

The fact that the high proportion of CMI students and teacher interviewees related the 1997 political factor to the implementation of mother-tongue education is speculated to have accounted for their negative responses regarding the mother-tongue policy. The point that the change of medium of instruction policy was not fully put into force until 1998 may nevertheless have made people in the education sector feel that it was a policy imposed on them from the bureaucracy. The apparent political connotation of the mother-tongue policy may act as an obstacle for the promotion of Mandarin, and has probably made people more defensive of their local identity, as revealed by the response by Teacher A, who was aware of the encroachment of Mainland Chinese in terms of language as well as general culture. Although people generally did not express any dislike towards Mandarin, imposing the mother-tongue policy and acting against the will of the general public may result in the lack of support for Chinese-medium education in Hong Kong.

## **6.4 The language pattern according to domains**

### **6.4.1 The case of Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is a diglossic (or triglossic) society with two H languages, English and standard Chinese operating in the domains of higher formality and one L language, Cantonese, performing the functions in the more casual and informal settings. A table has been designed in the questionnaire to find out the usual language used in different domains, which may be able to reflect the function, the status and the roles the three languages, Mandarin, Cantonese and English, are playing in post-colonial Hong Kong. The following section is going to discuss the choice of languages of student respondents in order to obtain a general pattern of language use in various domains.

### **6.4.2 Domain vs role relationship**

The following discussion focusses on the language pattern in the four domains under

study: 'Schools', 'Friends and peers', 'Family' and 'Streets'. The data indicate that the student respondents mixed English and Cantonese, and sometimes Cantonese and Mandarin, in all four domains. The form and extent to which Cantonese and English interplay was, however, not clearly identified. It may possibly be in the form of code-mixing or code-switching, or in the form that students stick to one specific language without any mixing at one time, but the language being used is subject to situational variation in the same domain. It could be the result that there are other different variables other than the usual predicted ones that come into the scene, which makes the use of languages even more unpredictable. As Romaine (2000) suggests,

**Due to competing pressures, it is not possible to predict with absolute certainty which language an individual will use in a particular situation. Variable language use can arise when domains become unclear and setting and role relationship do not combine in the expected way.**

(p. 45)

The fact that role relationships exert a certain degree of influence on the choice of language is indicated by the remarks some CMI students made regarding this question. They specified that the choice of languages varies according to situations. Results to this question of language choice in various domains have been summarised in table 6.8, which will be followed by more detailed elaboration on each domain under study and explanations for the certain phenomena.



**Table 6.8****Summary of results with reference to language patterns and domains**

Question	Quantitative data
Use of languages according to domains	<p>Students' choice of languages varied according to domains. However, Cantonese turned out to be the language they were likely to choose in all four domains under research: schools, family, friends and peers, and streets.</p> <p>68% of the EMI students used 'Cantonese only' in the school domain, while 83.1% of the CMI group used Cantonese in the same domain.</p> <p>Over 90% of both CMI and EMI group have selected Cantonese as the language they most frequently used with their friends, though a minority of EMI students (5.3%) suggested that they would code-mix Cantonese and English in their conversations.</p> <p>Over 90% of the EMI students and nearly 90% of the CMI students used Cantonese in the family domain.</p> <p>The frequent use of Cantonese extended to the street domain according to the data obtained, but the interesting point was that EMI students were more likely to code-mix and code-switch with other languages even when they were using Cantonese. They would mix with English or even Mandarin, though only a minority of them would do so (6.7%).</p>

#### 6.4.2.1 Analysis and discussion of students' answers

As all the questionnaire subjects were junior secondary students, 'domains' were confined to those they are most likely to be exposed to in their everyday lives, such as 'schools', 'family', 'friends and peers' and 'on the streets'. Students were asked to choose which language/languages they usually adopt in each specific domain. The proportion of unanswered questionnaires is 1.5% for CMI and also 1.3% for EMI schools, which is small and is not likely to affect the degree of representation of the results.

**Table 6.9****School Domain**

Form	EMI %	CMI %
Cantonese only	68	83.1
Cantonese and/or English	22.7	10.8
Cantonese and/or Mandarin	2.7	0
English only	4	1.5
Cantonese and/or English and/or Mandarin	2.7	3.1
Unanswered	1.3	1.5

The most notable difference between the CMI and EMI students' results regarding the use of languages is found in the school domain. Cantonese has turned out to be the most frequently used language in both the CMI and EMI contexts, with 68% of EMI students choosing 'Cantonese only' in schools, and 83.1% of CMI students opting for the same category. The 15.1% gap is likely to be the result of the different medium of instruction used in the two contexts.

As we can see from table 6.9, students' choice indicates that the use of 'Cantonese and/or English' in the school domain was not uncommon in both the CMI and EMI contexts. This was exceptionally the case for the EMI school context. 22.7% of EMI students chose this category, while 10.8% of the students from the CMI context selected the same category. It should also be noted that there was a small but considerable amount of students from the EMI group who selected 'English only'. 2.7% of them used the form of 'Cantonese and/or English and/or Mandarin' and a similar proportion of the CMI group used this form too (3.1%).

The difference of the results between the 'school' and 'friends and peers' domains in the EMI context is very likely to be explained by the 'unexpected match' between the setting and role relationships. In the EMI school context, even if students are supposed to be immersed totally (or almost totally) in the English-speaking environment, it does not necessarily imply that students would talk to one another or even to the teachers (after formal class hours) in English. Therefore, the school setting here is obviously in conflict with role relationships, and students' use of language would vary according to roles and the situations they are reacting to. The same explanation also applies to the CMI students, though the degree to which English was used is far smaller than that in

the EMI schools. This coheres with what Romaine (2000) describes about 'school' as the setting "where mismatches often occur and speakers are presented with a choice." (p.46)

**Table 6.10****Friends and peers**

Forms	EMI%	CMI%
Cantonese only	90.7	95.4
English only	2.7	0
Cantonese and/or English	5.3	1.5
Cantonese and/or Mandarin	0	1.5
Unanswered	1.3	1.5

One interesting point that can be raised is the difference of language used in the 'friends and peers' domain. More than 90% of both CMI and EMI students would use 'Cantonese only', which matches the predicted phenomenon of Cantonese performing the functions of a demotic language. However, it is surprising to find that around 2.7% of the EMI students would use 'English only', whereas none of the CMI students chose this category. Apart from this, the form of 'Cantonese and/or English' is more likely to occur in this informal domain for EMI students. Around 5.3% of the EMI group would use Cantonese and/or English, while only 1.5% of the CMI group would use this form to communicate with friends and their peers.

**Table 6.11****Family domain**

Forms	EMI %	CMI %
Cantonese only	90.7	87.7
Mandarin only	1.3	1.5
English only	0	1.5
Cantonese and/or English	2.7	3.1
Cantonese and/or Mandarin	2.6	1.5
Cantonese and/or Mandarin and/or English	1.3	3.1
Unanswered	1.3	1.5

Cantonese remains the most dominant and frequently chosen language for both EMI and CMI students in the 'family domain'. 90.7% of the EMI group would use this in the family while this is the case for 87.7% of the CMI group. However, the traces of

English and Mandarin could also be found, with the pattern of ‘Cantonese and/or English’ and ‘Cantonese and/or English and/or Mandarin’ emerging as the second most popular form for both streams of students, although the size of subjects for these two categories obviously amounts as a minority compared to that of the ‘Cantonese only’ category.

**Table 6.12**

**Street domain**

Forms	EMI %	CMI %
Cantonese only	85.3	93.8
Cantonese and/or English	6.7	3.1
Cantonese and/or Mandarin	6.7	1.5
Unanswered	1.3	1.5

The ‘street domain’ was designed in a way to make the subjects put themselves in ordinary situations which they might encounter everyday on the streets, and imagine what language they would generally use. This domain differs from the other three in the way that it involves interaction with total strangers, such as shop assistants or waiters in restaurants. In a way, the setting is raised from merely the individual and family level to a broader societal level. It is not surprising to see that the number of both EMI and CMI students would use ‘Cantonese only’, as Hong Kong still remains a Cantonese-oriented society and diglossia operates fundamentally in certain settings such as particular workplaces and EMI classrooms. However, it is worth noting that EMI students were more likely to switch flexibly regarding language use on streets than CMI students according to the data. Only 3.1% of CMI students indicated that the form ‘Cantonese and/or English’ would likely occur in their conversations in the street domain, which is half of the number of the EMI group (6.7%) who would use ‘Cantonese and/or English’ under the same circumstances. Apart from ‘Cantonese and/or English’, a same proportion of EMI students (6.7%) would choose ‘Cantonese and/or Mandarin’ as well.

### **6.5 Discussion of students’ choices of language use in relation to domains**

The most probable reason for such a difference in the language use (with EMI students having a greater variety) by the EMI and CMI groups is the level of exposure

these two groups of students receive due to the environmental variation. EMI students may receive more positive encouragement and support when they use English to talk to teachers and peers. Students from EMI schools tend to be more proud of their English-medium culture, as speculated in the previous chapter as the negative impact brought by the polarization of the two streams. With generally higher proficiency in English language, EMI students' choice of language in the 'street domain' is therefore different from that of the CMI students.

The form of 'Cantonese and/or English' also emerges as a category of language pattern in the school domain, despite the fact that its prevalence and popularity falls a lot behind the 'Cantonese only' category. The proportion of students from both streams who chose this category is 22.7% of students from the EMI stream and 10.8% from the CMI group. It is predicted that students' use of Mandarin, which became part of the core curriculum in 1995, is confined to the Mandarin classes because none of the EMI/CMI students reported that they would use 'Mandarin only' to talk to their friends and peers. Only 1.5% of the CMI group would use the form of 'Mandarin and/or Cantonese' when talking with friends.

Analysis of language use in these four domains brings out the message that the use of 'Cantonese only' is very broad in Hong Kong, be it in the 'school' domain or the 'friends and peers' setting. The extent of its use is relatively smaller only in the 'EMI school domain', when certain restrictions on language use apply. There is little space for either Mandarin or English, the two higher languages in Hong Kong (with Mandarin being the standard spoken form of Chinese of the mother country) to penetrate into people's lives on their own. It is clear from the analysis that the use of two or three languages in one domain, such as 'Cantonese and/or English' and 'Cantonese and/or Mandarin', also occurs. In addition to this, 'Cantonese and/or English' proved to be the most popular choice among the 'language mixing category' since this particular choice, however large or small the proportion of subjects who selected it, exists in every domain in both CMI and EMI streams. This has more or less indicated the general linguistic inclination of students, with higher preference for switching to English instead of Mandarin.

The category of 'Mandarin only' was rarely chosen and it only existed on its own once in the 'family' domain, with 1.3% of EMI students and 1.5% of CMI students choosing it. The use of 'Mandarin only' in the 'family' domain could be due to the reason that the students' grandparents or family members may only be able to speak Mandarin instead of Cantonese, and it has become a family language. However, it should be noted that this type of family (that speaks only Mandarin) makes up a very tiny proportion of the population in Hong Kong.

As pointed out in section 6.1.4.4, what obviously counts as the most important reason for using Cantonese as the teaching medium is simply that it lifts the language barriers and also improves teachers-students communication. However, a small but considerable amount of the group (21.5%) thought that Cantonese is a better medium for learning because it could reflect their identity as a Hong Konger better. As elaborated in section 2.2 in the literature review chapter, a sense of deep-rooted pride has been attached to the Cantonese identity due to the wealth of the Cantonese region, and also because of the prosperity of the Hong Kong economy that consolidates this regional dialect. The inherent linguistic comprehensiveness of the Cantonese language system further strengthens its status. Throughout the years, Cantonese has proved itself to be something more than just a dialect, but a cultural manifestation of the whole Cantonese region, which is one of the most crucial bases of the whole Chinese economy. Cultural integration of Hong Kong students with the Cantonese culture instead of the general mainland culture is more or less indicated by their attitude of identifying themselves more with the Cantonese language instead of Mandarin.

The relative status of Cantonese, Mandarin and English have been analysed through the respondents' language attitudes and language choices in sections 6.0 to 6.5. Various reasons that might contribute to the differences in status are reported according to the data obtained. The next section 6.6 tries to relate the subjects' preferable teaching medium to their concepts of cultural identity. It is going to further explore the question of cultural constructs after the change of sovereignty. The future possible development of the medium of instruction issue will follow in section 6.7.

### **6.6 The correlation between using Mandarin as the MOI and cultural identity**

156 years of domination by Britain had left Hong Kong with a number of colonial traces. The first section of chapter two deals with Hong Kong culture and the formation of an identity unique to Hong Kong people. It is believed that the integration with the motherland in 1997 has undoubtedly exerted impact on the cultural constructs of local Hong Kongers (Joseph 2000).

The following analysis looks into the identity question through language attitudes and their perceptions on the change of the medium of instruction. This correlation is grounded on the assumption that language attitude and perceptions compose a dominant part in one's cultural makeup. Nevertheless, we should be aware of the fact that culture is a composite which is made up of different variables, such as basic social norms and behaviour, and external cultural influences.

Before moving forward to the discussion of cultural construct and identity question in relation to teaching medium, the results of respondents' answers are listed in the table below. It will be followed by more comprehensive discussion of the data in section 6.6.1.

**Table 6.13**

**Summary of data with reference to the correlation between the MOI issue and the identity question**

Question	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Cultural identity question in relation to the issue of teaching medium	<p>The majority of teachers regarded that Hong Kong education had the long history of not putting emphasis on the identity question. Therefore, students were still a bit apathetic about this issue.</p> <p>Identity question has to do with civic education instead of the teaching medium issue.</p> <p>Some interviewees have suggested that mixed code was a distinctive form of Hong Kong identity.</p> <p>Only one teacher from the CMI stream said that mother-tongue education would strengthen the sense of Chinese nationalism.</p> <p>Respondents generally have not put much thought on the question of cultural construct and its relation with the language use.</p>	The percentage of student respondents who drew a connection between the medium of instruction issue and the identity question was low.

### **6.6.1 Discussion of teachers' responses**

#### **6.6.1.1 MOI vs cultural identity**

The general disagreement of replacing Cantonese with Mandarin as discussed in section 6.1.4 suggests that Mandarin is not yet accepted as the appropriate teaching medium in the society, though it is the only official language of the mother country. Teacher G suggested that

**Only Cantonese can be renowned as the mother-tongue in Hong Kong, and replacing it by Mandarin would have distorted the fundamental principle of mother-tongue education. Using Mandarin instead of Cantonese to teach means**



**that they learn from a language which is linguistically as distant, though not necessarily as foreign, as English.**

(Teacher G English CMI)

The strong emotional and cultural attachment to the mother-tongue, Cantonese, can be seen from the above quotation from Teacher G. In fact, before the political handover in 1997, several attempts have been made to inculcate a sense of Chineseness and belonging to the mother country. This includes the addition of Chinese Language and Culture as a compulsory subject in the A-level curriculum in 1992, in addition to the Use of English, which had been the sole compulsory subject for university candidates before then. The inclusion of Chinese Language and Culture, according to the guidelines as listed on the syllabus, is “to assess the ability of A-level candidates of the use of Chinese language and their degree of understanding of Chinese culture.” (Hong Kong Examination Authority 2002) Apart from writing, listening and speaking skills which form the general framework of the subject, five articles pertaining to Chinese culture are selected with an aim to expose teenagers to the great traditions inherent in the Chinese culture and to spread the pride of being Chinese and to strengthen the cultural tie among the younger generation through cultural education. The previous question regarding whether Mandarin should replace Cantonese as the teaching medium indicates that the vast majority of students and teachers prefer Cantonese to Mandarin mainly because of communicative benefits instead of identity issues, though the latter reason also exerts a certain amount of influence on the choice of MOI. Only one out of seven teachers drew a positive relationship between the use of Chinese as the teaching medium and the sense of Chinese identity. Teacher D pointed out that the limited degree of sense of belonging to the mother country could be a result of the lack of civic education and that the change of teaching medium to Chinese may strengthen individuals’ sense of identity. She concluded that,

**I believe that mother-tongue education has positive impact on the cultural makeup of students. If Mandarin instead of Cantonese is used, the effect is even more obvious. Teaching students in Mandarin will lead them to question the origin of their roots, and in a way improves the sense of nationalism. Students from EMI schools do not have any sense of belonging to China, and they do not**

**regard themselves as Chinese.**

(Teacher D Geography CMI)

The rest of teachers' views were more in common with students' perceptions towards the connection between the teaching medium and students' sense of identity. They suggested that the teaching medium in schools would have few implications on students' cultural construct and that the sense of 'Chinese identity' would not be strengthened either with the use of mother-tongue. Teacher C claimed that the building of 'post-colonial Hong Kong identity' lies in civic education instead of the teaching medium. Civic education was only introduced into the curriculum recently. Both Teacher A and Teacher B raised the question that the whole identity issue has neither been stressed nor has received much attention in the education in Hong Kong and ideology such as nationalism has been rather fragile. Teacher B said that,

**Hong Kong does not really stress the identity issue. Students therefore do not really feel any difference with the use of different teaching medium. For instance, they will not feel that they are less Chinese if they are taught through English. I do not think it does have any impact on students, since we have not done much to inculcate the sense of nationalism or patriotism in the minds of students.**

(Teacher B English CMI)

It should be noted that recent Chinese history (from the liberation in 1949 onwards) has long been neglected in the secondary curriculum, not to mention the education of the sense of loyalty to the country. As previously pointed out in section 1.1.1.1, Hong Kong people have been well-known for their political apathy which has more or less to do with the colonial history and the lack of emphasis on political education in Hong Kong. Therefore, there is some truth in Teacher A's saying that the identity foundation of Hong Kong students has been weak.

**I think the connection between mother-tongue education and self-identity is not so strong. Students' self-identity and sense of belonging to China have not been strengthened yet. When we look back at the EMI schools in the past, they used mixed code and not pure English medium. They use Chinese to explain English textbooks. Teachers and students have been using Chinese all the way, and the**

**only difference is that they are now using Chinese textbooks as well. I do not think the awareness of social identity of Hong Kong students has been very strong and it has little to do with the teaching medium.**

**(Teacher A Maths CMI)**

Teacher A raised an interesting point about the use of mixed code in the EMI schools, saying that the impact of teaching medium on cultural identity was limited because even the EMI schools were using mixed code or Cantonese to teach all the way through. Therefore, the change of the teaching medium has little impact on the actual spoken medium adopted and to assume that cultural construct has gone through changes due to the change of MOI may be deceptive. Instead, changes only occur in the written form i.e. subject textbook materials in CMI schools are all written in Chinese.

#### **6.6.1.2 Possible changes in cultural constructs**

Cultural construct and the question of identity have long separated Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese from each other. As discussed in chapter two, the features of Hong Kong culture, or more specifically Hong Kong cultural identity, could be manifested through the media and the mentality construct because of historical and economic reasons. Cultural construct can also be illustrated by the language attitudes of local people. Lai (2001) conducted a survey that explored the nature of the change of language attitude with regard to Hong Kong cultural identity after the political handover. The sample of Lai's (2001) survey shares a lot in common with the current study, with half of the students' sample from the elite EMI group and the other half in the CMI group and the educational level of CMI students' parents is slightly lower than that of the EMI's. The survey illustrates that English apparently enjoys a superior status to Cantonese and Mandarin, reasons being that English is not only a global economic language and a tool for upward and outward mobility, but also symbolic of westernization and modernization. These reasons coincide with those obtained from student respondents in the current research, as has been discussed in section 6.2.5.1. As for Cantonese, its social value is recognised by 50% of both CMI and EMI groups in Lai's (2001) study, though only a small minority suggest that it

should be adopted as the teaching medium because student subjects are only culturally attached to their mother-tongue. As shown in Lai's (2001) study, the general attitude towards Mandarin is neutral, and it does not associate with any elevation of the status of Mandarin,

**Although the students do not associate Putonghua (Mandarin) with any negative image, being able to speak fluent Putonghua does not make them appear more intelligent or educated.**

(p.121)

Respondents from Lai's (2001) and the present studies did not express any attitudes of negation towards the learning of Mandarin and its use and commercial value because the close links between Hong Kong and the motherland have been recognised. However, subjects from both studies expressed indifferent attitudes about learning Mandarin (only 12.5% of EMI and 11.1% of the CMI students in the present research study suggested the need to learn Mandarin, as shown in tables 6.15 and 6.16), and it has turned out to be the least important language in both the social and academic contexts in my study. Its growing importance does not seem to be in proportion with peoples' motivation to acquire the language.

