

Faculty of Education The University of Hong Kong

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A bi-annual newsletter which keeps fellow educators, alumni and friends informed about Faculty developments and topical educational issues.
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Mark Bray

It is a great pleasure to welcome readers to this inaugural issue of *Education Matters*, the newsletter of the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong.

One stimulus to the production of the newsletter has been the restructuring of the Faculty. On 1 September 2002, the Faculty of Education moved to a unitary (non-Departmental) structure. This enables us to build on our strengths and to achieve our goals more efficiently and effectively.

In the new structure, the Dean is assisted by five Associate Deans. Their portfolios cover Centres & Outreach; Facilities & Administration; Learning & Teaching; Research; and Speech & Hearing Sciences.



The main body of the Faculty operates on a matrix system, with Programmes on the one hand and Divisions on the other. In the current academic year, the Faculty has 2,379 students, of whom 709 are undergraduates and 1,670 are postgraduates. The Faculty has nearly

100 academic staff, who are grouped into six Divisions.

The Faculty has a strong reputation in both teaching and research. Among our academic staff are three University Teaching Fellows, who have been recognised and honoured by the University as a whole for the quality of their work. We also have major achievements in publication and research funding. During the last academic year, academic staff published 12 books, 131 articles in refereed journals, and 44 chapters in books; and the value of grants won by Faculty members exceeded HK\$9 million.

We are proud of our links with the local community, with mainland China, and internationally. More information on the Faculty can be found on our website: www.hku.hk/education. We invite you to visit the website, and to get in touch with us electronically, by telephone and/or in person.

From left:

Wendy Lin, Faculty Secretary;
Tse Shek-kam, Associate Dean (Facilities & Administration);
Tara Whitehill, Associate Dean (Speech & Hearing Sciences);
Colin Evers, Associate Dean (Research);
Mark Bray, Dean;
Nirmala Rao, Associate Dean (Centres & Outreach);
Nancy Law, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching)



Variations in learning and teaching across cultures are a rich goldmine for education research. The Faculty has been conducting a number of research studies in the area and reaping fruitful insights. Among them are the Hong Kong Component of the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Secondary Analysis of the TIMSS-R Data for Hong Kong led by Frederick Leung.

Mathematics Teaching and Learning Frederick Leung

East Asian students have consistently out-performed their counterparts around the world in international comparisons of mathematics achievement, and my research interest has been to investigate factors which account for such achievements. So far, findings on variables at the country, education system, and curriculum levels failed to explain the achievement. Furthermore, East Asian students were found to hold rather negative attitudes towards mathematics (Leung 2002).

For teacher variables, Ma (1999) found that Shanghai elementary school teachers possessed a “profound understanding of fundamental mathematics” compared with US teachers, and this profound understanding has enabled them to invoke rich and relevant pedagogy. In cooperation with Park (2002), a small-scale replication of Ma’s study was conducted in Hong Kong and Korea. It found that although Hong Kong and Korean teachers were reported to be teaching in a procedural manner, they had a sound understanding of the subject matter. However, compared with their Shanghai

counterparts, they lacked a profound understanding of mathematics, and they did not possess a rich theoretical foundation of mathematics teaching.

Recent international studies have focussed on classroom teaching itself through analysis of video-taped lessons. I am currently involved in two such major studies: the TIMSS-R Video



Study (TRVS), and the Learners’ Perspective Study (LPS). TRVS is a “video survey” of seven countries where a random sub-sample of 100 schools from the TIMSS-R sample were chosen, and one lesson per school was video-taped. The aim is to characterize national norms of teaching practice, and the primary focus is the teacher. LPS, in contrast, documents students’ perspective over several lessons of the same classroom in nine countries, utilizing a technology which combines videotape data with participants’ re-constructions of classroom



events. Classroom taping using three video cameras is immediately followed by video-stimulated recall interviews with selected students to obtain their re-constructions of the lesson and the meanings which particular events held for them personally.

Results of these classroom studies may throw light on the success of the East Asian students. But more importantly, the initial results show that teaching is very much a cultural activity. Effective teaching may not be transferable, and may not even be meaningful in another culture. As Clarke (2003) commented, these studies serve more as a “window on national mathematical aspirations and pedagogy” rather than “some educational sporting event”.

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Teaching excellence is a top priority for educational institutions -- primary, secondary and post-secondary. The Faculty of Education is devoted to ensuring and researching teaching excellence. This section will report on two major innovative teaching methodologies. Paul Fletcher, former head of the erstwhile Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, discusses problem-based learning, a learning innovation which our Faculty was the first local education faculty to adopt. On the opposite page, Ki Wing-wah, project leader of Dragonwise, introduces computer-assisted learning and teaching of Chinese characters.

Problem-based Learning in the Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences

Paul Fletcher

Speech therapy students are exposed to a multidisciplinary curriculum, involving linguistics, psychology, medical sciences and communication disorders. These have to be integrated into a demanding clinical practicum. Over the last two decades, the knowledge base in each of the subject areas has burgeoned. A common reaction to this information explosion, is to include more and more topics in the various strands that make up the curriculum, and to deliver it almost entirely through lecture courses. The students are then left to resolve the disparate strands of their academic work on their own. A promising solution to these twin difficulties of an expanding knowledge base, and the requirement for integration, is to change the mode of curriculum delivery to problem-based learning (PBL).

The major objective of PBL is to make *learning* rather than *teaching* explicitly the centre of the university student's educational experience. It is important to emphasise that PBL does not do away with didactic teaching entirely. But its role becomes ancillary. In the BSc (Speech and Hearing Sciences), six of the student's nine timetabled core hours per week are taken up by two three-hour tutorials. The tutorials are discussion-based explorations of 'problems' - statements of clinical cases, carefully crafted to require the students to bring information from all the contributing

disciplines to bear on the issues raised by the problem. The students' discussion of the learning areas inherent in the problem is informed by set readings. Tutorial groups consist of up to eight students, with a member of staff as tutor/facilitator. The development of critical thinking is a major objective of the tutorials.

The Division first implemented PBL five years ago. Over that period we have identified benefits for both students and staff. Students become used, from very early in their University career, to self-directed learning, and to working in teams. Via the discussions in the tutorials they get a good deal more practice in English than would be the case with a largely lecture-delivered curriculum. They acquire a facility in the construction of arguments from evidence, and they receive immediate feedback in the tutorials from their peers and from the tutor. Staff welcome the opportunity for much more individual contact with students. The small-group tutorials and associated written work afford them a continuous perspective on student learning processes, in contrast to the one-shot view afforded by the end-of-module assessment of a more traditional curriculum delivery.

There are drawbacks, certainly, with the most obvious being the effort involved in the initial design and implementation of the PBL curriculum, and the recurrent resource implications of small group teaching. But in our view and experience, the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages.



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The Dragonwise Project: Using ICT to Enhance the Teaching and Learning of Chinese Characters

Ki Wing-wah
and
the Dragonwise Team

It is a common (mis)belief that the learning of Chinese characters is extremely difficult and that the only way to master them is by means of repetitively and mechanically copying the characters one after another. The Dragonwise team believes there are other alternatives. One of them is to teach Chinese characters by purposefully highlighting the underlying regularity of the components in the characters with the provision of a meaningful context to students. As an example, the characters for 螞蟻(ant), 蜜蜂(bee), 蝴蝶(butterfly) and 蜻蜓(dragonfly) can be more effectively taught in a cluster since they all share the common component 虫(insect), and these characters can be further put into a text centering around a story of a bug's life since all these characters are related to "insect" in meaning.

Around this idea of componential understanding of Chinese characters, and other kinds of structural understanding of the language as well, the team has been producing and revising generation after generation of software for almost a decade, which has been disseminated to all primary schools



in Hong Kong in the form of CD-ROMs and via web-sites, with the support of the Language Fund and the Quality Education Fund. Numerous research papers also have been published locally and internationally.