#### **6.6.1.3 Mixed code as a symbol of Hong Kong identity**

Another point of interest found in the current study is that the use of mixed code as a way to represent Hong Kong identity has also been affirmed: for example, students' choice of mixed code as their favourite MOI, their tendency to code-mix in different domains, and teachers' perceptions that Hong Kong is a mixed-code society. Lai's (2001) research further reveals that "44% of the middle-class group and 23% of the working-class group think that a mix of Cantonese and English best represents Hong Kong. The two groups also tend to agree that speaking in mixed code make them feel more like a Hong Konger. In addition, they agree quite strongly that a main difference between Hong Kong and mainland China is that Hong Kong is a bilingual city of English and Chinese." (p.125)

The language orientation of the vast majority of the subjects in this research have shown that the cultural constructs have not changed much as a result of the change in the teaching medium. Though the issue of Hong Kong culture and Hong Kong identity have obviously been manifested through the unique Hong Kong popular culture, such as local comics, magazines, television dramas as well as popular music, the identity question has not been strongly stressed and people generally have not given much thought to the identity issues. The assumption that the sense of Chinese identity could be boosted through the use of Chinese as the teaching medium does not hold true according to this study because the general picture implies that people have not thought much about consolidating their Chinese identity even with the implementation of mother-tongue policy. No signs have been shown so far regarding the shift of the local Hong Kong identity towards the direction of Mainland Chinese.

Sections 6.1 to 6.5 have discussed largely about the language attitudes of interviewees and student respondents. Their attitudes are judged according to their use of languages in various domains, and their ranking of the three major languages, Cantonese, English and Mandarin in both the social and educational contexts in Hong Kong. Section 6.6 attempts to relate the ideology of cultural identity to the question of teaching medium, and tries to explore if the change of the teaching medium and the addition of Mandarin in the linguistic scene has complicated or changed the cultural constructs of the subjects. The following section 6.7 is going to explore the future trend of language policy in Hong Kong. By looking at the subjects' perceptions about the future development of language policy, it might be able to reveal more of their concepts of cultural constructs after 1997.

### **6.7 What are the suggestions for future trends?**

A question has been designed to collect the thoughts of both the CMI and EMI students as well as policy-makers regarding suggestions for the present medium of instruction policy in case there are any views or ideas which have been left out in the questionnaire. The response rates for both streams were generally low. It is believed that it was mainly due to the unpopularity of open-ended questions, as illustrated by the low response rate for the open-ended question previously mentioned. The response

rate for CMI schools doubles that of the EMI schools. Only 10.7% of the EMI group answered this question, with the rest of them writing 'no comment' or simply leaving it blank. 27.7% of the CMI group provided comments for this question.

**Table 6.14**

**Summary of results with reference to the question of future trend of the language issue**

Question	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Suggestions for future trends	<p>Policy-makers regarded that code-mixing could be a possible teaching model.</p> <p>The possibility of introducing the two-mode instruction model.</p> <p>Cantonese may be replaced by Mandarin in the future according to the Policy-Maker A.</p> <p>Benchmarking is one of the actions to improve the quality of language teaching.</p>	<p>The CMI group thought that Code-mixing should be adopted, and this idea coheres with their choice of their most preferable teaching medium.</p> <p>English teaching should be strengthened.</p> <p>EMI group English should be treated as the second language.</p> <p>Using Chinese as the teaching medium was unacceptable according to some EMI students, otherwise Hong Kong would decline.</p> <p>There is a yearning for English-medium education.</p> <p>Hong Kong should be oriented towards English.</p> <p>There is a general fear of the rise of Chinese in the EMI group.</p> <p>The proportion of respondents who proposed the need for learning Mandarin was small.</p>

### 6.7.1 Analysis and discussion of student responses

#### 6.7.1.1 Results of CMI schools

Of the 27.7% of the CMI students, 22.2% commented that code-mixing instead of pure mother-tongue education should be used. Code-mixing in the Hong Kong context

as mentioned in the literature review chapter involves the interplay of Cantonese and English in conversations. This teaching model had been prevalent in secondary classrooms for decades, until measures were taken to draw a stop to the practice. Students' preference of mixed code, as suggested in the open-ended question analysis, coheres with their choice over their most preferred medium, in which case mixed-code teaching has been selected by the majority of the subjects.

A considerable proportion (22.2%) of the CMI subjects felt that the present system is fine and there is not any need for changes. 16.7% of them believed that mother-tongue education is good, however, English teaching should be strengthened in this case and English should be the sole language for English lessons. 11.1% of the CMI group commented that English should be adopted as the teaching medium, and another 11.1% of the group preferred to have more attention paid to Mandarin teaching, whereas 5.6% of them expressed that Chinese should not be used as the teaching medium because of the fear of the decline in English standards.

**Table 6.15****Suggestions for future trend of MOI—CMI schools**

Comments/suggestions regarding the MOI policy	%
Code-mixing is preferred	22.2
More English should be used	11.1
Mother-tongue education is good but teaching of English should be strengthened at the same time	16.7
The present MOI policy is satisfactory	22.2
English should be used as the MOI	11.1
Chinese should not be used as the MOI because it will lead to the decline in English standard	5.6
More attention should be paid to Mandarin	11.1

**6.7.1.2 Results of EMI schools****Table 6.16****Suggestions for future trend of MOI—EMI schools**

Comments/suggestions	%
English is being neglected and should receive more attention and be treated as a second language in Hong Kong	50
Education Department should not restrict the MOI of schools because both Chinese and English are important	12.5
Chinese as the MOI is unacceptable, otherwise Hong Kong will decline	12.5
Learning of Mandarin is essential because we are Chinese.	12.5
Improve on Chinese foundation skills before focusing on English skills.	12.5

As pointed out earlier, the response rate of EMI students to this particular question was low. For those who responded to the question, half of them (50%) believed that English should receive more attention because it has currently been neglected. 12.5% of them wrote that the Education Department should not restrict the freedom of schools to choose their own medium of instruction, because both Chinese and English are equally important and it should be up to the schools themselves to decide the teaching medium that they want to adopt. A same proportion of EMI students even commented that using Chinese as the teaching medium is not acceptable as Hong Kong society would otherwise decline. 12.5% of them made the suggestion that



learning Mandarin is essential for Chinese people, and that is why more attention should be paid to Mandarin in future language policy. The remaining 12.5% of them pointed out that before improving English skills, more effort has to be made on improving Chinese, and reinforcing the foundation skills of the mother-tongue is essential for second language learning.

The concern raised by the EMI students that the skills in the first language should be well-established before building the second language on it coincides with what has been proposed by the principle of the new language policy. Relevance can also be drawn between this particular answer to Cummins's model of linguistic interdependence as mentioned in section 2.5.1. Although it raises doubt as to whether the mother-tongue would benefit the learning of English, consolidating the foundation in the first language would at least do more good than harm to students' language learning because it would not lead to language deficits in both languages.

### **6.7.2 Discussion on the future development of the MOI issue**

#### **6.7.2.1 Discussion of students' responses**

##### ***Yearning for English-medium education***

The most striking and interesting point revealed from the comments is that there was an almost one-sided preference for English language among the CMI group. Only 22.2% of them commented that the present system does not require any improvements and 11.1% of them have drawn attention to the rising status of Mandarin, claiming that it is going to be one of the most important languages in Hong Kong society. The remainder of the group all pointed out the importance of English in different ways. The fact that they preferred code-mixing rather than pure Chinese and also their suggestion that more English should be used illustrate that the status of English still rates very highly in their minds. 11.1% pointed out that English should be used as the teaching medium and the 5.6% who opposed the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction bring out the general perception of Chinese as the low language in the society. It should be noted that the 5.6% who opposed the use of Chinese as the teaching medium felt English standards would fall if Chinese is used, and even for the 16.7% who reported that mother-tongue education was beneficial, all stressed that the

teaching of English should be strengthened at the same time.

### *Language orientation and Hong Kong's future*

The most apparent message brought by this open-ended question is that, without any doubt, English enjoys much more attention and importance than any other language in the society. Answers of subjects illustrate that English has been viewed as a linguistic capital more than a colonial language, as quite a number of students from both the CMI and EMI streams associated the future of Hong Kong's economic and social status with the English language, pointing out that Hong Kong would decline or even collapse if the use of English is reduced. Obviously, they thought that there is a strong link between the economic success of Hong Kong and the popularity of English.

### *Fear of the rise of Chinese among the EMI group*

However, a few EMI students still thought that the English language has been neglected in the social context and it should receive more attention. It is speculated that this point of view arises from the recent change of the medium of instruction in the majority of secondary schools and the current controversial debates on the rising status of Mandarin. This might have caused alarm to EMI students and led to a potential fear that there would be a shift in linguistic orientation towards Chinese (Mandarin) from English. Apparently, this awareness was exceptionally strong for the EMI students.

It should also be noted that the majority of respondents tended to measure the importance of languages in terms of the exchange value. Despite the fact that the status of English still ranks high, none of them expressed negative attitude towards Mandarin, though the awareness to learn it is generally low, and it is not widely used in the society.

It is also worth mentioning that the response rate for CMI students was much higher than that of the EMI group. One of the most likely reasons could be that the present medium of instruction policy has placed the EMI group at a further advantage and

made the division between the CMI and the EMI groups even sharper. There is the possibility that the EMI group benefits more from the present system and that is why they do not bother to make suggestions to change the present situation as they might be already satisfied with it.

#### **6.7.2.2 Discussion of interviewees' responses**

##### ***Code-mixing as a possibility of teaching medium***

A large proportion of students in both the CMI and EMI streams have reiterated the importance of English language and some even pointed out the devastating effect mother-tongue education would bring to the future of Hong Kong. The data also showed that quite a number of student subjects would vote for code-mixing instead of a pure language teaching medium. This suggestion might somehow presage one of the future possibilities regarding the language policy in secondary education, revealing the fact that pure mother-tongue as the teaching medium would be problematic and will not be practical. Policy-Maker B predicted that mother-tongue education would persist but more effort would be paid to reinforcing the standards in English. However, he continued that

**The future trend would be, well, the policy of retaining a certain number of English medium schools has to be maintained because it is the wish as well as the expectation of a particular group of people. The right to learn through English should not be taken away from the students. If it was, there would be another wave of emigration and protests from parents. Mandarin will be included in the curriculum, and it actually is already included. It should be learned as an extra language but as long as students could handle it on the communicative level, we do not have to be too picky on the standard of the pronunciation, otherwise it will turn out to be an extra burden and further complicate the linguistic situations in schools. Students will be confused.**

(Policy-Maker B)

According to Policy-Maker B, the divisive line between CMI and EMI schools would persist because mother-tongue education could not, and should not, be fully implemented in all the schools in Hong Kong. The effects would otherwise be far-

reaching and would possibly result in another wave of brain drain because the rights of children to learn through the English medium are being deprived. Emigration or sending these children abroad for English-medium education will naturally turn out to be another alternative for families who could afford to do so. Nevertheless, it is worth clarifying that Policy-Maker B has different roles to play in the field of education. He is the Chairman of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the representative of the education sector in the Legislative Council, and one of the core members of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong, which is supposed to represent the voice of the general public. As Chairman of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, part of his role is to protect the benefits of teachers. Given the fact that teachers in Hong Kong are generally not proficient in Mandarin, the suggestion of Policy-Maker B that Mandarin should only be taught and learned as a language in addition to English might emerge out of the need to protect teaching staff in the profession because turning Mandarin into a core subject would logically deskill in-service teachers and put them to a disadvantage.

#### *Two-mode instruction programme*

When answering this particular question about the future trend of teaching medium in Hong Kong, Policy-Maker A has left room for possible changes of the present pure-medium language policy. He contended that

**We are thinking that teachers can perhaps teach some subjects in Chinese and some in English. But please note that we are not talking about linguistic division by class. If teachers are available and students have the abilities, then we would allow some subjects to be taught in English. However, it is not approved yet. We did not intend to divide the schools by teaching medium right from the start. Dividing the teaching medium by subjects instead of by schools will make the divisive line more blurry. Language teachers have to be benchmarked and be assessed to find out if they are able to teach through English.**

(Policy-Maker A)

Policy-Maker A continued that he would not rule out the possibility of replacing Cantonese with Mandarin as the teaching medium because "...given time, with the

introduction of Mandarin to the curriculum at an earlier stage, students would be able to learn through Mandarin.” What Policy-Maker A predicted as the direction of the future trend in the year 2000 turned out to be the policy-in-practice in 2001. The new two-mode instruction model recommended by the Education Department had been carried out as an experimental attempt in a small proportion of secondary schools. This has again brought lots of criticisms and sense of insecurity from parents and professionals in the field. The changeability and inconsistency of education policies coheres with the view of Teacher Trainer C with regard to the short-sightedness of policy-planning. In fact, teachers’ working morale might be reduced as the Education Department is constantly trying out new alternatives. This particular issue will be subject to further discussion in the next chapter.

### *Benchmarking*

The second point about benchmarking language teachers further stirs up issues of concern such as teachers’ discontent and demonstration and the series of events that increase the doubt of parents towards the whole teaching profession, and of language teachers in particular. The ‘benchmarking issue’ and the ‘two-mode instruction’ are the current developments of the whole medium of instruction issue. These have not been looked closely into in this research study because these changes occurred after my empirical research was carried out. Further implications resulting from the new medium of instruction policy will be elaborated in the concluding chapter.

### **6.8 Summary**

The previous chapter focuses on the educational impact the new medium of instruction policy has on secondary school students. We should be aware that the current sample in this study is too small to be attested on the impact of the mother-tongue policy, however, it is hoped that specific points of concern that have been raised with reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the policy by the respondents would be of interest for future policy-making.

This chapter attempts to look at the cultural implications the mother-tongue policy has

inflicted on the education sector. It refers to the basic assumption that language is not only a tool for communication but also symbolic of culture and identity. This study has explored the issue of language that includes respondents' attitude towards the change of the teaching medium and their language attitudes with regard to their choices of language in different domains, and also their choices of teaching medium.

Information gathered from students regarding language attitude and their language choices might reveal that this generation has somehow inherited values of the past generation and tend to measure languages according to their extrinsic values. The mother-tongue policy does not seem to have influenced the respondents' choices and use of languages. They realise that the importance of English derives mainly from its global economic value. It does not mean that they have necessarily identified with English in spite of their yearning for English-medium education and their ranking English the highest. Some teacher interviewees have pointed out that the 'politically apathetic nature' of the former generation might have passed onto their offspring. What we should note is that cultural mentality is constructed by a series of forces prevalent in a particular context: for instance, personal upbringings, social norms, behaviour, education and also the interaction of external and internal forces in the society. Culture undoubtedly goes with languages, but the trend could be that people could draw a clear separation between culture, identity and languages, which can be a manifestation of their more flexible and global outlook.

One of the interesting points that could be drawn pertains to the use of mixed code in most of the domains by both groups of students, and it is especially so for the EMI group. Questionnaire results illustrate that EMI students tended to code-mix in a wider variety, with more frequent use of English and sometimes even with Mandarin in the mixed-code utterances. Better fluency in Chinese and English could be one of the explanations for their more extensive coverage of languages, but a more global outlook of self-images as indicated by their multiplicity in the use of languages may also reveal the differences between CMI and EMI students in terms of their language attitude, and hence their cultural mentality. The hypothesis that the more bilingual and multilingual the person is, the more open he or she is towards cultural and linguistic diversity is suggested by this finding.

The general language attitude might in fact suggest that rather than equating their inclination to Cantonese language to their identification of being a Hong Kong Cantonese, or assuming that the 1998 MOI policy may have strengthened people's cultural awareness, it might be more appropriate to say that their cultural mentality can also be made up of a mixed-code element, which could be a result of the promotion of bilingualism in which case students from EMI schools benefit more because their higher proficiency in English is more likely to pave their way to get access to the elite class culture in Hong Kong, which is still more English-dominant. The positive impression towards mixed code and the trend that it is regarded as a symbol of the upper-middle or professional elite class might result in an urge for mixed-code identity. This might as well be one of the products of the trend towards bilingualism and multilingualism in societies today.

However, although the status of Mandarin is relatively low compared to Cantonese and English, we have to be aware of the fact that there is no sign of anti-Chinese or anti-Mandarin feeling among the sample and the fact that a small proportion of CMI and EMI students are aware of the importance of Mandarin. Such openness might at least leave some room for the growth of Mandarin in the future. However, whether changes would occur in the future remains an unanswered question. In addition to this, language attitude is only one of the components of the whole entity of cultural construct. This constraint may inhibit the expression of the whole picture but its implications might open up room for future research.

The languages in spotlight have been discussed according to people's ranking of their level of importance in both the school context and the social context. Results indicate that the post-1997 era and the change in teaching medium have not led to any remarkable changes in the use and importance of the three main languages in Hong Kong. Cantonese remains the demotic language, with very little sign of moving towards Mandarin despite its high political and national importance. Mandarin does not seem to gain much status in either the social or the school context, nor does the promotion of Mandarin in schools bring any significant changes to the use of languages in several domains. Apart from the fact that there is no significant change with regard to language attitude after the use of mother-tongue education, their

interest in the identity question seems to be overridden by their economic orientation, which appears to play a more important part in relation to language choice.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

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### 7.0 Introduction

The main findings of the research are summarised in this chapter. It attempts to review the major points of interest in the previous chapters, give a brief outline of the current trends regarding the medium of instruction issue, and also provide some insights on possible alternatives. A potential model for the teaching medium with reference to the review of literature and the points of views of the people involved in various sectors of education is suggested, and limitations of the present study and implications for policy and practice are also considered.

### 7.1 Summary of the main findings

#### 7.1.1 Educational implications of the current MOI policy

##### 7.1.1.1 The adaptation of the linguistic interdependence theory

The interdependence between languages, according to the linguistic interdependence theory, refers to the fact that a good basic foundation in the first language, Cantonese in the case of Hong Kong, would enhance the learning of English, the second language. While this belief may hold true for certain languages, it has not been recognized by the majority of the subjects involved in the present study as most of the teachers did not perceive any connection between the knowledge of mother-tongue and that of the second language. Linguistic interdependence theory may work for a number of languages that are grammatically or phonetically related (belonging to the same language family) but the result might not be as positive if the two languages in the study fall into two extremely different groups. The majority of the interviewees pointed out that the perceived relatedness of languages is a vital element of the linguistic interdependence principle and they do not see many features in common between Chinese and English. Doubts are raised as to whether a good foundation in Chinese would act as a facilitative tool for second language learning.

Students' perceptions on the inter-influence of Chinese and English projected quite a different picture from that of the interviewees. The most interesting matter of concern refers to the students' views about their language standards. Questionnaire results illustrated that 58.5% of the CMI students have realised improvements in their English language and 60% in their Chinese language with the use of mother-tongue. This more optimistic perception among the students might very well be the result of perceptive variation between teachers and students, and it could also be the positive outcome of improved language awareness with more stress given to mother-tongue education and the whole language issue.

It should be noted that Chinese as the first language might not provide a facilitative ground for learning English but raising the awareness of mother-tongue and the stress on the language issue might have improved the language awareness of students and may therefore bring a positive effect on the learning of both languages. Nonetheless, the main weakness of this position arises from the point that statistical figures relating to the results of students' English and Chinese languages were not accessible and therefore 'improvements of language performances' are a matter of perception. There is a possible loophole that students might think that their language standards have accelerated while it may not really be the case if their academic results could be assessed. The lack of statistical evidence to support their perception might make their points of view unrealistic.

However, one of the major points deriving from the data is that the teaching medium for students is only one of the many components accounting for the proficiencies of English. The basic language foundation of students' L1, the family factor (relating to the social and financial background of students' families), the social factor (the social atmosphere which affects the motivation of learning English), the psychological factors (such as language anxiety) and contextual variation (which involves the level and quality of exposure to the second language) all contribute to the level attained for the target language. The component that turns out to be the most unique and has not been investigated deeply in other studies is the 'quality of exposure'. Previous literature focuses mainly on the inter-relationships between the level of exposure and the proficiency of the target language, pointing out the fear that the standard of

English will decline with decreasing exposure to it (maximum exposure hypothesis). However, the 'quality of exposure', which means the kind of second language materials the students are exposed to and the ways through which they are exposed are what that matter to second language learning. Appropriate teaching methods tailor-made for students and motivation of students would be able to overcome the constraint of the level of exposure in second language learning.