At present, the team is taking a closer look at what actually happens in the classrooms. The Dragonwise II project has been carried out since 2002 in close collaboration with 15 local primary schools, with teacher empowerment and classroom practice being its major foci. The software has been re-designed as small learning objects that can be flexibly incorporated into the day-to-day instructional practice of teachers. Furthermore, teachers are given support to play a prominent role in its development. They analyse the mistakes their students make, and suggest ideas on the content and interactions they need for the learning objects. With this new collaborative model, research, professional development and classroom practice are brought close together, to deepen understanding about how technology can advance Chinese language education.

(<http://www.dragonwise.hku.hk>)



S potlight on Schools – Partnership

As a Faculty of Education, we place great value on partnerships with both local and overseas schools and institutions in order to enhance the learning of our students and provide service to the education community. In this section, two of our partners, one overseas and one local, reflect on how they and our Faculty have benefitted from the partnership.

Immersion Down Under Bob Adamson

Since 1996, the Faculty of Education has been involved in a partnership with the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Unit at Queensland University of Technology, in Brisbane, Australia. The focal point has been the provision of immersion programmes for English Language majors on the Faculty's BED (Language Education) and PCEd (Full-time) courses.

The immersion in Brisbane has four inter-related components:

homestay, school experience, language proficiency and cultural studies. The homestay gives the students the opportunity to be part of an Australian family, an experience that is mutually beneficial. School experience provides an introduction to the Australian education system, through visits to a variety of local schools and, in some cases, extended placements in which the students shadow a mentor teacher. The development of language proficiency and of cultural competence pervades the whole programme - in the homestay, the school and the university. Courses run by university staff look at the professional language of teaching (classroom interaction, staff discussions, error correction, reading aloud, etc). Students participate in excursions to places of cultural interest and study a module on cross-cultural competence, which is

designed to help them handle the cultural phenomena they encounter on a daily basis.

To enhance the quality of the partnership, staff in the Faculty of Education liaise closely with their counterparts in Brisbane. Modules are planned collaboratively, care is taken in selecting homestays to match the needs and interests of the students, and information on students' progress is shared during and after the immersion programme. Meanwhile, the TESOL Unit has set up partnerships with the homestay families and the local schools in order to ensure that the Hong

Kong students are well supported during their time in Australia.

Feedback from students and others involved in the programme indicates that the immersion experience is most valuable. Besides the insights into another culture, language and education system that the programme affords all parties, there are also the challenges for many students of dealing with homesickness and culture shock that lead to personal growth. Then there are the friendships made in Australia that endure, providing ongoing relationships that can last many years.



Foreword by Albert Wong, former Director of the Unified Professional Development Project (UPDP):

The UPDP was set up to establish a mutually beneficial working relationship between schools and the University and to enhance the quality of teacher education and the quality of teaching in schools. Since its inception in 1996, the partnership network has grown from three schools to its present size of fifty schools. To facilitate closer cooperation, these schools are grouped into five regional clusters based on geographical proximity. In the article that follows, Steve Chan Wai-hung, coordinator of the New Territories West Cluster (with eight partnership schools in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long) shares with us his experience and reflections as a UPD Fellow and cluster coordinator.

The Professional Development of Teachers: An Ever-Improving Process

Steve Chan Wai-hung

How can an experienced front-line teacher keep pace with the current developments in pedagogy? How can he/she grow as a professional? How can he/she contribute to the development of fellow professionals? I believe I have found the answers to these questions through my experience with UPDP.

My school joined the partnership scheme in 2001 and I attended the UPD Fellowship Programme in 2002. Released from schools for three months, 16 teachers from different partnership schools explored in depth important issues in education along cognitive, social and affective dimensions. We also had ample opportunities to share our reflections and visions on teaching and learning and to work as a team. It was such a pity that this valuable experience had not been longer and had not been extended to more teachers.

Back in schools we are now consolidating school-based professional development in different ways. For example, “peer observation of lessons” has evolved from an administrative procedure into a mutually beneficial undertaking for both observees and observers in their common pursuit of teaching excellence. The concepts of lesson study (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999) I learned on the programme, emphasizing the collaborative efforts of teachers in planning, evaluating and re-teaching lessons, have given me and my colleagues fresh impetus and much clearer goals for engaging in peer lesson observation.