#### **7.1.1.2 The adaptation of the threshold theory**

Apart from the educational impact of mother-tongue education on language proficiency and academic performance, problems that arise from its implementation are likely to have brought misallocation of students' language abilities and hence displacements of students into linguistically inappropriate learning environments. Assessment of the MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment), the age students are being assessed and also the percentile of students whom the Education Department has designated as 'Group I & III' in the MIGA were criticized by teachers. Besides, the threshold theory that the 'streaming' is based on also appears to be problematic because of a lack of research evidence to support the appropriate 'threshold level' for learning through English. These uncertainties might lead to the possibility that late achievers would be disadvantaged and be deprived of the chance to develop their English proficiency in the EMI context. As some teacher interviewees commented, the high percentage of students who are allocated to Group I might also bear the risk that some of them are in fact not eligible for EMI teaching. Some critics like Tung (1992) regarded that the ratio of students to be grouped in category I (able to learn effectively through Chinese and English) as too high, as the number of students who are capable of learning through English and Chinese is expected to be lower than 30%.

#### **7.1.1.3 Impact on teaching and learning**

Following a series of data analysis, teachers and teacher trainers revealed that the sudden shift from an EMI-based system to mother-tongue education has led to public unrest because of the insufficient time for preparation and lack of resources for

implementation. However, mother-tongue education is generally seen as facilitating teaching and learning. As cited in section 5.4, teachers and students in the CMI stream admitted that lessons are made easier because of the eradication of language block and both parties understand each other better. Teachers get a clearer idea of where students stand and how to guide them. Mother-tongue education also makes students more articulate and apparently their motivation to learn has also increased. Mother-tongue education also takes the advantage of time, and enables improvements and changes in ways of teaching. The general picture obtained from the sample is that mother-tongue education has a positive impact on both teaching and learning of academic subjects. A more activity-based approach could be devised to make teaching and learning a more interesting task.

#### **7.1.1.4 Implications of the elimination of code-mixing**

Elimination of code-mixing is one of the main aims of the new medium of instruction policy. However, it is noted from the study that code-mixing receives support from the majority of students, and although language teachers might have reservations about mixed-code teaching in language subjects, some said that it is practically a very convenient tool when teaching through English. The advantage of frugality with the use of code-mixing conforms with Butzkamm's (1998) view that code-mixing can in fact be used skilfully as the teaching medium. Luke (1991) argues that code-mixing has been used by the government and educators as the scapegoat to cover up the real cause for the decline in language standards. This argument has been widely supported by the majority of interviewees in the current research, though it cannot be denied that code-mixing cannot be accepted in formal writing. The reason why most of the subjects involved are in favour of code-mixing is mainly because it is a convenient way out for both teachers and students, whose English standards might not be particularly high. The preference of mixed code is especially strong among both EMI and CMI students. Content-based subject teachers also supported the use of mixed-code teaching, seeing it as a trend and also a type of bilingual education model. The principle of preparing students to be trilingual and biliterate was questioned by teachers because mixed code was generally seen by teachers positively as a sign of 'bilingual quality'. The data from students' responses also reveal that mother-tongue

education has not totally brought 'mixed-code teaching' to an end, which may in a way imply that mixed-code teaching has in fact emerged as a culture in the education field.

It is suggested that more research should be done on the issue of mixed code. Given the preference of students for mixed code and its practical convenience for teachers, it might therefore be more constructive to devise ways to turn mixed code into a facilitative teaching tool instead of eliminating it totally. As pointed out earlier in the literature review on mixed-code teaching in section 2.8.2.1, empirical evidence has supported the suggestion that mixed code can be adopted as a tool to ease the transition from the use of the first language to the second language in classrooms, if it is used skilfully.

### **7.1.2 Social impact: linguistic segregation of CMI and EMI**

Apart from the impact that mother-tongue education has on the educational dimension, the divisive nature of mother-tongue education itself should not be overlooked. The discriminatory impact on CMI students and the rise of the elite EMI culture is believed to be one of the backwash effects of the streaming quality inherent in the policy. The labelling effect is far-reaching, and CMI students' strong preference for EMI education reveals their sense of inferiority arising from being taught in CMI. The rise of EMI culture due to streaming has further led to the polarization of the two streams with the EMI group getting more superior and the CMI group as belonging to the lower strata. It is true that the formation of an elite culture is not uncommon in Hong Kong. However, the linguistic segregation as a result of the new medium of instruction policy has proved to widen the gap between the two streams by giving them linguistic labels. As revealed from their choice of teaching medium, the vast majority of both the CMI and EMI students opted for the bilingual model of mixed-code teaching. Nonetheless, an interesting area is that almost a quarter of the EMI students prefer pure-English medium and only a very small proportion of EMI and CMI students would select the pure mother-tongue medium.

It should be reiterated that streaming, no matter how undesirable, is practically

inevitable due to the inherently divisive feature of the examination system. As a matter of fact, the streaming impact would not be as problematic and parental protests may not be as fierce if the government had given adequate confidence in its policy and elaborated well enough to clear up the doubts and misconceptions of mother-tongue education. It is the fact that the government was pushing forward the mother-tongue programme in the midst of uncertainty and at a time right after the political transition that has stirred up people's discontent and feeling of unrest. Due to people's general inertia of being defensive to whatever changes and policies are introduced and the feeling of insecurity, a more detailed and properly designed programme is necessary.

One of the shortcomings that has existed since the stage of planning is that in-service teachers' views have been neglected and the visibility of policy planning is also too low. The policy might have got higher credibility if teachers had been consulted and if their views had been reflected. Apart from lack of consideration of teachers' opinions, the language policy itself is changing too rapidly and is too dynamic for the whole profession to follow. The situation turns out to be that the Education Department keeps putting forward tentative attempts and invites schools to participate, which implies that educational experts are still trying out new ways to improve the situation and are in the process of finding a solution to make the bilingual policy work.

### **7.1.3 Political implications**

Political implication is another issue investigated in this study. This relates to one of the subsidiary questions that looks at the extent to which the mother-tongue policy was enforced as a result of the political handover. The data show that the majority of teachers and CMI students saw that there is a strong correlation between the political handover and the change of teaching medium. Although mother-tongue policy has long been recommended and encouraged (since the early 1970s), the time that the government chose to implement the policy raises speculation since it was not firmly put into force until 1998, one year after the political handover. The timing is too sensitive, and government's propaganda and speech by the Director of Education Fanny Law about the pure pedagogical consideration behind the policy, as has been presented in section 2.7.1.1, has not gained too much credit from the education

profession. It is speculated that imposing a policy against the will of the general public would lead to negative outcome, which may act as a hindrance for the promotion of Mandarin as well as the implementation of mother-tongue education.

#### **7.1.4 Cultural constructs in relation to language attitudes**

Chapter six contributes to the investigation of the cultural construct by looking at the language attitude of the subjects. It is not surprising to find that the great majority of the students and teacher interviewees have confirmed Cantonese as their mother-tongue (100% of EMI students and 83.1% of the CMI group) and again 93.3% of the EMI students and 89.2% of the CMI students have chosen Cantonese to be their most preferred medium if Chinese has to be used as the teaching medium. Apart from students' choice of Cantonese as their teaching medium, students' and teachers' choice of the mother-tongue is very similar as the proportion of both groups of subjects who have chosen Cantonese as their mother-tongue is equally large.

##### **7.1.4.1 Attitudes towards Cantonese, Mandarin and English**

###### ***Mandarin***

Differences regarding the perception on the status of Cantonese, Mandarin and English depend mainly on the context within which the language is used. English gains the highest importance in the school context for EMI students, which is understandable, though the status of English in the social context in the minds of EMI students falls behind Cantonese. However, CMI students have quite an opposite view from the EMI students, as they regarded English as the most important in the social context. Language attitude has to do mostly with the psychological belief and tendency and it is very likely that this difference in attitude might probably be a result of the backwash effect of the streaming policy that pushes CMI students further to the edge of inferiority. One of the interesting findings is that Mandarin has been ranked as the least important in both of the school and the social contexts. The main reason accounting for this might be the low use value of Mandarin in Hong Kong, though Mandarin is undoubtedly less foreign in terms of cultural and national considerations. Nevertheless, schools in Hong Kong did not have the tradition of promoting Mandarin

except for the left-wing schools. The majority of the local population possess limited knowledge in the language as we can see from the fact that Mandarin is rarely used in the four domains. As for its economic value, its importance is more usually felt in the financial and commercial sectors than the education field. Therefore it is not surprising that Mandarin has been ranked as the language with the lowest level of importance in the society as well as schools.

### *English*

As for English, results have shown that historical and economic considerations are the two most significant factors affecting people's attitude towards the language. Colonial reasons provide the starting point for the language to flourish and to consolidate its status. However, social and economic developments have paved the way for the former colonial language to prosper and in order not to lose linkage with the rest of the world, English has become a tool for international communications.

### *Cantonese*

Analysis of the language patterns in the four domains raised in the questionnaire indicate that Cantonese has continued to be the most popular language to be used in the 'school', 'friends and peers', 'family' and the 'street' domains. It is worth mentioning that code-mixing of Cantonese and English is found to be very common in all these domains.

#### **7.1.4.2 Language attitude with regard to the question of identity**

Despite the educational and cultural advantages of Mandarin over Cantonese, people's linguistic inertia and the identity issue may have exerted a certain degree of influence on people's use of language. Nonetheless, the whole medium of instruction issue does not seem to have related to the cultural construct of the subjects in the study too much and they might not have given too much thought to the cultural identity issue in relation to the change of the teaching medium. Such a position may be attributed to the general political apathy of Hong Kong people, and some interviewees have



suggested that the cultural construct might have more to do with civic education as the cultural implications of mother-tongue education do not seem to play a very significant part in identity issues.

Apparently, the change to mother-tongue education after the political handover has not resulted in any sweeping changes in people's cultural constructs and language attitude up to this point. In spite of the fact that some respondents have acknowledged the phenomenon that Mandarin is rising in status in the political as well as the economic fields, the dominance of Cantonese in almost all the domains under study and English in some particular domains are still apparently felt.

Respondents in the current research have illustrated a close tie with the Cantonese language. More than 150 years of colonial rule does not seem to have undermined their sense of cultural ethnicity, as have been discussed in the 'Hong Kong culture' section in the literature review. It is speculated that the addition of Mandarin into the present linguistic situation would not result in too much difference. Subjects in the current research seemed to be proud of speaking Cantonese, and some of them either consciously or unconsciously drew a distinction between Hong Kong Chinese and Mainland Chinese by identifying the language differences. Mandarin is very likely to have the same fate as English and may become another High language in the society and its use might be confined to certain sectors. Hyland (1997) suggests that

**...while English skills may be perceived as a means to material benefits, Hong Kong people are resistant to many aspects of the culture with which it might be associated...the results of this study imply that respondents are able to routinely distinguish language and culture without difficulty in selectively accepting and transforming what the West has to offer. In other words, English appears to represent a useful tool rather than a weapon of colonial control...English bestows no particular social benefits on its users, nor do Hong Kongers aspire to embrace Western culture and its values. These Cantonese speakers were firm in their views that English did not detract from their own sense of ethnic identity, but there was also little evidence that Putonghua evoked a strong 'Chinese' ethnic consciousness, despite the emotional and spiritual ties felt towards the mainland mentioned by other writers.**

(pp.205-207)

DeGolyer (1993) believes that the “ ‘One country, two systems’ slogan implicitly recognizes Hong Kong’s separate identity” (p.277). However, the speculated deliberate avoidance of the linguistic question drafted in the Basic Law has somehow left the language and hence the identity of Hong Kong questions ambiguous. Leaving the term ‘Chinese’ undefined obviously helps to resolve the political and cultural tensions between Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese. DeGolyer (1993) has drawn our attention to the extreme scenario that might be brought upon by the distinction Hong Kong people have to draw between themselves and Mainland Chinese. DeGolyer (1993) stresses that

**While proclaiming themselves [Hong Kong people] as being Chinese sets up the sort of cognitive dissonance which, given the right, or perhaps better, the wrong-circumstances, could lead to explosive results. This danger may be seen clearly in comparison to events and processes in a similarly Chinese but also distinct and more rapidly modernizing society, namely Taiwan.**

(pp. 274-275)

Drawing comparison between Hong Kong and Taiwan may not be appropriate in the sense that despite their separation from the mother country, China, historical backgrounds and political bases of Hong Kong and Taiwan have been very different. Results from the present study do not show signs of anti-Chinese feeling. In spite of their preference for English over pure mother-tongue education in both CMI and EMI settings, which might extend to the society as a whole, anti-Chinese feeling is unlikely to reach a climax in Hong Kong which would lead to ‘explosive results’ as stated in the above quotation. It does not necessarily equate to total acceptance of Mainland Chinese identity, and could instead be interpreted as a more neutral and mild cultural orientation and attitude. The *status quo* is likely to be maintained, provided that circumstances remain unchanged. The future of Hong Kong identity is likely to be positive. As Joseph (2000) states: “It is hard to see how it would be in Beijing’s interest for Hong Kong people to develop a south Chinese identity. By comparison, an independent, relatively neutral Hong Kong identity would be far less threatening.”

(p.24) Despite the speculation, whether the local cultural identity would converge with that of the mainland Chinese or follow a diverging path remains a question that only time will tell.

## **7.2 Significance of the Singaporean model**

Chapter three projects Singapore as an example in a comparative frame of reference. Singapore was put in juxtaposition because of the cities' similar historical, economic and geographical backgrounds and this chapter was designed with a view to stepping aside from the Hong Kong case and perceiving its characteristics by relating commonalities and diversities between the two places and their policies. It is hoped that a brief comparison might shed light on the current medium of instruction policy of Hong Kong and provide some constructive insights on what future trends might be leading to.

Singapore and Hong Kong, as summarised in chapter three, share much in common with regard to the colonial history. Both had been British colonies, though they developed in different ways regarding political development. One of the most notable similarities between the two is probably that the ideology of linguistic imperialism has evolved into linguistic capitalism with the transition from colonial rule to resuming independence in the case of Singapore and retrocession with China in the case of Hong Kong. Whether linguistic imperialism plays a more influential role and to what extent this notion explains the continuous importance of English even after the colonial era is still subject to controversy. Nevertheless, Morrison and Lui's (2000) statement that "it is simplistic, of course to suggest that, by attending an EMI school, one was subscribing to the ideology of the supremacy of British culture. Economics rather than ideology were at stake, and students had to acquire the cultural and linguistic capital of the English language rather than the ideology of English domination" (p.476) is justified, as illustrated by table 1.3 regarding the instrumental motives as the main reasons for students to learn English. The saying that "Linguistic imperialism translates into educational capital, thence into the reproduction of cultural capital, and beyond, into economic capital" (Morrison *et al* 2000 p.477) applies to both Singapore and Hong Kong, though the predominance of English in Singapore is

also a result of political and cultural considerations.

Singapore differs from Hong Kong in the way that languages are more diverse and it has altogether four official languages, though the size of the language groups varies according to people's ethnicity; Mandarin is the largest because of the large Chinese population. Students in Singapore are streamed at an earlier stage than those in Hong Kong. The language stream that students belong to is decided in primary four according to their abilities in English, mother-tongue and Mathematics. Apart from streaming at an earlier stage, the English-medium stream itself is divided into three types, ranging from EM1 to EM3, where the difference lies in the levels of English and mother-tongue to be taught. With the reduction of banding from 5 to 3 in Hong Kong as will be mentioned in 7.3.2, the language ability in one class will be of greater variability, but there is only one single English-medium stream which does not specify the level of English to be learned and taught. This has indicated the lack of thoroughness and detailed consideration in the design of the policy itself.

Singapore's MOI policy has developed in a more positive and consistent direction than that of Hong Kong mainly because of the confidence that Singaporeans have in their government and their beliefs that what the government is doing is for the benefit of its people. Obviously people's confidence in the government has to do with success of their country in economic terms. The fact that the Singaporean government managed to transform the country from poverty into an international and cosmopolitan nation state has given a tremendous boost to its people's confidence. There is no doubt that the Singaporean government has been adopting a strict policy on various aspects and exercising control on its citizens' self-discipline. Nevertheless, Singaporeans are generally satisfied with the government's achievements. In addition to this, being an island which is short of natural resources, a kind of unique island identity has been developed and the government has become the only pillar its people could rely on.

Before examining the impact of the language policies in the two places, we should be aware of the difference of the mentality constructs between Hong Kong people and the Singaporeans. Having been ruled by the colonial government for over 150 years, people in Hong Kong have long realised that they would not have much say in the

administration and policy-making in the government. The identity they develop therefore tends to be more economic-oriented. They may not be as nationalistic as the Singaporeans, as the colonial government did not give much confidence and pride to its people. Although the cabinet in the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) government has switched to be more Chinese or local-based in terms of composition, it does not seem to have made much difference to people's attitude towards the government because of their political inertia and also because of people's belief that the year 1997, which politically means the change of sovereignty and decolonization of Hong Kong, may be interpreted as another form of recolonization by the Chinese government. The new government is culturally less foreign than the old one but it is expected that people's suspicion towards the government is even stronger during the first few years of transition and might be more resistant to whatever policy the government is proposing. Unlike the Singaporean counterparts who are generally more supportive to and confident of the government, the lack of general support for mother-tongue education in Hong Kong leads the policy to mass protest.

### **7.3 Current trends**

As revealed from the data of Policy-Maker A, benchmarking language teachers (both Mandarin and English) and reassessing their language abilities is one of the ways the Education Department uses to strengthen the quality of the language teaching profession. Apart from the issue of benchmarking, the 'two-mode instruction model' has also become the talk of the town and led to severe criticisms. The introduction of 'benchmarking' and 'two-mode instruction' has led to various issues of concern and this section attempts to draw a brief outline of the current trends in the area of MOI in secondary education.

#### **7.3.1 The two-mode instruction model**

The section on the MOI issue in the literature review chapter has pointed out that 114 schools out of more than 400 schools in Hong Kong have been able to pass the three criteria set by the Education Department to continue with EMI teaching. The three

criteria are, namely, the students' language proficiency, the abilities of teachers to teach in English and the support and facilities available in schools. It has been pointed out in the government documents that all these EMI schools would be monitored and a survey will be carried out by the Steering Committee to make sure that EMI teaching is used genuinely in all these schools and that students are learning effectively through the English medium.

As for CMI schools, the Steering Committee has proposed different means to help strengthen the English abilities of students, with an aim to allay the fears of declining standards as a result of the lack of exposure to the language. The programme is named as the 'Study on Two-Mode Instruction in Secondary Schools' and five models have been explored and suggested with regard to enriching the English language proficiency in the CMI context. They include the:

- "By class" approach (i.e. all non-language subjects are taught in English for some classes)**
- "By subject" approach (i.e. some subjects are taught in English)**
- Modular approach (i.e. certain modules or topics of a subject are taught in English while the remaining ones are taught in Chinese)**
- Two-track approach (one example of this approach is that certain topics of a subject may be taught in Chinese first and then in English again while the remaining ones are taught in Chinese only)**
- Cross-curricular thematic approach (i.e. some cross-curricular modules or themes are developed and taught in English while the other subjects remain to be taught in Chinese).**

(Hong Kong Education Department undated b)

The 'cross-curricular thematic approach' was finally recommended because it is the model which is more closely in line with the principle of pure-medium education. As written in the documents, the "cross-curricular themes or modules on the basis of the selected subjects i.e. computer literacy, integrated and social studies, would be developed for the participating schools to implement. Participating schools will be requested to set aside a certain number of teaching periods for the study, say 3 periods per cycle at S2 and four periods per cycle at S3, and to design the programme plan,

teaching activities and support strategies to tie in with the study.” (Hong Kong Education Department undated b)

#### 7.3.1.1 Issues of concern

##### *Problems arising from cross-curriculum thematic approach*

Effectiveness of mother-tongue education will be measured according to the performances of CMI students in comparison with students from the EMI context. Impact of the cross-curriculum thematic approach on CMI students' English proficiency will also be examined. Although the 'by-subject' and 'by-class' approaches have been deleted from the possible alternatives, the 'cross-curricular thematic approach' does not differ too much from these two models in the sense that this practice is likely to turn out to be an extra subject taught in English medium apart from English language in CMI schools. The weakness of the programme is based firstly on the design of the module. It is speculated that with the introduction of the new cross-thematic module, students' burden is likely to accelerate. It might also be viewed as confusing students' language use in schools rather than a tool to improve students' exposure. Besides, Hong Kong students have been famous for being exam-oriented and pragmatic. As an extra module added to the curriculum that does not count as a core subject, it is very likely that students' motivation to learn English through the cross-thematic module will be low and they might not be taking the module very seriously. Teachers' motivation to teach the module also raises doubts since teaching another module would require more preparation time and work to be done, which does not sound very appealing to the teachers who are already occupied by normal teaching preparation and other school affairs. They might be reluctant to spend extra time on it.

As pointed out in the educational documents (Hong Kong Education Department undated b), only 10-15 schools will be used as the sample and will try out this approach. The small sample chosen for this rather large-scale project might pose problems of validity and the degree of the programme's applicability, thus distorting the authentic outcome of this tentative attempt because only around 1/30 of the CMI schools are represented.