We are also striving to contribute to the professional development of teachers in the wider community. As the coordinator of the New Territories West Regional Cluster, I have been working closely with other Fellows and the UPDP team to organize a series of workshops on lesson study in a



range of subjects in the cluster this academic year. I am fully convinced that these cluster-based workshops are able to engage teachers in “collective work on

authentic problems that emerge from their own efforts” (McLaughlin, 1997, p.89) by providing a forum for front-line teachers to share with and to learn from one other.

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In this knowledge-based, information age, challenges, changes and controversies abound in the school sector. One recent controversy centres around 'class size'. Given the highly debatable nature of the issue, the Government is planning a study on 'class size', aiming to find out the relationship between 'small class teaching' and the 'effectiveness of teaching and learning'. We have invited Cheng Kai-ming to share with us his views on the issue.

The Myth of Class Size

Cheng Kai-ming

For quite a while, educators in Hong Kong have subscribed to the claim that small classes are better. This assumption has been used as an argument for lighter load for teachers by the unions, and was also at one time echoed by some senior officials as a panacea for Hong Kong's school problems. However, it is the best demonstration of how rationality is absent in the discussion of education policies.

class size without modifying the modes of teaching would mean further lowering the student-teacher ratio to a point that would seem very luxurious by international standard. Yet, there is no guarantee that learning will improve.

The issue of class size is very much a matter of culture. Korea and Japan, as examples, often favour a class size of around 50 or 60. Japanese teachers argue that too small a class may reduce opportunities of interactions among students. The Americans, however, prefer individual attention by the teacher, and hence think smaller classes would result in more teacher attention. Hence, the different

size sometimes reflect alternative ways of organising student learning, rather than a matter of resource availability. Recent developments in the notion of *learning communities* may further challenge the myth of small classes. In the models that I have seen, students are grouped in large communities of over 100. There is then the whole team of 6-8 teachers who are devoted solely to the learning community, and hence students are given "total-solution" care for their comprehensive development.

The issue of optimal class size must be fully debated, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of the different numbers and the Hong Kong context. Unless this is done, any unexplained reduction of class size would cause dramatic increase in the demand of resources, yet with little proof that subsequent learning would be more effective.



The "smaller is better" argument is hardly supported by history. Hong Kong's school classes have decreased from a size of 45 to 35 or less in the past twenty years. It is hard to observe any significant improvement in learning.

Even from a quantitative point of view, it is difficult to argue for small classes for Hong Kong without looking at the way teaching is done. Hong Kong enjoys a student-teacher ratio (less than 20 for both primary and secondary schools) that is envied by many. Further reducing the



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oices of Alumni

The Faculty of Education has, over the years, produced 1,123 bachelor degree graduates, 11,230 PCEd graduates, 504 Advanced Diploma graduates, 1,636 Master's degree graduates, 30 MPhil and 100 PhD graduates. Many of them have gone on to take up important and prominent positions in society, mostly in the education sector.

In this issue, we introduce one of our most distinguished alumni, Cheng Kai-ming, graduate of CertEd (1981), AdvDipEd (1982) and MEd (1983), currently Chair of Education and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University, and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education & Qualifications, tracing his contributions to the local and international education communities.



Cheng Kai-ming, after graduating from HKU, taught at the Pui Kiu Middle School. He later became the Founding Principal of the Elementi College in 1970, a private school admitting children of poor families in Shaukiwan. Cheng then taught at the St Paul's College. Afterwards, he went to the London Institute of Education, mid-career, to do his doctoral studies in Educational Planning. He was the first local educator elected Dean of Education (1992) and appointed Chair Professor of Education (1995) at HKU.

Cheng has chaired various educational bodies and alliances. In 1984, a group of MEd graduates at HKU started the Hong Kong Council for Educational Administration. Cheng was elected the Founding Chairman. The Council was a member of the Commonwealth Council

of Educational Administration (later Commonwealth Council of Education Administration and Management, CCEAM), the largest world organisation of its kind at that time.