It is very clear that one of the benefits of the pure medium of instruction approach, as claimed by the Education Department, is to eliminate code-mixing. It cannot be denied that the two-mode instruction does not violate the 'mixed-code-free principle' but this has apparently illustrated the inconsistency of the direction the Education Department is moving towards. The addition of a subject taught in English in the CMI context might not only receive little success but is not really in line with pure mother-tongue education.

### **7.3.1.2 Benchmarking of language teachers**

Another issue of concern which leads to further criticism is that teachers' quality and proficiency of languages (in Mandarin and English) have raised doubts and for quite a while it has been considered as one of the reasons for the decline of students' language standards. Teacher Trainer A pointed out the fact that local English teachers are not doing very well in terms of exposing students to a good English-speaking environment because of the lack of training in teaching skills. Whether their standard of English is up to the level for transmitting correct and adequate knowledge in English language to students is questionable.

The benchmark test was made officially compulsory for language teachers in 2000, and it is made mandatory for in-service language teachers to take the test and pass it within 5 years. The number of candidates sitting for the English benchmark test is approximately 14000. It should be noted that only "about 3500 in-service English teachers [out of the 14000] who have got English degree and have received professional training are exempt".(Cheung 2001 p.17) It is suggested that teachers have to take the test on a regular basis and that the Education Department would consider raising benchmark standards in order to make sure that the teaching profession can keep up with the pace and expectations of the society. The government policy states that in case teachers cannot meet the requirements by 2005, they would have to stop teaching language subjects and switch to others instead.

Benchmarking for Mandarin teachers has not brought about as much feedback as that



for English teachers because of the small number of potential candidates for the test. There were altogether 413 candidates taking the English benchmark test and only 141 out of the 14400 serving English teachers sat for the test. The results have raised a matter of concern in the areas of productive language skills of speaking and writing, as we may observe from the passing rates for each paper as shown in the table below. The general result was not completely satisfactory but it was pointed out that most of the candidates were teacher trainees and the performance of serving English teachers was much better (Cheung 2001).

**Table 7.1****Results of the first benchmark test**

Paper	Candidates	Pass rate (%)
Reading	38	85.68
Writing	387	33.33
Listening	376	68.35
Speaking	351	50.71
Classroom language assessment	93	89.25

(Cheung 2001 p.17)

***Impact on teachers' working morale***

The results have illustrated that teachers are generally weaker in productive skills such as writing and speaking as compared to receptive skills like listening and reading. The low percentage of candidates sitting for the test also reveals the discontent and threat felt by the teaching profession. Some teachers did not take it because they believe the policy still has room for change. According to one of the teachers interviewed by the newspaper reporter, "my colleagues are not going to do the training until the last minute. They think in the end it might be dropped". (Whitehead 2001 p.5) Teachers' lack of enthusiasm in taking the benchmark exams might as well suggest their lack of confidence in themselves as they feel threatened by the test, and also their doubts in the consistency of the policy proposed by the government. 2500 members from the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union launched a protest on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2000 and urged the cancellation of the benchmark system. Leaders of the demonstration group claimed that benchmarking was a symbol of distrust of the

serving teachers, condemning it as a humiliation to their professional qualifications. Apart from mass protest, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union is also making the attempt to collect support from its members by asking them to 'sign up' on the 'protest web page', which is specially designed with the hope to have the benchmark test abolished. (The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union undated)

### *Resisting force from the teaching profession*

Urmston's (2001) study on English teachers' attitude towards government policy suggests that "...English teachers in Hong Kong as a group are quite cohesive and not open to change, as evidenced by the widespread resistance to government-initiated innovations such as a task-based curriculum and the benchmarking of language teachers." (p.179) Voices of discontent from the teaching profession regarding the benchmark test are understandable because English teachers, especially the marginal ones who might or might not be able to pass the benchmark test, would feel exceptionally threatened. One of the reasons accounting for the failure of candidates taking part in the benchmark test is that only 18% of the serving English teachers major in English and some of the teachers have been asked by the school principals to teach English even though they are not absolutely willing to do so. It is not unusual that non-English teachers have been requested by school principals to teach English, because the demand for English teachers obviously exceeds the supply for it. The lack of supply in professional English teachers has led to a vicious circle in which teachers' English abilities could be very diverse and the probability of students getting professional English training in schools is generally low as the teachers are not well-trained themselves.

### **7.3.2 Reduction of banding from five to three**

From 2001 onwards, the banding of secondary schools in Hong Kong has been reduced from five to three. This move has undoubtedly blurred the streaming between EMI and CMI schools. However, its impact is twofold because schools that used to be graded/categorised as band 3 or 4 might now be upgraded to band 1 or 2. This has in a way increased the diversity of students in band 1 schools, which are supposed to have

the brightest students in their secondary one intake, because they might now be allocated students who used to be in the borderline between band 2 and band 3. It has made teaching through English in the EMI schools even harder because not all the students are necessarily capable of learning in English. Schools, EMI in particular, are facing another challenge because of the lack of support measure provided by the Education Department with regard to increased diversity of students' abilities. It means that schools have to find their own ways to deal with this dilemma. The incomprehensive design of the cross-curricular thematic module also makes the promotion and strengthening of English teaching even more difficult for schools because the instructions stated in the guidelines are inadequate. Details have not been given in the guidelines as to what are supposed to be taught in the modules.

### 7.3.3 Maintaining the *status quo*

According to the public releases of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), the Working Group on Medium of Instruction suggested that the policy proposed in 1998 would be continued and would remain unchanged until September 2004. No major changes would be introduced earlier than the time specified in order to assess the full impact of mother-tongue education. The Chairman of the Working Group on Medium of Instruction confirmed the benefits of mother-tongue education and stressed that 'there is no drop in the standard of English when the medium for learning of non-language subjects is switched to the mother-tongue.' (Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau 2000) The views of the government regarding the implementation of mother-tongue education are generally positive. As concluded by the Secretary of the Education and Manpower Bureau,

**Though the mother-tongue teaching policy has only been implemented for two years, we can already see some initial success. We agree that it is not appropriate to introduce major changes to the MOI arrangements at present. The EC [Education Commission] will conduct a comprehensive review on SSPA [Secondary school places allocation] in 2003, and that should be the best time for reviewing the MOI policy.**

(Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau 2000)

## 7.4 Implications for policy and practice

### 7.4.1 Implications for practice

#### 7.4.1.1 Misconception and misunderstanding of the parents

'Parents' are obviously the group that reacted most fiercely against the streaming of CMI and EMI schools because of the vast majority of schools which have fallen into the CMI stream. Parents are worried that their children are bound to suffer in terms of upward and outward mobility. Parents might be condemned to be too pragmatic and profit-oriented as they seem to be willing to sacrifice their children's real educational benefits for the sake of learning through English. However, the parents' reaction is understandable in the sense that global development of the present time is bound to be associated with the world's *lingua franca* and possession of more knowledge in the language logically guarantees a better prospect. The growth of English during the past few decades has justified the fear of the CMI parents. The government's failure and the lack of worldwide evidence that proves that English language teaching would still thrive under mother-tongue education explains why Chinese (Cantonese as in the case of Hong Kong) as the teaching medium does not receive a positive welcome from parents. The ideology of linguistic capitalism has empowered English with a value that is indispensable. As So (2000) observes,

**...the worldwide 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.**

(p.22)

It has come to the point that parents will not buy into the promotion and propaganda regarding mother-tongue made by the government. As So (2000) continues,

**The popular demand for EMI is deeply rooted in the historical milieu of Hong Kong and in the status enjoyed by English worldwide...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.**

(p.22)

Misconception of mother-tongue education arises partly from the violation of the 'maximum exposure hypothesis'. The component of the 'quality of exposure' is vital in the sense that it might have shed new light on the whole issue of teaching medium. It shifts the focus on the correlation between mother-tongue education and the proficiencies of both Chinese and English, to the real essence underneath, which is to do with how languages should be taught. The current debates over the possible positive/negative impact of mother-tongue education on languages might leave some space for discussion of teaching approaches and content of the language subjects. Quality of exposure plays a particularly crucial role in the context of Hong Kong because of the limited reinforcement of the second language. Despite the fact that various means of consolidating English standards are available in Hong Kong as television as well as radio have English channels, and access to English magazines or reference materials is easy, local students mostly retreat to Chinese (Cantonese) or local newspapers. Due to students' lack of motivation for learning English, the quality of exposure in schools is therefore one of the most determining factors for second language learning in Hong Kong. Misconception and overestimation of the impact of the medium of instruction has somehow oversimplified the core of the language problem.

**7.4.1.2 Bridging courses**

The obstacle of connection in terms of the teaching medium also poses another matter of concern for the implementation of mother-tongue education, because CMI schools could apply to switch to EMI education in senior forms if they could prove to the Education Department that they were eligible to do so when the MOI policy was reviewed in 2001. As a matter of fact, 4% of the CMI schools succeeded in switching completely to EMI education in senior forms (secondary four and upwards), while 133 CMI schools switched to partial EMI education (teaching certain subjects in English) in senior forms in 2001 (Unnamed reporter from the Oriental Daily 2001). It is considered that bridging courses would be problematic because there are too many

reference materials to cover. The time allocated for bridging courses is too little and ensuring that students could learn effectively through English in the senior forms within such a short period of time is a target too difficult to achieve. The survey conducted by Chan *et al* (1997) about English-medium instruction in secondary 1 and 2 has illustrated that bridging programmes that are supposed to help primary 6 leavers to adapt to English-medium teaching usually do not produce positive outcomes, which might also imply the difficulty involved with implementing bridging programmes for secondary 3 and secondary 4, at which the academic transition is equally hard, if not harder, than that from primary 6 to secondary 1.

#### **7.4.1.3 Insufficient support and resources for quality CMI education**

Although the Education Department has embarked on mother-tongue education since the early 1980s, not much consideration has been given to the issue of how to enhance and maintain the quality of CMI education. The survey done by Tse *et al* (2001) reveals that in-service teachers have been frustrated by the problem of selecting relevant textbooks and teaching materials written in Chinese because of the lack of standardized teaching materials. The teachers being surveyed also raised the need for retraining so that they can teach effectively in the mother-tongue. Similar concern has also been pointed out by teacher interviewees in the current study, who claimed that it was hard to teach subject content in mother-tongue because they were trained in English and they learned through English throughout their schooling.

#### **7.4.1.4 Conflict between theories and practices**

After a close examination of the issues involved, the main problem arising from the current medium of instruction policy appears to be the conflict between theories and practices. The Education Department has made use of several linguistic principles and copied bits and pieces from other western bilingual models which do not necessarily fit the local context.

Cummins (1988) has made clear for policy-makers and educators the difficulty of the adaptation of educational or linguistic theories in other contexts and sample group.

We should be aware of the fact that there is no one single theory or model that is universally applicable or practical. As Cummins (1988) suggests:

**A major reason why many policy-makers and educators in the United States regard the research basis for bilingual education as minimal or even non-existent is that they have failed to realize that data or “facts” from bilingual programs become interpretable for policy purposes only within the context of a coherent theory. It is the theory rather than the individual research findings that permits the generation of predictions about program outcomes under different conditions. Research findings themselves cannot be *directly* applied across contexts.**

(p.11-12)

The general size of classes and also the language qualifications of local teachers, as discussed in section 2.8.2.2, may explain why direct adoption of theories from the west would end up in more conflicts in Hong Kong. Apart from the problem of adaptation of western models to the local context, we should also be aware of the fact that the principle underlying the 1998 MOI policy is inherently self-conflicting. The very first target of the current language policy as listed on the principle guidelines about enabling students to be trilingual (in Cantonese, English and Mandarin) and biliterate (in Chinese and English) proves to be contradictory to the policy in practice because students from CMI schools (which amount the majority) have not been given adequate chances to improve their English skills and knowledge. While code-mixing has been accused of being an inappropriate bilingual teaching approach, the new single-stream policy has exacerbated the situation by tracking students into one single stream.

#### **7.4.1.5 Time allowed for implementation**

One of the major weaknesses of the implementation of the medium of instruction policy is that the government has never allowed adequate time for the general impact of the policy to be felt. As Teacher Trainer C explained: “Education policy usually takes more than a decade for its impact to be seen.” However, the government keeps putting forward new policies and changes whenever it is felt that something has gone

wrong or does not seem to produce the expected results. The short-sightedness of the government has in a way overwhelmed whatever positive impact that might have come out in the long-run.

## **7.4.2 Implications for policy**

### **7.4.2.1 Redefinition of mother-tongue education**

Unlike other places where dialects differ from the official or standard language only in terms of accents, the complexity of Chinese, as explained in the literature review chapter, further complicates the medium of instruction issue in Hong Kong as it has brought up another series of debates on what the mother-tongue should be. Educationally and politically speaking, Mandarin obviously gets higher utility rating than Cantonese, which carries mainly cultural connotations and is regarded as the mother-tongue of the Hong Kong populations, as revealed from the interviewees' and student subjects' choice of mother-tongue. However, it is worth asking whether the use of Cantonese as the teaching medium would facilitate the learning of Chinese language because of the grammatical mismatch between the Modern Standard Written Chinese and Cantonese. Interference instead of facilitating impact is likely to occur, as it is not unusual to spot the use of Cantonese characters in Chinese compositions that require students to write in Modern Standard Written Chinese.

### **7.4.2.2 Reidentification of the source of the problem: unconsolidated foundation of primary education?**

Regarding the perceived educational and language failure in secondary schools, we may not confine our scope to the ill-designed language policy at the secondary education level. As a matter of fact, a large-scale reformation that is well-planned could be carried out for the primary education sector as well (So 1987) because this is the stage when the source of the problem begins to root and breed. A number of surveys have been carried out to assess the impact or effect of mother-tongue education in secondary education. However, the importance of primary education should not be disregarded as primary education is the stage when students' language proficiencies begin to take shape. The unsatisfactory performance of English of the



overwhelming majority may probably be attributed to the fact that students have not built a solid foundation for their languages when they are in primary schools. It does not suggest that all the primary schools in Hong Kong should switch to English-medium. However, language subjects including English and Chinese should be consolidated and extra support should be provided by the government to each primary school. It cannot be denied that reforms should take place in the foundation years of education.

#### ***A well-trained bilingual teaching workforce***

As for English, a well-trained bilingual workforce might be the first priority. Teachers who are additive bilinguals would be the most preferable. The present benchmarking examination lays out the appropriate direction for guaranteeing that language teachers are well-qualified and are capable of teaching language subjects. As proposed by the report of the Language Fund Project (E/07/98-1) done in 1999, “All the successful examples of immersion education are characterized by strong professionalism and high bilingual proficiency levels of both immersion and language teachers” (p.43). This argument has also been supported by Swain & Johnson (1997) and also Butzkamm’s (1998) report as discussed in section 2.8.2.2.

#### ***Design of teaching approaches***

Apart from language proficiencies, teaching approaches can be devised specially to fit into the local classrooms. Teachers should be able to exercise these approaches effectively. This has in fact pointed out one of the directions for future research that relates to what sort of teaching approaches should be adopted. Investigations on teaching approaches is not within the scope of the present research study. Nonetheless, it is considered that teaching approaches may not be standardized for every school as teaching culture and administration of schools are not totally identical.

#### ***Raising teachers’ morale by getting them involved with policy planning***

A misconception exposed in the current study is that teachers generally do not possess

much knowledge of the linguistic interdependence hypothesis. They may not be aware of the possibility that L1 could in fact help enriching literacy development of the L2. It should be aware that communication between the teaching profession and the government body will clear misconceptions and teachers will be more convinced by the proposals by the Education Department if the communication gap between them can be bridged.

Language teachers in each particular school should be involved and given a say on what they believe will well suit the school. In this way, teachers would at least feel respected and they may also be able to bring in new insights of teaching in practice, which will help avoiding conflict between theories and practice. Li (2001) raises a point about action researches in school, which coheres with what has been suggested here about involving teachers in policy-planning. As Li (2001) states,

**The School-based Curriculum Research Project Scheme showed that good policy had to be more than bureaucratic recommendations. It should empower teachers and be beneficial to students. From practitioners, we have found that genuine reform must be grounded in the working situation of teachers.**

By encouraging more teachers to participate in policy making, they would be more positive and enthusiastic in enforcing new policies, which would contribute to greater success on implementation. It is expected that teachers' morale will also be heightened in this case.

#### **7.4.2.2 A tentative bilingual model**

##### ***Primary education***

As for the Chinese language, instead of improving the content of the textbook materials, a change of teaching medium from Cantonese to Mandarin would sound more appealing. Considering that the vast majority of the local student population speak Cantonese as the mother-tongue, Mandarin should be taught as a core subject from primary one before it can be introduced as a teaching medium. The only concern is that schools have to make sure that their students could cope with Mandarin

effectively before it is phased in as the medium of instruction. It does not have to be the sole medium for every subject. Instead, it can be made the teaching medium for teaching Chinese and other social-cultural subjects. It might be too demanding to make Mandarin the teaching medium for Integrated Science and Mathematics for both the primary school students and teachers, as these subjects require more explanation and more in-depth cognitive understanding. This approach of dividing the teaching medium by subject differs from the suggested 'cross-curricular thematic approach' as 'subjects' instead of new 'cross-curricular modules' are involved, the cross-curricular module might have become an extra academic burden for both students and teachers as extra time has to be spent for teaching and learning. Moreover, while the 'cross-curricular thematic approach' is intended to give a boost to CMI students' standards of English, phasing in Mandarin in primary education would help to reinforce the foundation of the first language, Chinese. This point is made by the report of the Language Fund Project (E/07/98-1)(1999),

**...in view of the general lack of support for Chinese literacy development in the larger sociolinguistic context of Hong Kong, building this Chinese literacy foundation in schools, especially at primary and junior secondary levels, is very important for students to develop additive bilingualism instead of subtractive bilingualism.**

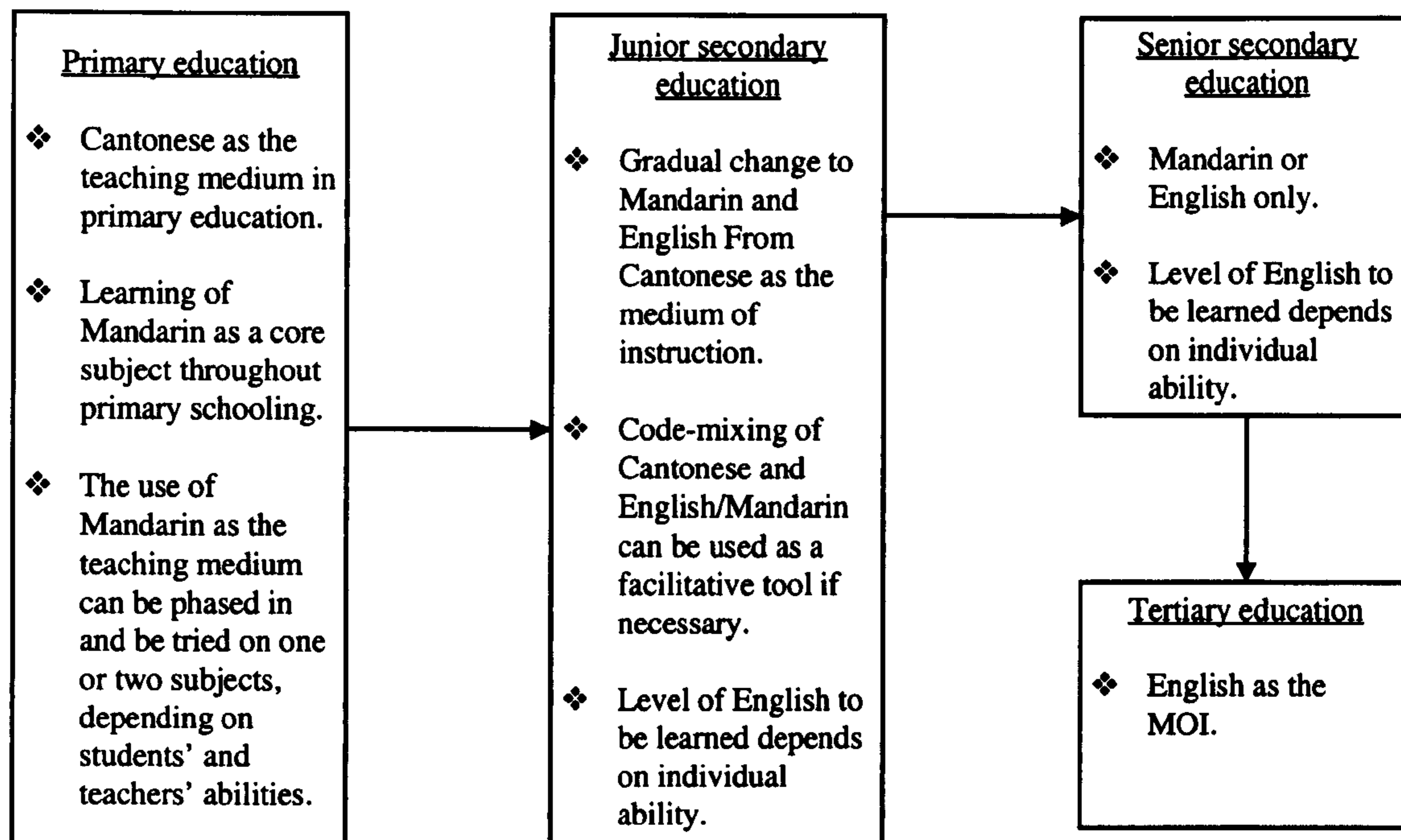
(p.42)

### ***Secondary education***

When the students approach secondary education, they would be able to have adequate competence in Mandarin. Despite the general preference for Cantonese over Mandarin as the teaching medium as indicated from the data of the current research, it may still be worth making a move towards replacing Cantonese with Mandarin as the teaching medium for the sake of better standards in Chinese language. The level of English taught can vary according to students' language abilities, that are determined by internal assessment. For example, English can be taught at a more basic level to students whose English proficiencies are poor; while advanced English courses can be offered to students whose English proficiencies are higher.

### **7.4.2.3 The skilful use of code-mixing as the MOI**

As revealed from the research findings in the current study, code-mixing is generally accepted as a feasible means for bilingual spoken education. The positive reception of mixed code as the teaching medium has been supported by Boyle (1997) who has done a review on the prevalence and popularity of mixed-code teaching in the education history of Hong Kong. He reflects the need for the Hong Kong government to be aware of the inevitability of mixed-code teaching in local schools. Mixed code can probably be adopted as a way to ease the transition from the mother-tongue to both Mandarin and English in secondary one and two but it should be used with strategy. When students are promoted to secondary three, schools could devise a set of language-stream test papers which assess students' Chinese and English abilities and act as a yardstick for allocating students to either the Chinese-medium stream or English-medium stream. The results of these language-stream tests can also be referred to as a frame of reference for allocating students to learn English at different levels according to their individual abilities. The result would be that students' individual language ability will be assessed and they would be learning English in the way that is supposed to fit their abilities best. Students who are allocated to the Chinese-medium stream can learn English at either basic or intermediate levels, depending on school internal assessments. During secondary 3, students in the Chinese-medium stream would have one year to brush up their English and switch to the English-medium stream and learn English within the same school at an advanced level when they are in secondary four, while those who are not able to or do not wish to do so will remain in the Mandarin teaching stream. It is recommended that schools should strengthen English language teaching for this particular stream. Students could get another chance to switch medium when they move on to the A-levels. It is speculated that with the reinforcement programmes of English all the way from primary to secondary education, the proportion of students who are enrolled in the EMI stream would be the majority. This will ease the bridging problem of languages from CMI to universities, which are mostly English-based in terms of teaching medium and reference materials. Code-mixing is to be used as a transitional linguistic device and strategies have to be devised for the effective use of it.

**Suggested alternative model of teaching medium from primary to tertiary education****Diagram H****7.4.2.4 Strengths of the suggested alternative over the current MOI policy*****Linguistic benefits of using Mandarin***

The 1998 MOI policy is similar to the present tentative model in the way that students with different language abilities could learn in the language stream that suits them best. The main difference lies in the point that streaming takes place in the same school and students could switch stream when appropriate. Mandarin instead of Cantonese is phased in as one of the teaching media and the reform takes place from the foundation years of schooling. The use of Mandarin instead of Cantonese originates from educational and socio-cultural considerations because Mandarin is the national common speech of the motherland and its widespread popularity in China as well as South East Asian countries has also reinforced its status as a *lingua franca* for Asian Chinese communities. Besides, the academic value of Mandarin also strengthens its potential to triumph over Cantonese as the teaching medium. Local

students' Chinese standard would also be upgraded as a result because what they speak (Mandarin) will exactly be what they write (MSWC).

The majority of respondents who prefer the use of Cantonese to Mandarin may indicate that a compulsory or forceful move towards Mandarin might bring negative effects as people may resist the replacement of Cantonese by Mandarin. The general public might interpret the sudden change of teaching medium as politically threatening and also as depriving them of their local Hong Kong identity. This may lead the mass to impose a negative perception on Mandarin and the whole issue of mother-tongue teaching.

However, it should be noted that Mandarin is not forced into the curriculum right from the beginning of primary education. Adequate time should be given to the people involved to adjust to a new teaching medium as Mandarin might be considered as an unfamiliar language for the majority of the population. Implementing Mandarin within a short time frame might do more harm than good to students. As the programme for promoting Mandarin during the past decade has not been very successful and the government has also paid little notice to the education of Mandarin, the number of students and teachers whose knowledge of Mandarin is rich enough to cope with learning and teaching through the language is subject to the minority. Therefore, the supply of teachers who are proficient in Mandarin raises another matter of concern.

Hong Kong is unique in the sense that despite its political integration with the mother country, it remains a culturally semi-detached island with a culture that is hybridized. A policy will be likely to fail without mass support, and therefore policy that is forced upon people would end up being ineffective. Educational-wise, Mandarin would better be phased in gradually to replace Cantonese as the teaching medium; cultural-wise, forcing modern standard Chinese everywhere in Hong Kong would obviously not receive a positive reception, and thus continuing with the use of mixed code or Cantonese style writing in less formal domains should not be regarded as a tolerance of subculture. In fact, it should be respected as a regional culture that is generated from social, historical, linguistic and economic foundations.

*No divisive line between Chinese-medium and English-medium schools*

Bifurcation within the same school might bring criticisms from the public and it might be interpreted as a divisive instrument of the students in the same school. However, it should also be noted that the element of divisiveness is inherent within the examination system because the principle that the examination system is based on is the 'survival for the fittest'. The present medium of instruction policy is equally divisive, as it only differs in the sense that the policy currently in practice streams students into schools with different teaching media, whilst the model recommended here does not label schools with either 'English-medium' or 'Chinese-medium' because the EMI and CMI streams exist within one single school. Students are enrolled in the stream that they can cope with. Streaming within the schools has the advantage that it can reduce parental opposition as EMI is not totally eliminated from the schools at which their children study. This point has been supported by Wong (2000), who suggests that

**If CMI schools were given the flexibility to introduce English-medium teaching gradually and progressively...the highly undesirable distinction and discrimination of the dual-medium system would be removed.**

(p.17)

Apart from gaining acceptance from parents and the public, in this model, late developers in languages would be given the opportunity to consolidate their L1 and to switch to another stream in the same school if they fulfill certain requirements.

## **7.5 Implications for future research**

### **7.5.1 The need of localisation of western theories**

Having taken various factors into consideration, the present medium of instruction policy needs to be examined closely. A bilingual policy that could cater for the needs of both CMI and EMI students should be developed. Nonetheless, more research on the kind of bilingual programme that could be adopted in the context of Hong Kong has to be done before any changes are implemented. The whole language problem has

to be planned thoroughly. The adaptation of western theories on which the new medium of instruction policy is based might be too risky. Educators should realise that the linguistic situation in Hong Kong is unique, and theories borrowed from international research studies should be filtered and carefully localised before they can be adopted.

### **7.5.2 Awareness of the social learning atmosphere**

The learning culture including the teaching and learning strategy will have to be reformed as well. The learning attitude of the new generation is also crucial for the success of the policy. Educators or critics may have stressed the pitfalls of the policy too much. Apparently the drawbacks in the policy due to incomprehensive planning and design cannot be denied, but the social and mentality changes of the teenagers nowadays should not be ignored as well.

### **7.5.3. Family background of students as an area for further research**

The social and family background of the students seems to be one of the major determinants for the proficiency level of English because it directly affects the quality of exposure. The correlation between the language proficiency on the one hand and family and social background on the other provides a ground for future research, as family influence could be a vital element in reinforcing the learning of the second language.

### **7.5.4 Limitations of the present study**

#### **7.5.4.1 Size of the sample**

The size of the sample poses another constraint to this study. The fact that the findings are only based on the data collected from the present sample suggests a limitation in the scope of the study. It should be noted that the present study involves a small sample, which has made it inappropriate to generalise the results. This study does not aim at finding out the truth; it is only reporting what appears to be reflected in the existing data. However, this research might provide us with some new insights as it



includes the perspectives of policy-makers, teachers, teacher trainers and students. In the past, students were the intended beneficiaries of change and their views have usually been excluded in the research conducted by the government.

#### **7.5.4.2 Denial of access to statistical evidence**

It has to be stressed that due to the denial of access to students' academic results, findings in the current research study are not supported by solid statistical evidence and are therefore solely based on the points of views of respondents. For instance, the question of whether mother-tongue education has led to improvements of Chinese and English is perceptive and depends on the interpretation of the term 'improvement'. The analysis and discussion of findings would have a stronger basis to stand on if access to students' results was granted.

#### **7.5.4.3 Lack of follow-up interviews**

After analysing the quantitative data, I realised that a fuller picture of what student respondents perceive would be obtained if follow-up interviews with students could be done. There are cases where certain points of interests have been raised in the open-ended questions, for instance, the sort of bilingual model they prefer and the reasons for their answers. It is believed that students' and teachers' views could make quite an interesting comparison and contrast if students' points of views had been investigated in a more in-depth basis.

### **7.6 Multilingualism as an ideal model for linguistic development**

In the new global age, where globalization is becoming more of a common phenomenon and the perceived distance between different corners of the world is getting shorter, it has become uncommon for an educated person to be proficient in only one language. Bilingualism or multilingualism have gradually emerged as a norm in several societies. Economic (international trade) and social (emigration and moving around of the world population) developments are the major forces for the growth of multilingualism. It is speculated that the trend of bilingualism that gears towards the

learning of English as a second language is subject to change in the long-run. Grin (2001) contends that

**As competence in English spreads (as it certainly will, if only because it yields appreciable gains), the socio-economic relevance of English will increase, and so will the demand of English-language skills, thereby driving upwards the wage 'premia' accruing to people with a good command of the language. Yet as people are moved to learn it, they will increase the supply of English language skills, making them more banal, as it were, and driving down the 'premia' to English speakers.....In other words, the rewards for speaking English will be less and less, and other skills will be required to achieve socio-economic success. First and foremost among those skills are languages other than English.**

(p. 75)

The prediction of the development of English learning mentioned above draws great relevance to the economic theory of 'diminishing marginal return', that suggests that demand for a certain commodity (or skill in this case) will saturate once it has reached the point of equilibrium. Additional supply of that commodity/skill will lead to decreasing desire for it once the equilibrium point has been attained. What Grin (2001) is trying to imply from the quotation above is that "...English is worth learning, but restricting foreign/second language acquisition to English only would be a very short-sighted policy, even if one reasons only on the basis of the crassest materialistic considerations". (p.75) The implication of this school of thought is apparently the promotion and encouragement of multilingualism and multilingual education, instead of bilingualism and bilingual education.

The basic aim of the new medium of instruction policy to equip students with biliterate and trilingual abilities is the trend in many of the world's cities, though the current policy in Hong Kong seems to have further narrowed the choice of students and deprived them of the chance to develop their language potentials by limiting them to one single teaching medium stream. The principle of the new medium of instruction policy of enhancing bilingual abilities of students seems to be inherently self-contradictory, and not to promote multilingualism. Additive bilinguals in Hong Kong obviously benefit from their language proficiencies in terms of upward and outward

mobility. Nevertheless, Hong Kong might fail to be renowned as an ideal bilingual city because of the tiny proportion of additive bilinguals in Hong Kong. The attempt to make it a perfectly bilingual city requires a revolution in the language policy from the primary level and upwards. The learning culture, including the teaching and learning strategy, will have to be reformed as well. It is hoped that the present research will pave the way for further investigation on such issues.

## **Appendix I**

### Interview questions for teachers in CMI schools

1. What do you think about the shift of English medium to mother-tongue education? Are you in favour of it?
2. Do you think that mother-tongue education affects students' learning and hence their academic results? If so, are they positive or negative effects? Elaborate.
3. What do you think about the fairness of the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment in terms of assessing language proficiencies and determining their most suitable medium of instruction for students?
4. Should the most appropriate medium of schools be determined by the intake of secondary one students' language proficiencies?
5. Does mother-tongue education affect students' language proficiencies? Do you think that students could do better in both Chinese and English if they are taught through the mother-tongue?
6. What do you think about the correlation between the exposure to English language and the standard of it?
7. If you are to rank the three languages—Cantonese, Mandarin and English according to the level of importance in the context of schools, and the society as a whole. How would you rank it? Why?
8. How do you interpret the term 'mother-tongue'? Does it refer to the language we have spoken since childhood? Or does it refer to the official language of our country?

9. Is there any cultural implication or impact on students' self identity with the use of mother-tongue?
10. Should Mandarin be introduced gradually to replace Cantonese as the teaching medium? Why and why not?
11. The Education Department condemned that code-mixing causes detrimental effects to students. Do you think this is the main cause for the low standard of languages?
12. Are you in favour of bilingual education? Why? If you have the right to choose, do you prefer to use the bilingual model or to stay with pure English medium or pure Chinese medium? If you prefer the bilingual model, can you elaborate what kind of model you prefer?
13. Do you think that the implementation of mother-tongue education is the result of the political handover in 1997?
14. Do you think the use of mother-tongue has any impact on the teaching and learning in class? If there is, what is it? In what ways have the teaching and learning approaches been affected by mother-tongue education?

## **Appendix II**

### Interview questions for teachers in EMI schools

1. What do you think about the shift of English medium to mother-tongue education? Are you in favour of it?
2. Do you think that mother-tongue education affects students' learning and hence their academic results? If so, are they positive or negative effects? Elaborate.
3. What do you think about the fairness of the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment in terms of testing language proficiencies and determining their most suitable medium of instruction for students?
4. Should the most appropriate medium of schools be determined by the intake of secondary one students' language proficiencies?
5. Does mother-tongue education affect students' language proficiencies? Do you think that students could do better in both Chinese and English if they are taught through the mother-tongue?
6. What do you think about the correlation between the exposure to English language and the standard of it?
7. If you are to rank the three languages—Cantonese, Mandarin and English according to the level of importance in the context of schools, and the society as a whole. How would you rank it? Why?
8. How do you interpret the term 'mother-tongue'? Does it refer to the language we have spoken since childhood? Or does it refer to the official language of our country?
9. Should Mandarin be introduced gradually to replace Cantonese as the teaching medium? Why and why not?

10. The Education Department condemned that code-mixing causes detrimental effects to students. Do you think this is the main cause for the low standard of languages?

11. Are you in favour of bilingual education? Why? If you have the right to choose, do you prefer to use the bilingual model or to stay with pure English medium or pure Chinese medium? If you prefer the bilingual model, can you elaborate what kind of model you prefer?

12. Do you think that the implementation of mother-tongue education is the result of the political handover in 1997?

13. Do you think the use of mother-tongue has any impact on the teaching and learning in class? If there is, what is it? In what ways have the teaching and learning approaches been affected by mother-tongue education?

### **Appendix III**

#### Interview questions for policy-makers

1. Do you think that mother-tongue education is the main determining factor that affects students' learning and their academic results? Are they positive or negative effects?
2. Does mother-tongue education affect students' language proficiencies? Do you think that students' could do better in both Chinese and English if they are taught through the mother-tongue?
3. Do you think there is a direct correlation between the exposure to English language and the standard of it?
4. How do you interpret the term 'mother-tongue'? Does it refer to the language we have spoken since childhood? Or does it refer to the official language of our country (China)?
5. Should Mandarin be introduced gradually to replace Cantonese as the teaching medium? Why or why not?
6. The Education Department condemned that code-mixing causes detrimental effects to students. Do you think this is the main cause for the low standard?
7. Are you in favour of bilingual education? Why and why not? (If yes, can you specify what type of bilingual model you prefer?)
8. Can you give me some guidance about the direction of the medium of instruction policy is heading towards in the future?

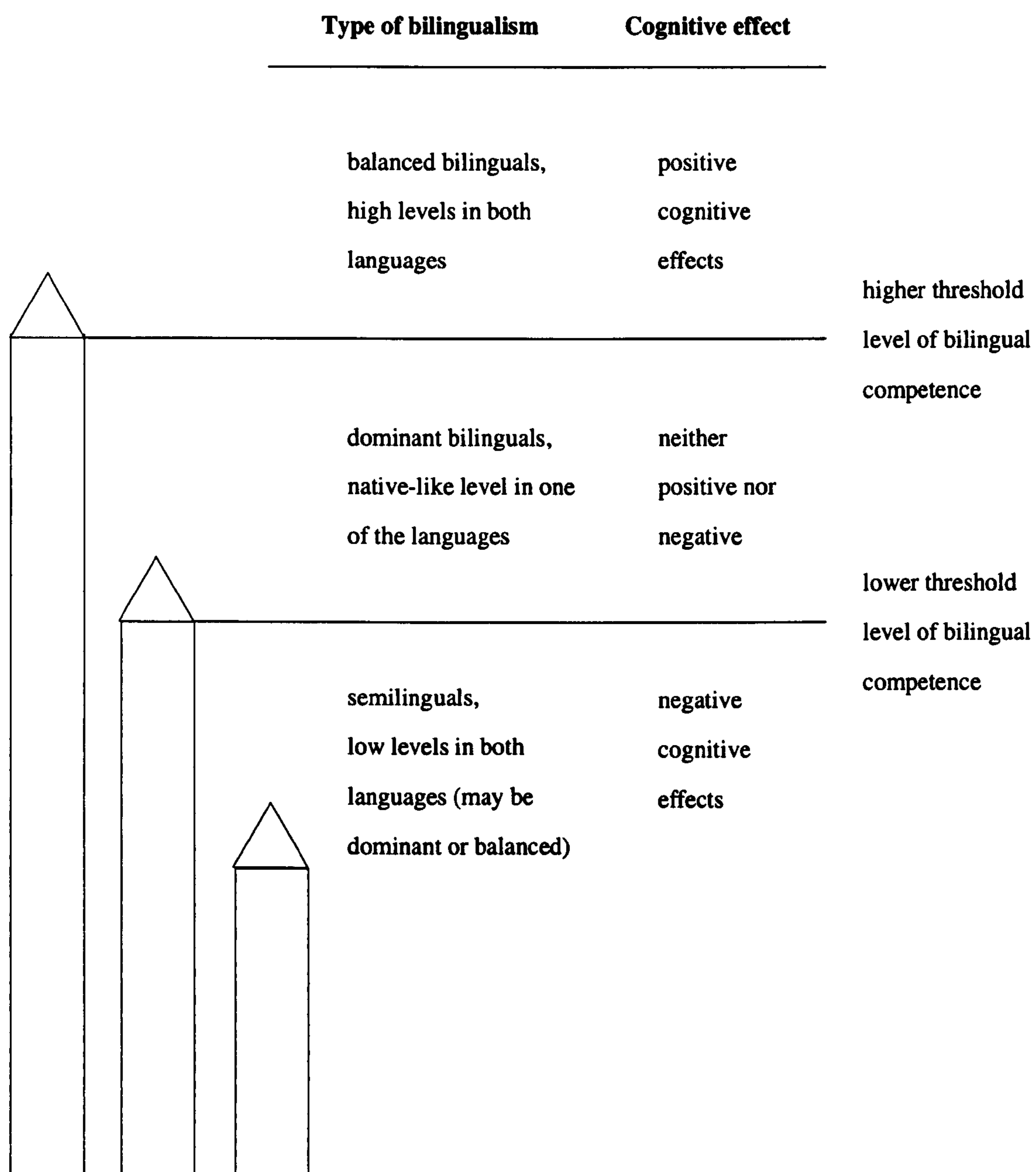


## **Appendix IV**

### Interview questions for teacher trainers

1. What do you think about the shift of English medium to mother-tongue education? Are you in favour of it?
2. Do you think that mother-tongue education affects students' learning and hence their academic results? If so, are they positive or negative effects? Please elaborate.
3. What do you think about the correlation between the exposure to English language and the standard of it?
4. If you are to rank the three languages—Cantonese, Mandarin and English, according to the level of importance in the context of school, and the society as a whole, how would you rank it? Why?
5. How do you interpret the term 'mother-tongue' Does it refer to the language we have spoken since childhood (our first language)? Or does it refer to the official language of our country (China)?
6. The Education Department condemned that code-mixing causes detrimental effects to students. Do you think this is the main cause for the low standards?
7. Are you in favour of bilingual education? Why or why not? If you have the right to choose, do you prefer to use the bilingual model or to stay with pure English medium or pure Chinese medium? If you prefer the bilingual model, can you elaborate what kind of model you prefer?
8. Do you think the implementation of mother-tongue is the result of the political handover in 1997?

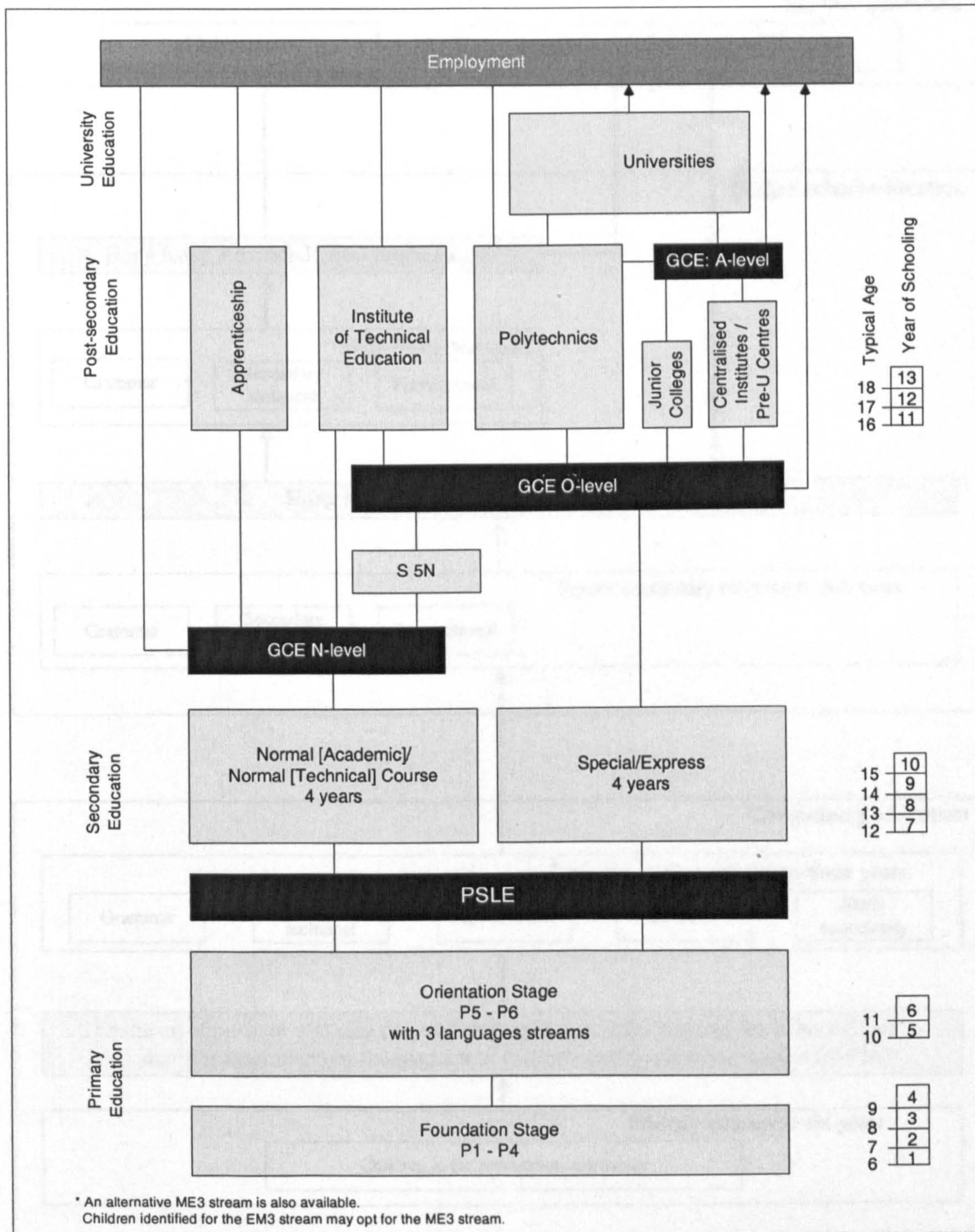
9. Do you think the use of mother-tongue has any impact on the teaching and learning in class? If there is, what is, what is it? In what ways have the teaching and learning approaches been affected by mother-tongue education?

**Appendix V****Model of Threshold Hypothesis**

(Hoffman 1991 p.130)

**Appendix VI**

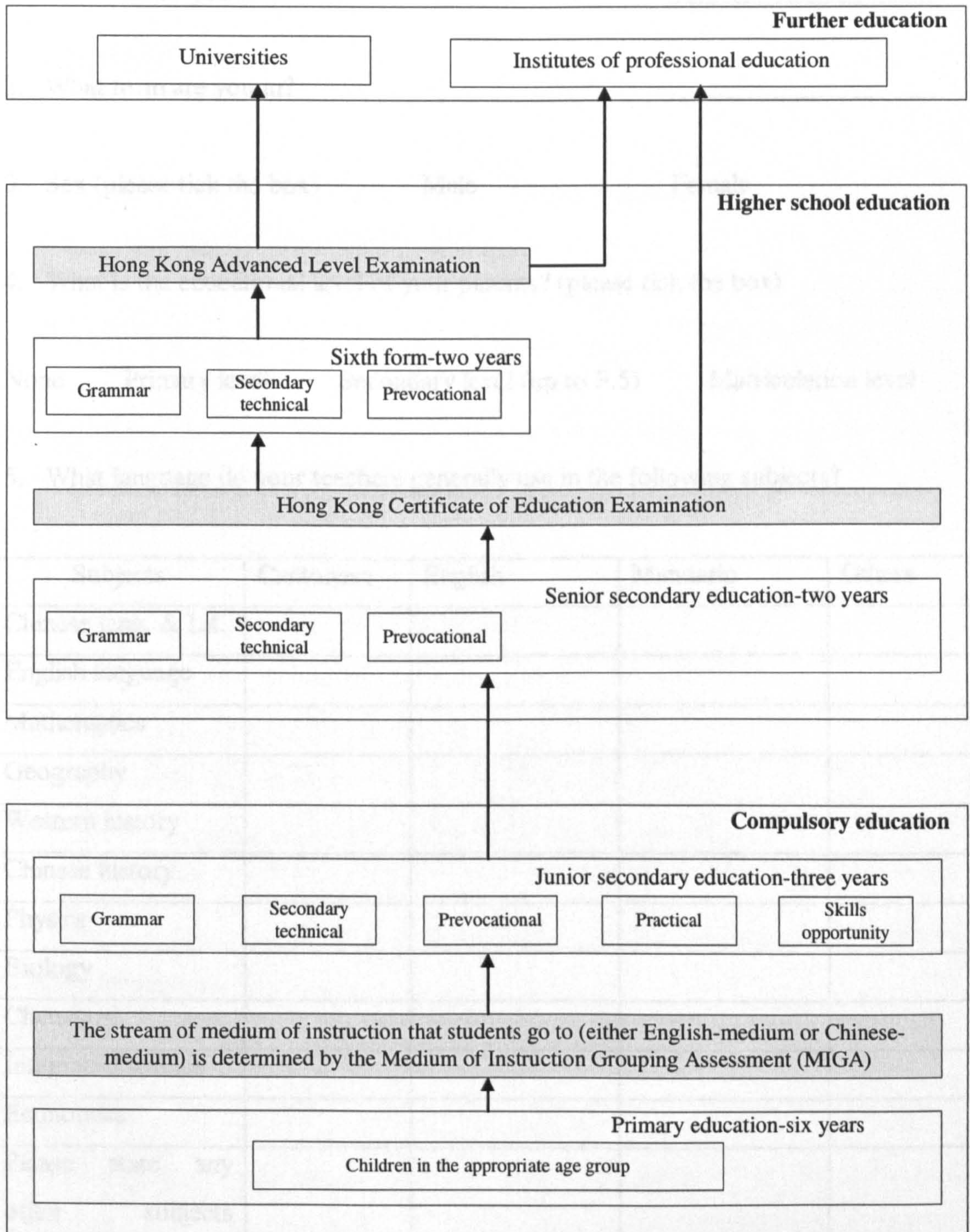
The Education system of Singapore



(Ministry of Education, Singapore undated)

**Appendix VII**

The Education System of Hong Kong



## Appendix VIII

## Questionnaire for CMI students

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What form are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex (please tick the box)

Male

Female

4. What is the educational level of your parents? (please tick the box)

None

Primary level

Secondary level (up to F.5)

Matriculation level

5. What language do your teachers generally use in the following subjects?

Subjects	Cantonese	English	Mandarin	Others
Chinese lang. & Lit.				
English language				
Mathematics				
Geography				
Western history				
Chinese history				
Physics				
Biology				
Chemistry				
Integrated science				
Economics				
Please state any other subjects which are not stated above				



Yes

No

12. Can you rank the following three languages in terms of importance in schools?  
(ranging from 1 as the most important and 3 as the least important)

Cantonese\_\_\_\_

Mandarin\_\_\_\_

English\_\_\_\_

13. How would you rank the following in terms of importance in Hong Kong?

Cantonese\_\_\_\_

Mandarin\_\_\_\_

English\_\_\_\_

14. Can you explain briefly the reason for your choice?

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15. If you have the right to choose on your own, which of the following model do you prefer?

Bilingual model (Having Cantonese and English mixing at the same time)

Pure English-medium model

Pure Chinese-medium model

Others Please state\_\_\_\_\_

16. Please express your opinion for the following statements. (please tick your answer)

i. What do you think about your proficiencies in English and Chinese after you are taught in mother-tongue education?

a) They have both improved . \_\_\_\_\_

b) They have both remained the same. \_\_\_\_\_

c) One of them has improved and the other has not. (Please state



- which language has improved) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Both of them have declined \_\_\_\_\_
- e) One of them has declined and the other has not. (Please state  
which language has declined) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. The impact of the use of code-mixing (using both Chinese and English at the  
same time) in terms of understanding the lessons.
- a) Lessons are made more easy with code-mixing \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Lessons are made more difficult with code-mixing \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Either code-mixing and pure teaching medium does not make  
any difference. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. With less exposure of English than before in lessons, your standard of English  
will
- a) Drop \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Improve \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Remain unchanged \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. Political change (handover in 1997) has
- a) A bit effect on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Indirect effect on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_
- c) No effect at all on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_
- v. What do you think about determining the medium of school according to the  
intake of students, whose language proficiency are ranked by the Medium of  
Instruction Group Assessment test?
- a) Fair \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Unfair \_\_\_\_\_
- c) No comment \_\_\_\_\_

17. What language do you use in the following domains? (Please tick)

Domains	Cantonese	Mandarin	Both	Others (please state)
School				
Family				
Friends				
On streets				

18. Do you have any other views or comments regarding the present issue of the medium of instruction?

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**This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.**

**Appendix IX**

## Questionnaire for EMI students

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What form are you in? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sex (please tick the box)                      Male                      Female

4. What is the educational level of your parents? (please tick the box)

None    Primary level    Secondary level (up to F.5)    Matriculation level  
University level

5. What language do your teachers generally use in the following subjects?

Subjects	Cantonese	English	Mandarin	Others
Chinese lang. & Lit.				
English language				
Mathematics				
Geography				
Western history				
Chinese history				
Physics				
Biology				
Chemistry				
Integrated science				
Economics				
Please state any other subjects which are not stated above				

6. If Chinese has to be used as the medium of instruction, which of the following do you prefer in the classroom? (Please tick the box)

Mandarin

Cantonese

Others

7. Which language do you think is your mother-tongue? (Please tick the box)

Mandarin

Cantonese

English

Others

8. Have you taken the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment test when you were in Primary 6?

Yes

No

9. (This question only applies to those who have chosen "Yes" in the previous question) If you have taken the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment test before, do you think it can test and indicate your language proficiency?

Yes

No

10. Can you rank the following three languages in terms of importance in schools? (ranging from 1 as the most important and 3 as the least important)

Cantonese\_\_\_

Mandarin\_\_\_

English\_\_\_

11. How would you rank the following in terms of importance in Hong Kong?

Cantonese\_\_\_

Mandarin\_\_\_

English\_\_\_

12. Can you explain briefly the reason for your choice?

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13. If you have the right to choose on your own, which of the following model do you prefer?

Bilingual model (Having Cantonese and English mixing at the same time)

Pure English medium model

Pure Chinese medium model

Others Please state \_\_\_\_\_

14. Please express your opinion for the following statements. (please tick your answer)

vi. The impact of the use of code-mixing (using both Chinese and English at the same time) in terms of understanding the lessons.

d) Lessons are made more easy with code-mixing \_\_\_\_\_

e) Lessons are made more difficult with code-mixing \_\_\_\_\_

f) Either code-mixing and pure teaching medium does not make any difference. \_\_\_\_\_

vii. The relationship between exposure to English and your standard of English

a) There is a direct relationship between exposure and English

b) There is an indirect relationship between exposure and English language proficiency

c) There is no relationship at all

d) No comment

iii. Political change (handover in 1997) has

a) A bit effect on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_

b) Indirect effect on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_

c) No effect at all on the use of mother-tongue education \_\_\_\_\_

iv. What do you think about determining the medium of school according to the intake of students, whose language proficiency are ranked by the Medium of Instruction Group Assessment test?

- a) Fair  
 b) Unfair  
 c) No comment

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15. What language do you use in the following domains? (Please tick)

Domains	Cantonese	Mandarin	Both	Others (please state)
School				
Family				
Friends				
On streets				

16. Do you have any other views or comments regarding the present issue of the medium of instruction?

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**This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your help.**

## **Appendix X**

Interview transcription for Teacher C (CMI)

### **1. Are you in favour of mother-tongue education?**

It used to depend on the subjects. We used to teach some subjects in English, and some in Cantonese, but during the past two years, the whole school has changed to CMI due to the government policy. (Are you in favour of it?) Well, I teach English, but I believe that mother-tongue education benefits the students better.

### **2. Will mother-tongue education affect student's academic performance?**

Yes, especially for my students. Actually, according to the Hong Kong education system, this school belongs to the band 2 group. Well, especially in terms of understanding and ways of expression...like the homework, we, as teachers, can assess students' performance more easily if they use mother-tongue education.

### **3. What do you think about the fairness of MIGA**

Well, I believe in Hong Kong, it is kind of fair. (hesitant) Basically, in Hong Kong, a same set of tools is used to assess..., and the trend is that people tend to think that it's fair. But I doubt the accuracy of the MIGA. (why?) I don't think they can really assess or reflect real students' abilities. Can it really group them into different language ability groups? It tells that a particular group of students can learn most efficiently through mother-tongue, another group via English, and another group via both languages. Actually, it turns out to me that the students' abilities don't really match the description of tables. (Do you mean that even if they belong to band one, it does not mean that they are really that bright?) Yes.

**4. Do you think that the MOI of school should be determined by the intake of students?**

Well, actually it's the problem that we have been discussing lately, and debating upon. What we teachers think is that it is problematic. What you say about language development is that, I don't think the language standards of primary six students have already taken shape. I mean should their standards be really judged at that stage? What I mean is that it is too early to judge their language development. I mean even if they did not do well in primary school, it does not mean that they cannot do well in secondary schools. I think what the ED is doing is that the labelling effect has been produced. (So you don't think that it's appropriate?) No, I don't think it is appropriate to assess their standard at such early stage. Actually, that is the way ED dose things. They will pick up the time for their own convenience to carry out a particular policy, just for their own sake. Or perhaps it is the problem of allocation of resources as well.

**5. Do you think that the language proficiency of students can be benefited by mother-tongue education?**

I think that Chinese must be better, but English...I have reservations. I teach English, and what I believe is that if you want to speak good English, then exposure is very important, and the language environment of Hong Kong is that the only input of English exposure is from school. If a school belongs to CMI, then the exposure, or I should say the quantity of input is limited. But the assumption of ED is very interesting. They think that the English standard of students won't fall even with the switch to CMI. They believe that in the Hong Kong society, there are lots of other means of input for students to learn languages. But I don't really think so. For HK students, who are locally born here, the only exposure to English is from teachers, schools, and textbooks. Therefore, the exposure to English in CMI schools is obviously less than before. (How about the assumption of the ED about the transferable knowledge from L1 to L2?) Well, what I think is, the foundation might be better, since there might be some kinds of transferable knowledge of linguistics. For example, since their ways of expressing Chinese is better, that might benefit their



expression through English as well. But in terms of higher level, like fluency. L1 can't help much with. I don't think that people who are good at L1 are necessarily good at L2. at a certain level, there might be some kinds of linkage, but the relationship is not that directly proportional.

**6. How would you rank Cantonese, Mandarin and English in the school and social contexts?**

Do you mean that how the school ranks the importance? In fact, in our school, Cantonese is very important. But when you Mandarin and English, they are of more or less the same level of importance. Actually Mandarin is still in the stage of taking shape, and the recruitment is not really high. I think what the school expects from students regarding their Mandarin and English level are very similar. I think Cantonese is much stressed. Like they should be good at Cantonese presentation...well, students don't really have much chance to speak, since we only offer Mandarin classes in junior level. (How about the society as a whole?) Well, I still believe that English is the most important, the exchange value is higher than Chinese. But when compared to Cantonese, the use value of Cantonese is much higher, since the majority of the population speaks Cantonese. But when you are talking about the region of our school, I think it is very unique, since we have more contacts with students from Mainland China. So students in this region might be able to use more Mandarin than those students from the Hong Kong Island. It has much to do with daily encounters. Since they come into contact with tourists mainly, but what the students encounter in this region is that there are more immigrants from China. There is a bit of a regional variation.

**7. Can you define mother-tongue?**

Well, of course it is Cantonese. (Even Mandarin has become the official language after that handover?) Yes, I think that Cantonese is the mother-tongue for us. But the difference is that the status of Mandarin has changed obviously, well, when compared to English language, it is less foreign, and furthermore, it is easier to master after all. For most Cantonese who can't speak good mandarin, at least they would be able to

listen and understand more.

**8. What do you think about the correlation between mother-tongue and self-identity?**

Well, I think social identity does not have much to do with MOI. I think it has more to do with civic education. And civic education is taught through mother-tongue, and perhaps there might be some linkage.

**9. Do you think Mandarin should replace Cantonese as the MOI?**

Well, not really necessary. I'd rather think that it should be learned as something extra. Cantonese is still used in most of the domains, and it shouldn't be replaced. What I think is that it would be better if students learn it as something extra, and have more contacts with a new language. I think in this way they have more choices and can do more things with different languages. If Cantonese is replaced, then their everyday communication and function might not be able to be done so proficiently with Mandarin.

**10. What do you think is the impact of code-mixing?**

Well, as for English teaching, I am not in favour of mixed code, as there would be negative effects obviously. Well, but of course there is the positive side as well, otherwise mixed code would not be used as the main means of communication. (You prefer a pure language.) Yes, I do. I think that mixed-code education results in the problem that students fail in both languages, and they can't be bilingual either. They are not able to express themselves in either one of the languages. I think the development of the quality of mixed-code teaching would be a big problem.

**11. Are you in favour of bilingual education? What model do you prefer?**

In what ways do you mean by bilingual education? Well, I think bilingual education is necessary. Due to the demand of the society, and sometimes even trilingual. Well, I do

think that there should be more options for students.

**12. What do you think about the correlation between mother-tongue education and the handover? Do you think it is the result of the return of sovereignty from Hong Kong to China?**

I think political motive is strong. The whole implementation is that it is in a great hurry, and it does take a long time for schools to adapt to such a change. In fact, as you might be able to see that there are still lots of voices of protests, and critics from different sectors of the society. People think that it is still problematic. (You think the political background is crucial here?) Yes, I think it is the main motivating force.

**13. What do you think is the relationship between teaching methods and the MOI?**

Well, as I teach English, it doesn't make much difference. But for other subjects, I think students react differently. The background of both languages is different, so there are in fact two sets of mentality and logic, so I do feel the difference. The students are more willing to respond. The participation is higher. But I would like to make a note here. The level of participation might be more or less the same, but what is different is that their achievement can be more clearly seen if mother-tongue is used. Actually, they might have some kinds of learning going on in their minds, but due to the use of English, they are refrained from expressing themselves freely. But it does not mean that they don't acquire that knowledge. The result is just more visible with the use of mother-tongue.

## **Appendix XI**

Interview transcription for Teacher F (EMI)

### **1. Are you in favour of mother-tongue education? Why?**

Yes, I am totally in favour of it. Because some students might not be good in English, and so if they are taught in Chinese, they can learn better. As for learning, this is more effective, and students can absorb better what they learn. This division is actually a good thing...I mean to divide students into different groups of CMI and EMI. For those whose English proficiency is better, I think that they should be taught in English, as long as they can learn effectively. (So you agree that students should be grouped into different MOI groups?) Yes, I do.

### **2. What do you think is the impact of mother-tongue education on academic performance?**

Do you mean mother-tongue education? I think if they are taught in Chinese, they can understand better about the texts. But if they have to write in English, then the problem occurs. I think the best way is that if a subject is taught through CMI, for example, then the students have to write and answer in the same language as well. This will be more direct. But if translation is involved, then it would be difficult for students. I mean if they learn in English but are required to write in Chinese. Or if they are taught in Chinese but are required to answer in English, they might not be able to think of the appropriate terms promptly since it is indirect.

### **3. What do you think about the MIGA system?**

Well...I guess the assessment judges the students too early. Well, I haven't taught in primary school before, but what I reckon is that perhaps this is not the suitable stage to assess students. Are their standards really that consistent? And if we use this to group them into CMI and EMI, I don't think it can really reflect their standards, and the most appropriate MOI. I think language is in fact a kind of habit, if a student is sent abroad

and is surrounded by English language all the time, then naturally he/she will be able to learn better in this language. It is just a matter of habit.

**4. Do you think the most appropriate MOI should be determined by the intake of F.1 students?**

(The teacher was not sure of what I mean by MOI being determined by the intake of F.1 students. Therefore explanation is necessary here.) well, I think it is really problematic. Most of the primary schools are CMI, and it is difficult for them to adapt to the new life. (Probes necessary because the answer goes a bit off-track.) I mean when they were in primary school, the English that the students learn is much simpler than that they encounter in secondary schools, so it would be a problem. (You don't think their level can reflect the standard of the school?) Well, I mean even if they can understand the English lessons, it does not mean that they can learn well in English, since every subject has different vocabulary. The intake doesn't really reflect the most suitable MOI of the school.

**5. Does mother-tongue education affect language proficiencies of students?**

It is very difficult to say. It depends on students. Some educationists may think so, but it is not the case. For some students, they might be talented in languages and will be good in both. But it doesn't apply to all students. For some students whose Chinese may be very strong and proficient, but it doesn't necessarily imply that they are good at English as well, and vice versa. And perhaps for some who are not so talented in languages, they would not do well in either of them. (So you think the correlation is not that strong?) No, I don't think it is that strong.

**6. What do you think about the exposure to English and the standard of it?**

Well, I think exposure is important...you listen more to English programmes and watch English channels, then your English would be better. (Do you think if a school

changes to CMI, then the English standards of students will be lower as well?) Yes, I think they will think faster in Chinese. Since we were born, we have been speaking in Chinese, and that's why we can speak Chinese more fluently, but when it comes to English, we have to think longer when we want to speak. Even if you want to practice English, there is a lack of exposure in Hong Kong because it is not our L1 after all.

**7. How would you rank the importance of Mandarin, English and Cantonese?**

In fact, more or less the same. But our school is an EMI, so I think English is stressed more in this school. But with the importance of Chinese and Mandarin, I think what the school is doing is that both will be stressed and promoted in school. I think in the context of school both English and Chinese are important, and their levels of importance are more or less the same...but it is just that since our school is an EMI, so English is still more important. We have activities of Mandarin as well, but it is still not widely used in schools. At least not as popular as English. (Do you think there is anything to do with the colonial history?) Well, yes perhaps that's the reason. We have more propaganda with the aim of promoting the use of English as well. Like we have got posters, saying that when you see teachers, you should address them in English. And we have got English speaking day, during which students have to use English to communicate with teachers. Students will use it most likely. But if both teachers and students are motivated to do so, a very positive environment can be provided to learn English as well. And I believe the school is very much in favour of it.

**8. Can you define mother-tongue?**

Although it's after handover, but we speak Cantonese, so I think it should be Cantonese. Mandarin is still mainly spoken by Mainland Chinese only.

**9. What do you think about code-mixing? Do you think it causes negative effects on students?**

For those students whose language abilities are low, code-mixing is just one of the reasons, and there are many other reasons as well. e.g. there are many other attractions, ICQ, emails, they use lots of abbreviations when writing English, and that's actually not standard English. They are affected by comic books, like Japanese...which affects their language developments. As for code-mixing, regarding the way it is formed, if the students' abilities are low, then they should be taught in Chinese, but they have to write English, so code-mixing is formed. It has something to do with the syllabus as well. Some people think that the syllabus is just too long, and actually it would be much better for particular subjects if the syllabus is shorter. The problem is that the language teachers use of English depends very much on the standards of students in class. If we have to ensure that every student understands the lessons, then we have to use Cantonese. But since they have to write in English, that is why code-mixing is used, otherwise they would not be able to understand. They will rely very much on teachers' explanations, rather than checking the meanings of terms. (Does code-mixing have negative effects on language proficiency?) Yes, sometimes if we speak in Cantonese, it is one format, which is different from the other format. And it is also a habit that is going to be passed on to the next generation.

**10. Are you in favour of bilingual education? what model do you prefer?**

I think two languages are equally important. Although English is the international language, but we still have to learn Chinese well. I think both should be implemented equally. It requires all subject teachers to put forward this kind of balanced education. Teachers can discuss about this in more detail, to discuss the ways on improving their languages. (So bilingual is not a bad thing?) I think it should require the whole school immersion. Actually it should not rely only on language teachers. Students would not be able to write in standard language if they are not taught through that language in other subjects. My comment is immersing the two languages equally in the schools so

that students can get exposure to both of them.

**11. Do you think the teaching medium has a relationship with the teaching and learning methods adopted?**

In fact, lots of time is spent on explanation, especially there are lots of attractions for students, and they would rather spend time on ICQ, or emails. They use less time on studying. That is why we would think of activities related to high technology. But for my subject, lots of time is spent on explanation. Because students' standards are not that high, and they are required to write in English. Anyway I spent lots of time on explaining the terms, which does restrict the kinds of activities that I could do in the class. So there are lots of after-school classes, and this reduces learner's interest to learn. If their English had been better, then more could be done, and more knowledge could be delivered which in a way would increase their interests.



## **Appendix XII**

Interview transcription for Teacher Trainer B

### **1. Are you in favour of mother-tongue education?**

Yes. Actually the existence of EMI education is due very much to historical and colonial reason. Important posts in government and other fields used to be filled with British, and people who could manage English well. But with the change of sovereignty, it's very obvious that we don't need to use EMI from a historical or political point of view, and according to lots of survey, CMI is more beneficial. However, the introduction of CMI education leads to social and parents' opposition. What we can see from the present state of affairs is that people are expected to have English proficiency, but what students could attain is general English proficiency rather than professional English. Hong Kong needs English speakers for professional purposes, and English remains a subject in CMI schools, and leads to the setting up of those schools for commercial use of English etc.

Actually immersion education is the way to deal with this problem. It produces curriculum that generates good proficiency in second language. Before 1997, English was viewed as a colonial language, but after 1997, it is viewed as an international language, and there's no colonial rationale. Both EMI and CMI curricula have different motives, and both serve their needs in Hong Kong. But labeling effect is the by-product because schools are forced to be streamed into either EMI or CMI. Educationally, English education in Hong Kong should be taught through immersion, but schools choose EMI out of pragmatic needs.

### **2. Mother-tongue education benefits students academically?**

If students are taught through the first language, students can benefit, but at the same time it doesn't mean that students cannot benefit if they are taught through English. It depends very much on the ability of the student. Some students couldn't learn anything at all if they are taught through L2, but there are some students who could

learn through L1 too. Provided that the students do not object to the learning through L2, then I don't see any need to stop them from exploring their potentials. There are such economic needs in Hong Kong, and there's a demand for part of the population to be proficient in English. But if we put economic need aside, assume that some students learn Japanese out of their own interests and motivation in learning a second language, then it is not a problem at all. But the present system just wouldn't give them the choice. (You mean students can learn better through L1, but do you mean that it has to depend on different students' abilities too?) Well, I should perhaps put it this way: no one denies that learning through L1 would at least refrain us from the language barriers, and also from the obstacles when it comes to thinking, since we know our L1 so well. Using L1 is more efficient and more natural too, and I believe it applies to everyone generally. But L2 curriculum is a totally different curriculum with different objectives, and this curriculum is not suitable for everyone.

### **3. Can linguistic knowledge be transferred? Does proficiency in L1 facilitate proficiency in L2?**

In fact, ED has mixed up education rationale and implementation rationale. Educationally L1 literacy helps L2 learning is widely covered in the literature. Naturally, if you already know one language, then you learn the other language, it does help a little bit. But there are some arguments about interference. I think both exist, but it depends on how you use it. But when it comes to implementation level, well, L1 might be assisting L2 learning, personally, I think help is greater than interference. If students are good at L1, are they necessarily good at L2 as well? Well, for me, lots of other issues are involved. It does depend on how English is taught in class? If teaching is not carried out promisingly, then students can't benefit either. When students are put under a second language learning environment, and then you ask me if his L1 benefits his L2, then perhaps it does. But when we talk about the present education system which lacks language environment, it depends on whether teachers can use the L1 as a learning resource to help enhancing L2. People in ED think that if they are good at L1, they should be good at L2, but how could they be better in Chinese? Only to strengthen them through lessons? Well, have they ever paid

any attention to the factor of language across curriculum? Students learn a subject through a language, so he's actually learning a language and a subject at the same time. Language and subject content have parallel development. But if student's language is to be developed, then it actually involves the cooperation of other teachers, and depends on how the teachers see the whole thing. (so you mean that it is in fact the problem of the whole school?) Yes. School is an organization for developing literacy. Schools functions as an institution to develop literacy. If we look from this way, then every teacher has the responsibility to teach language, and through language development, it also benefits thinking development and cognitive development.

**4. Do you think the standard of English is affected by the degree of exposure to the language?**

Actually it depends on how you define "being exposed" to English. If it only involves incomprehensible inputs, then it doesn't help at all. Many students have been exposed to English since kindergarten, but their English is not that good. Why is that? Because most of the inputs are incomprehensible, which doesn't help with the standard of English language. That's why I said the definition of "exposure" is crucial here. (can you elaborate more on the concept of what you mean by exposure?) The most important thing is that if a student wants to learn, then that thing should become part of the person, which involves the learning process of the student. If the knowledge has really gone through the thinking/learning process of the student, then it has become part of the person, and implies that he has really learned that, and vice versa. If exposure involves thinking process like this, then it would be better. But exposure is not the only factor. It doesn't mean anything if you are just exposed to the language. Learning a language also requires the use of the language. So there are inputs and outputs, quality inputs and quality outputs.

**5. What do you think about the mixed-code teaching model as a bilingual alternative in Hong Kong? How do you think it relates to the decline of standards?**

It depends on how you use mixed code. It occurs because textbooks were written in English, however, how could teachers explain to them in English, and particularly the English which they could understand? That's why they use both Chinese and English to explain concepts and texts. Well, teachers have to cope with lots of things like catching up with syllabus within a limit of time. Code-mixing is perhaps a faster way to attain these goals. I don't know if it is the problem of mixed-mode or if it is because of the teaching method. Teachers transmit knowledge to students, which doesn't involve active learning, then it wouldn't be effective even without the use of mixed code. If teachers use Chinese to explain, and don't help them with the understanding of English texts, then students have to rely on what they have learnt through lessons—most of the time they could only absorb 70% to 80% of what the teachers teach. Eventually they have to use English to answer questions in exams, to demonstrate understanding. If English isn't used to help them with understanding, what students usually do is rote memorization. Teaching and learning approach have more parts to play with the decline of standards. If mixed-mode exists out of pragmatic needs, then this kind of mixed-mode is not suitable. If there's no active learning at all, then it's not only the problem of mixed-mode, but also the problem of teaching strategy as well, since students cannot learn without active participation, without anything challenging them. What teachers do is just to translate English into Chinese, but when it comes to answer questions, how could you expect them to use English? This kind of mixed-mode is problematic. People would argue that only the educated class use mixed-mode. Well, in a way it is not problematic. Perhaps I should say that if a person is good at both Chinese and English, and he wants to play around with both languages and use it as a means of communication, it's not a problem at all. But students cannot handle both languages well, then using mixed-mode is the source of the problem. So in a way mixed-mode is not a problem, but it depends on who uses it, and how it's being used. If you ask me to speak totally in Chinese, it would be a problem for me. But using it as a teaching medium, then it's the real question. If the objective of schools is to develop both Chinese and English, and if teachers use

Chinese only to explain English texts, but then don't help them further with understanding the texts back in English, then the objective isn't reached.

The arguments for this are that it helps students understand the texts. However, if this is just used as a means for transmissive learning, then how much could students benefit is questionable.

**6. What do you think about the level of importance of Mandarin, Cantonese and English in Hong Kong? Can you give me some reasons for your choice?**

Well, it depends on how you view it. Actually government doesn't necessarily have to run in English only because of the change of era. The running, and administration of the government relied solely on English in the past, but according to the political point of view, it doesn't have to be after 1997, in fact it can be solely run by Chinese now. But the problem is that it's not practical. Financially speaking, Mandarin is important in terms of China trade, which has been flourishing recently, but at the same time English is important for international business, and for communicating with other countries. After all, the status of English is still high because the majority of people, who have gone through the colonial rule for such a long time, have some kinds of irrational preference for English. They never consider how important it is. Actually parents still prefer to send their children to EMI schools, would love their children to go through English medium training, and they still don't think Mandarin is important to their kids. I think this can be understood in a sense, since people's minds and concepts are accumulated through one's history and past experiences too. One's past cannot be discarded and the history should count too.

**7. Difference in teaching methods with regard to different medium of instruction**

Well, if we talk about immersion teaching, if proper training is provided, then there can be lots of varieties too. The problem is that, I'd rather doubt the effectiveness of Chinese medium if teachers still rely on the transmissive teaching method. Well, some of them might have greater varieties but some of them do not. It does depend to a

large extent on proper teaching training, and the teaching strategy, rather than the teaching medium.

### **Appendix XIII**

Interview transcription for Policy-Maker A

**1. Do you think mother-tongue education is the major determinant of academic performance? Can you elaborate?**

It depends on language abilities. For example, in Hong Kong, most of the primary six students are not able to learn in English, they have not got the ability. In fact, it is not just an observation. In the 1980s, early 80s to early 90s, we conducted research projects which has yielded similar results. In the 80s, a series of research were carried out. Three or four researches were carried out and some of them focused on the primary six or lower form high school students, and we found that round 1/3 students were able to learn through EMI. What we mean by being able to learn through EMI is that the academic performance/results of this group of students are very similar to the rest who were learning through mother-tongue, and there wasn't much difference since. That is how we define them as being able to learning effectively through English. We had similar research in the 90s, and we did not only use English, but also Chinese and the result was very similar to that we carried out in the 80s, which is only 1/3 students are able to learn through EMI. Hong Kong is unique as it has the historical background of being a colony, and that is why many schools claimed themselves to be EMI schools, but most primary schools teach in Chinese. More than 99%, of course excluding international schools. Our surveys reveal that those students who are weak in languages cannot learn anything at all in schools. Their English is weak. Actually in Hong Kong, the correlation between the English and Chinese standard is very high. If they are good in their first language, which is Chinese, then their English will be good as well. If their L1 is not good, their L2 is poor. But of course there are exceptions for those who come from China. Although they are good in Chinese, but due to their lack of exposure to English in China, their standards of L2 are weak as well. But for most of the Hong Kong students, only 1/3 of them are able to learn effectively via EMI in their lower forms. But when it comes to upper forms,

things might be different. But not many researches have been done to look into upper form students. From F.4 onwards, their language standards are generally much better according to observation. That is why our policy only targets on lower form students, except that they can prove that they can learn via EMI (the 3 criteria), otherwise, they would need to go through the mother-tongue education first.

## **2. What do you think is the impact of the mother-tongue education on English language proficiency?**

What we mean by mother-tongue education is that students use their most familiar language to learn, including use Cantonese to do homework, for exams, textbooks. Cantonese is a means of communication, and in fact, our aim of putting forward mother-tongue education is that we hope students can understand the content of the subjects better, the main aim is not actually to put up the language standards. It is just to help students learn effectively. When we are carrying out the programme, lots of other aspects of learning have been strengthened as well. For instance, native speakers in teaching English, to carry out the extensive reading schemes (which include both Chinese reading and English reading), and also lots of things have been done. The things I have mentioned above are only for reinforcing the language standards of students, and mother-tongue education is a totally different thing. It is separated from the language-strengthening programme. Mother-tongue education aims at learning content-based subjects like science. Students used to memorize a set of terms, say, biology. Students did not understand what they mean but what they need to do was to memorize them. And at that time, say 10 to 20 years ago, not many people had the chance to go to high schools. Many years ago, only ½ student got the chance to study high schools. But now nearly all can finish high schools. In the past only the elite class got the chance for high school education, and that is why it did not matter what language they learned through, but when we talk about universal education, this is one of the problems we should help them to get over.



**3. What do you think about the correlation between the exposure to English and the standard of it?**

Well, exposure is very important and good for English learning. But what we are discussing is that Hong Kong cannot provide this kind of exposure. People like to compare Hong Kong and Singapore in terms of the language. But for Singapore, Singaporeans are able to master the skills of English to the level of daily communication. But Hong Kong students, apart from learning in the classes, they are not watching English channels, they do not even have the exposure. The other important factor is: teachers. Many Hong Kong teachers are actually not able to teach effectively in English. Therefore, if students in Hong Kong are sent abroad, being exposed to English speaking environment in class and in everyday life, then this kind of immersion is very effective. The case for Hong Kong students is that they don't have the threshold ability: they do not understand no matter how hard you try to explain to them in English. Whether teachers really speak pure English in classes, and if students have the ability to follow, we really doubt. And even if they can do that, it is inside classroom only. (Will the lack of exposure to English and the use of mother-tongue education pose a problem in terms of the supply of proficient English speakers?) Well, in fact, many successful people from Hong Kong are from CMI schools. What I believe is that to learn a language well, or to use that language to learn well is a totally different thing. If you say that you can just learn well through a particular language, I won't agree. But of course if you have a good environment, exposing to good English, then it is a very good exposure. But can we do that in the context of Hong Kong? Do Hong Kong students have this kind of ability? It is really doubtful. Actually, according to our surveys, students have to attain a certain threshold level when they want to learn via EMI. If they can't do that, they won't benefit at all. So it is all or nothing. What we are doing is that lower forms use CMI, but when it comes to F.4 onwards, schools can choose the suitable MOI for students according to their abilities. Then when it comes to A-levels, we will loosen our control and sanction about the MOI issue. In fact, in F.6 and F.7, students are not supposed to learn through textbooks. They are supposed to have the ability to look for textbooks themselves, and so we won't exert much control on the MOI for them. For lower form

students, what we see is that the mixed-code teaching, which was so popular in schools, has actually hindered the development of their language.

**4. Do you think code-mixing has detrimental effects on students? Can you comment on it?**

Mixed code is very popular. And what we reckon is that it has put a hindrance to the development of language learning of students. They can't reach either ends of proficiencies of Chinese and English. If you interview teacher who have the experience of marking HKCEE papers you will be amazed to find how horrible their English is. They fail to write the whole composition in English, so they have inserted Chinese words into the passage. For Chinese as well, they use non-standard Chinese, e.g. Cantonese. So this culture is generated, the local culture is too strong, and is gaining importance. We don't allow mixed code, but you should be aware that we don't encourage mixed code from F.1 to F.5 levels, but when both parties have developed their languages to a certain level, then I don't oppose the use of mixed code. It does not mean that when I am using mixed code to talk to you, then I will write in mixed code as well. But for students, if they have developed mixed code as a habit, then they cannot learn standard English nor standard Chinese. So when students are in such a crucial stage of language development, I don't want the teachers to ruin them through mixed code. But for A-level students, the control isn't so important. But of course we don't encourage mixed code anyway. It was too popular in the past. But now we want to reduce it to the minimum. (Do you regard mixed code as the main reason for pulling down students' standards?) Well, there are two sides of the coin. Some people think that mixed code is a very effective way of learning, to teach as well. Mixed code is a very effective language in Hong Kong. There are some words which we can't translate into Chinese, like the word *modem*, which I came across from an article. Hong Kong people call it *modem*, mainland Chinese use a different term. Actually it is good to carry on by saying just 'modem' in conversations. But when the phenomenon turns out to be that this kind of method affects students in terms of effective learning and language proficiency, then I think it does not worth it. For F.6-7 students, mixed code does not do much harm to them and so it is okay for

them to use in their conversations or even as a MOI. But when the junior form students use this, then it does not worth taking the risk of ruining their language foundation.

In fact, people say that we are streaming students, about 1/3 of them learn via EMI, and we are based on one criteria: if they are able to learn via EMI. But the society thinks it is a kind of streaming, and results in labelling effect. Hong Kong actually copies from other countries in the aspect of bilingual education. We are not totally opposed to English education, but we should stay with pure language until students attain the particular threshold level. We do not rule out EMI teaching. In fact, only 1/3 students can learn via EMI, and it does not make any points and sense to force the rest to use EMI as well. The policy that we are talking about was carried out in 1998, and before that, actually we adopted non-intervention policy, though we encouraged mother-tongue education. But the result in terms of promoting mother-tongue was not satisfactory, and the by-product is mixed-code education. If we let the schools choose by themselves, they would claim themselves to be EMI, even though they are not qualified for that in terms of students' abilities. Teachers use Chinese to explain English textbooks, or mixed code. That is why government has been spending more than 10 years to put forward mother-tongue education. However, the result wasn't satisfactory, and so it has resulted in the compulsory enforcement in 1998, and schools were forced to follow.

### **5. Should Mandarin be used to replace Cantonese as the MOI?**

Personally, I am totally in favour of it. But generally speaking, the Mandarin of Hong Kong students is poor as well, and perhaps I should say as poor as their English standards. So I don't think students are prepared for Mandarin education. But we won't rule out the fact that some years later, say, a decade later, Mandarin as the MOI can be introduced. Mandarin has been introduced as a core subject, so, given time, students can learn via Mandarin. But the other problem is teacher. Are they proficient enough to teach students through Mandarin? Unlike China which has been introducing

Mandarin for so many years, Hong Kong is different as Mandarin has only been introduced.

**6. What is the future trend of the MOI issue? Can you give me some guidance on it?**

Yes, we are thinking that perhaps teachers can teach some subjects in Chinese and some in English, but you should note that we are not talking about division by class. If teachers are available, and students have the ability, then we would allow some subjects to be taught in English. But it is not approved yet. (in this case, will the division between CMI schools and EMI schools would be blurry?) Actually we did not expect or we don't aim at setting up this kind of division between EMI and CMI streams. It is not the aim of our policy. Our policy is based on whether students can learn through a particular language. Hong Kong has a unique background, so if students can learn through English, then why not let them? But now teachers have to be benchmarked, to be assessed if they are able to teach through English. And we would like to do this benchmarking test as soon as possible. Students' abilities will be left to the schools to judge.

**Appendix XIV**

## Implementation schedule of the MOI policy

Timing	Action
June to August 1997	Guidance to be finalised, taking account of views from consultation with BoE, EC and SCOLAR further consulted.
August 1997	Vetting committee and appeals committee to be established
September 1997	ED to issue circular on guidance to schools ED to notify schools of the MIGA information of their S1 intake in the past three years
Late September to mid-October 1997	Schools to apply for use of English as MOI and to justify their case on specific grounds where necessary
October to December 1997	ED inspectors to visit schools as necessary and gather information  Vetting committee to consider applications
Early January 1998	ED to notify applicant schools of decision
January 1998	Appeals committee to consider appeal cases if any, with decision on all appeal cases finalised by end of January
April/May 1998	ED to publish the appropriate MOI for each school in the SSPA Secondary School List to parents of P6 students
September 1998	Full implementation of the MOI guidance

(Hong Kong Education Department 1997c p.8)

**Appendix XV**

**Evaluation Study  
on the Implementation of  
Medium of Instruction Grouping  
in Secondary Schools  
(1994/95- 1996/97)**

Education Department

February 1998

## Abstract

### **The Study**

The study was carried out in response to the Education Commission Report No.4 (Education Commission Hong Kong 1990), which recommended that Secondary 1 entrants be grouped in terms of their ability to learn in Chinese or English and that regular reviews be conducted to monitor progress and to consider whether stronger measures may be required to achieve the objective of encouraging Chinese-medium instruction and minimizing mixed-code teaching. As a result, the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment has been implemented since 1994/95 school year under which all secondary schools are advised on the appropriate medium of instruction to adopt, based on the language proficiency of their Secondary 1 intakes. The major objective of this study was to gauge the effects of the different modes of teaching medium on the academic achievement of pupils. 219 target schools were divided into seven groups based on the mode of instruction and 56 of these schools with a total of 287 classes were sampled for the study. Each pupil of these classes was tested in one subject from Chinese, English or Mathematics and another subject from Science, Geography or History by matrix sampling. The cohort of pupils was tested again around the same time in 1996 and 1997 when they were in Secondary 2 and Secondary 3 respectively, so that a three-year effect could be drawn up.

### **Major Findings**

2. Based on the analyses of the test results of the six subjects, it is found that mother-tongue teaching helps pupils achieve value-added performance in the subjects. This study does not support the general belief that attending an English-medium-instruction (EMI) school would help pupils achieve higher proficiency in the subject English Language. In general, pupils taught in English, especially those attending non-complying EMI schools, encounter a language barrier in expressing what they have learnt in the language loaded subjects, the subject History in particular.

3. Findings of the Questionnaire on Actual Medium of Instruction Used revealed that in teaching and learning, the medium of instruction used in non-complying EM1 schools is different from that of complying EM1 schools. For the non-complying schools, mixed code teaching is generally found. For the complying EM1 schools, English is the main teaching medium.

4. Overall findings of this study support the policy stated in the Education Commission Report No.4 that the majority of pupils will benefit from continuing their education at the secondary level through the Chinese medium of instruction. Pupils, in particular those of lower academic ability, would learn more effectively and achieve better results if Chinese is adopted.

### **Recommendations**

5. The findings should be publicized widely so that parents and teachers are aware of the educational benefits of Chinese-medium teaching.



**Appendix XVI**

**Research on Change of Medium of  
Instruction in Secondary Schools**

Education Department September 1994

### Abstract

The Education Commission, in its Report No.1, encouraged secondary schools to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction. A study was carried out to examine the effects of change of medium of instruction to Chinese on the academic performance of students, to study the learning process and related variables in schools adopting Chinese as the medium of instruction, and to establish the relation between students' performance and the language environment in school.

Preparatory work began in the 1987/88 school year. Eleven Anglo-Chinese schools with over 50% of subjects switched to the Chinese medium were selected as the experimental group. Eleven schools were matched as the control group. Initially 4543 SI students in the 1988/89 school year were involved in this longitudinal study which tracked the students from SI to S3.

Students' performance in Chinese, English, Mathematics, and three content-based subjects, i.e. Science, History and Geography, were measured. For Mathematics and the content-based subjects, there were three language versions of test papers: Chinese version for the experimental group, English and bilingual versions for the control group. Because of matching constraints, not all participating schools were tested on Mathematics and the three content-based subjects. The students' learning process and related variables were measured by using the Learning Process Questionnaires designed by Professor J.B. Biggs from the University of Hong Kong. Questionnaires for principals and teachers were also administered to measure their views on the choice of teaching medium. In addition, interviews with teachers and videotaping of classroom teaching were conducted to identify the actual medium used in the teaching process.

### Medium Index

It is too simplistic to define the language environment in a school by merely referring to the medium of instruction the school claimed to have adopted. In this study, three factors were included to describe the language environment in school: (i). proportion of periods taught in Chinese to the total number of periods, i.e. C/T ratio,

(ii) the attitude of teachers towards the use of Chinese/English in their teaching, and  
 (iii) the perception of students towards the teaching medium used in class. The C/T ratio was reflected in schools' annual feedback to the Education Department while the other two factors were measured through the administration of questionnaires to teachers and students.

By grouping the measures of these three factors into a single score, a medium index (M.I.) ranging from "1" to "5" was devised to describe the language environment of a school. M.I. = 1 means that the school language environment is mainly English, while M.I. = 5 indicates that the school language environment is mainly Chinese.

However, this procedure led to inequality of ability particularly in the group of M.I. = 5. There were two schools in this group where the teachers needed to use Chinese as much as possible because of the poor English competence of the students: those schools were in the lower school banding groups. Attempts were made to equate the groups but this was only partially successful.

### Effects of Change of Medium of Instruction on the Academic Performance of Students

Except in the case of English, where students in the control schools performed better than their counterparts in the experimental schools, performance of experimental schools in all other subjects by S3 was either equal in the subject of Mathematics or superior in the subjects of Chinese, Science, History and Geography.

When the results were looked at across the five medium groups, making allowance for unequal distributions of ability, the same findings were obtained: performance in English was the best in an English environment, performance in the subject of mathematics was ambiguous due to unequal ability distributions, but performance in all other subjects, i.e. Chinese, Science, History and Geography was the best in a Chinese language environment.

### Relation between Learning Process of Students and School Language Environment

When the students' learning processes were investigated, it was found that in a school language environment which was more Chinese than English, students generally were more 'deeply' or academically motivated. They were more likely to commit themselves to learning and to attempt to understand their school tasks rather than just to meet their teachers' requirements. They also tended to maximize their understanding by using various high level cognitive strategies to handle their school tasks. Their counterparts in the English medium schools who were not competent in English, however, tended to learn by rote memorizing, focusing only on selected details. They were more extrinsically motivated and more anxious in their studies. They had to organize their time and resources in order to cope with their learning in the English medium. Those students who were competent in English, on the other hand, were as likely to use high level cognitive strategies in learning as were their counterparts taught in the Chinese medium.

### Effect of the Language Medium of Textbook on Students' Academic Performance

Students were found to be in an advantageous situation when they learned the language-loaded subjects through textbooks written in Chinese. The use of Chinese greatly reduces the language barrier experienced by them. This not only motivates them to learn but also facilitates their understanding of the subject matter.

### Implications for Schools on the Choice of Medium of Instruction

The results clearly suggest that students of low English competence should not be placed in a language environment which is predominantly English. Otherwise, they are likely to have poor motivation and to apply superficial learning strategies like rote memorization to deal with the secondary curriculum, especially in studying language-loaded subjects. To enable these students to have better academic performance, it is advisable for schools to teach them through the Chinese medium.

As teachers play an important part in shaping the language environment in schools, it is recommended that schools should adopt a single-medium approach in class-

teaching.

Appendix XVII

Newspaper cutting A:

**東方日報** 1998年3月14日 星期六

# 14中學得直准英語授課

## 六校敗訴擬循法律途徑翻案



● 聖安當女書院校長叫學生祈禱，希望政府反省標榜英文學校的錯誤。

**【本報訊】**二十間爭取採用英語教學的中學提出上訴的結果昨日公布，其中十四間上訴得直，餘下六間仍維持採用中文名額行列之外，部分上訴失敗的學校昨日即時在校園內拉起橫額抗議，並表示會尋求法律途徑推翻決定。

有關上訴結果已提交教育統籌局，並獲政府完全接納。港府重申，推行母語教學的政策不會改變。上訴失敗及已規定改用母語教學的中學，必須由今年九月起使用母語向中一學生授課，若有學校不按照指定語言授課，將會受到懲罰。

隨著教學語言指引上訴委員會昨日公布有十四間中學上訴得直（見附表），全港英文中學的數目亦增至一百一十四間。而於新學年要改用母語教學的中學則增加六間。

上訴委員會主席張信剛昨日表示，委員會在過去七個星期逐一對上訴個案作研究，在作出決定時，除考慮教學語言指引所訂的三項條件，包括學生能力、教師能力及學校配套措施，但委員會亦認為不可只考慮此三項條件，因為其中規定英文中學必須有八成半學生被評為可用英文授課的準則並不科學，故委員會亦對這個準則作彈性處理。

至於委員會於寬有關標準是否對未有上訴的三百間中學不公平，張信剛對此多番迴避作答，只表示教育不只是學英文。「英語教學不是獎品，母語教學也不是懲罰」。

張信剛又認為社會上對於推行母語教學的反響非常情緒化，他相信經過幾年後回頭，可能只是蘇東坡的名句：「也無風雨也無晴」。他認為大部分學生用母語學習會更有效。

教育統籌局局長王永平昨日就上訴結果重申，學校必須用指定教學語言教授學科，他強調按照指引只有預科能申請使用其他教學語言。

### 十四間學校上訴得直准以英語授課

- ① 迦密中學(資助)
- ② 長沙灣天主教英文中學(資助)
- ③ 宣道會鄭榮之中學(資助)
- ④ 賽馬會體藝中學(資助)
- ⑤ 羅定邦中學(資助)
- ⑥ 妙法寺劉金龍中學(資助)
- ⑦ 瑪利諾神父教會學校(資助)
- ⑧ 聖母書院(資助)
- ⑨ 保祿六世書院(資助)
- ⑩ 天主教康德英文書院(資助)
- ⑪ 順德聯誼總會李兆基中學(資助)
- ⑫ 聖類斯中學(資助)
- ⑬ 聖士提反書院(資助)
- ⑭ 循道學校(資助)



● 聖安當女書院學生在校內張貼抗議標語。(路透社傳真)

### 教署將加強視學

教育署長余黎青萍昨日表示，教署會加強視學，確保學校按照指定教學語言授課。她表示，若發現有違規情況，會應用《教育條例》第八十二條賦予教署署長的權力，向學校下達行政指令，要求校方改善情況，否則會撤換校董，甚至終止其辦學權。

為支援母語教學，港府將於下學年期用逾五億元，為母語教學中學提供額外資源，優先設立多媒體學習中心、優先考慮語文基金申請，每校增聘兩名英文教師（包括一名外籍英語教師），提供一筆過津貼電腦文書和購置器材，並增加經常性津貼以購置教具和圖書。語文基金又會撥款推行校本英語進修課程、設立英語坊，及設立中文教材支援中心。

在昨日的結果公布後，其中上訴失敗的聖安當女書院副校長邱興華表示，會諮詢法律意見以決定跟進行動。慈幼小學中學語言問題小組今晚召開緊急大會，商討對策，有家長希望申請司法覆核，推翻當局的決定。

對於有學校表示會尋求法律途徑翻案，余黎青萍回應稱教署會正面面對訴訟，但希望校方能繼續及承認對學生造成的壓力。余黎青萍又宣布，下學年起所有官立中學均用母語教授公民科，他否認是由於有壓力要求官校帶頭推行母語，只是認為公民科內容包括中國傳統文化，用母語教授較合適。

(Unnamed reporter from the Oriental Daily 1998)

Extract A:

The result for the appeal for EMI teaching was released and announced yesterday [13<sup>th</sup> March 1998]. Of all the twenty schools which appealed for the use of English as the teaching medium, fourteen of them succeeded. Some of the remaining six that failed

in the appeal protested by displaying banners everywhere in schools, and some even claimed that they would seek for legal assistance to overthrow the decision of the Education Department.

**Extract B:**

The president of the MOI appeal committee, Mr. Cheung Shun Kong said, “ the committee has investigated deeply into every case and every school that appealed for the use of English medium for teaching. Apart from the requirements listed in the MIGA, which are students’ abilities, staff’s abilities and learning resources provided by schools, the committee has also taken other aspects into consideration, since the criteria that states that ‘the EMI schools should have no less than 85% of F.1 intake of students who are competent in learning English’ is not based on scientific basis.” Whether the whole assessment criteria is unfair to the rest of the CMI schools which did not appeal, Mr.Cheung did not answer the question directly and replied by saying that EMI education is not a gift, and CMI education is not a punishment.

## Appendix XVIII

Newspaper cutting B:



(Unnamed reporter from the Apple Daily 1998)

Extract C:

“Chi Yau School has a good reputation. I moved from Kowloon to get my child into the school. The Education Department has been very unfair to children, since they are obviously depriving them of the right to choose, and hindering them from becoming useful people when they grow up. When it comes to tertiary education and work in the society in the future, it is still English-oriented. Can this trend of language orientation be changed?” said Mrs. Chan whose son is studying in a ‘forced-to-be CMI school. Regarding the failure in appeal, she commented with disappointment, “I can’t believe it.”.



**Extract D:**

Another parent, Mrs.Lo, looked pale and was furious when she knew that the school that her son studies at failed in the EMI appeal. She said with a shaking tone, "I am very angry. I got one son only, and I have devoted all my energy and effort to nurture him. I want him to be a useful person, not to be a fool!" She continued that her son was in primary five, and the school has always been English-based. With the switch in the teaching medium to Chinese at secondary level, she is afraid that her son could not catch up and adjust to CMI education. With the lack of support of English, she is also worried that her son's knowledge in English would retrogress. When it gets to higher education which is dominated by English, her son would be trapped in between.

## Appendix XIX

Newspaper cutting C

本港新聞 蘋果日報

# 不滿被排「英中」外 全校齊見記者 劉金龍中學師生炮轟教署

**共二千學生家長簽名**

【本報訊】「英語中學名單」餘波未了，教育署至今共接獲兩宗落選學校的上訴，而多間學校亦繼續「抗爭」，包括家長自行召開大會，聯同全校師生、家長見記者，更有家長揚言要對特首董建華和教育署長余黎青萍。

被拒於英語授課學校名單內的屯門妙法寺劉金龍中學，昨聯同全校師生召開記者會，指教署的評核制度不公平，被「標籤」為次等學校，打擊全校師生士氣。

他們已收集得逾二千個學生及家長簽名，準備在稍後向董建華遞交簽名，表達不滿。

該校昨日羅列過往學生公開試成績、大學入學率、校外比賽獎項，以及由現職外籍教師，證明學校有能力以英語授課。校長梁剛強烈批評教署評核制度「錯誤、荒謬」，只參考中一入學成績，而忽略中五及中七生在學校受教的成果。

**指教署當學生荷蘭豬**

梁剛稱，過往該校平均每年收到三百多份中一入學申請，但本年度

之不。學生會代表林麗珊亦謂，全體學生為學校感不值，召開全校諮詢大會後，決定收集學生及家長簽名，稍後交到特首辦。她重申他們並非反對母語教學，只認為教署今次制度令家長為學校分級，造成「標籤」效應。

**慈幼小學家長亦緊張**

另外，有適用英語教學學生比例跟規定相差不足一百分點的學校校長，在「英語中學」名單公布前，致函評審委員會主席鄭慕智，要求須公正處理評審。

沙田保良局胡忠中學校校長陳玉楷強調，事實證明確有未及標準的學校獲准以英語授課。他質疑現時「英語中學」究竟有多少間真能全面英語教學。

他呼籲家長及校方團結起來，向教

一位梁姓家長更激動地表示，知悉該校未能入選感到非常憤怒，多天來寢食不安，因其不懂英文而影響他在紀律部隊的晉升，令他時常警惕子女要注意英文。

他呼籲家長及校方團結起來，向教

將來能否升讀英文中學備受矚目。

梁鑑章攝



屯門妙法寺劉金龍中學副校長利



妙法寺劉金龍中學昨召開記者會，而全校師生、家長等亦一同出席，校內各處亦掛滿不滿評審的英文橫額，例畢業生成績優異等。

(Unnamed reporter from the Apple Daily 1997)

Extract E:

They [The school head and the teaching staff of one of the secondary schools that was not qualified for EMI teaching] have collected the signatures of more than 2000

students and parents and are ready to submit to the Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, to express their discontent. They have listed the results of the past public examinations, the rate of university entries, trophies they have won in the inter-schools competitions, and put forward the fact that the inclusion of native English speakers as teachers can actually prove that the school is qualified for EMI education. The principal of the school, Mr. Leung Kong severely criticised the MIGA system devised by the Education Department as “making mistakes and is ridiculous”, because it only takes secondary one intake into consideration and has neglected the value-added factor throughout the course of secondary education.

**Extract F:**

A parent with the surname Leung strongly expressed his anger after he was informed that the school could not get into the list of EMI teaching. He couldn't sleep or eat well because of this, saying that he has met lots of obstacles in terms of promotion in the career path because of his poor English standard. He always warned his children of the importance of English because of his own experience.

## **Appendix XX**

Eight strategies regarding skilful use of L1 in L2 classroom

Lin (2000) has devised eight strategies regarding skilful use of L1 and L2 classroom.

They are summarised as follows:

1. A teacher can strategically use L1 when he/she 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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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 teachers' 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.

(pp.188-189)

**Appendix XXI**Population<sup>1</sup> aged five and over by usual language, 1991, 1996 and 2001

Usual language	1991		1996		2001	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Cantonese	4583322	88.7	5196240	88.7	5726972	89.2
Putonghua [Mandarin]	57577	1.1	65892	1.1	55410	0.9
Other Chinese Dialects	364694	7.0	340222	5.8	352562	5.5
English	114084	2.2	184308	3.1	203598	3.2
Others	49232	1.0	73879	1.3	79197	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>5168909</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5860541</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6417739</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department 2001b)

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<sup>1</sup> The figures exclude mute persons.

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