A Preparatory Committee on *Professional Code for Educational Workers* was established in 1987 with Cheng as the elected Chairman. This was an important milestone in the development of professionalism among Hong Kong teachers – which led to the constitution of the professional code for teachers *A Professional Code for Education* in 1992.

As a member of the Education Commission since 1993, Cheng is perceived as instrumental in launching the reform that started in 1999.

Cheng has been commissioned as a consultant by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, other international organisations and foreign governments. He has been Visiting Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education since 1996.

[Source: *Growing with Hong Kong: HKU and its Graduates - The First 90 Years*]

We have invited Ms Mandy Lo Yuen-fan, graduate of BEd (1998) and MEd (2002) and recipient of the Longman Awards, to share with us her memories and thoughts on studying in the Faculty.

Mandy Lo Yuen-fan

It gives me great pleasure to share my experience as a “double alumni” of the University of Hong Kong. I am a local primary school teacher teaching English and Music, and this is the fifth year of my career. Before I joined the teaching profession in 1998, I spent two years deepening my understanding of education ideologies through enrolling in a two-year full time Bachelor of Education degree course (Primary Education) at HKU. Through my study, I learned a lot of theories from a great variety of practical

operations of classroom teaching and learning. What prompted me to choose HKU from among the many tertiary institutions providing courses of the same discipline was its reputation as a quality English medium institution.

Having gained two years of practical experience in English language teaching locally, I returned to HKU for a two-year Master of Education part-time course, specialising in English Language Education. I have had a strong belief in life long education in parallel to professional development, and found the past two years to be extremely rewarding in many aspects, in spite of the challenges that preceded the long awaited honor of graduation in the year 2002. In view of today's school environment that demands a diversity of skills and knowledge of the teacher, my postgraduate study has surely benefited me enormously in terms of both intellectual and skills development.

I am glad that I have taken the best path in my education, and HKU has played a vital role in shaping me into a reflective practitioner. Along the way of my studies, I have made many friends with similar beliefs and levels of professional diligence, for which I feel much privileged. The four years of studies have brought me new insights, helping me to foster a holistic perspective towards life and the teaching profession. I have experienced HKU as a quality tertiary organization that stands out from the other institutions, and I feel especially proud and honoured to be a double alumni of the university which is very dear to my heart.



This issue looks at the controversial policy on the medium of instruction (MOI). Anissa Chan - Principal of SKH Bishop Mok Sau Tseng Secondary School and Chairperson of the Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council – and Cheung Kwok-wah, Assistant Professor in our Faculty, present their views on the issue.

Anissa Chan

Starting with Secondary 1 in September 1998, secondary schools had to progressively adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction unless they had evidence of suitable student ability and teacher capability to teach in English. Four years on since the implementation of this medium of instruction policy, this is still a much debated and contentious issue. The Government will review the MOI policy this year but as the educational environment is now very different from that of four years ago, the review should take the recent educational changes into consideration.

Firstly, the secondary school places allocation has changed from a 5-banding to a 3-banding system resulting in a wider mix of student abilities and language proficiencies such that the simplified dichotomy of schools into either English as medium of instruction (EMI) or Chinese as medium of instruction (CMI) schools across all students in all subjects from levels of Secondary One to Secondary Three, would not be able to cater for the need and fully develop the potential of students in both language development and in learning other subjects. Parents have been voting with their feet resulting in a large increase in demand for places in international schools or direct subsidy schools which are given the freedom to choose English as the medium of instruction. Secondly, schools have become more transparent with the public having access to school profiles, school plans, school reports, and quality inspection reports. The implementation of the Education (Amendment) Bill later this year with the inclusion of the various stakeholders e.g. parent managers, teacher managers, independent managers into the school management committee and hence participation in the governance of the school will further increase the transparency and accountability of the school. These two measures would be able to ensure that any choice a school makes would be made under public scrutiny and with collective input from various stakeholders with the best intention and student interests in mind. Thirdly, there has been a robustness of professional development activities of principals and teachers in recent years resulting in a new level of professionalism and competency in both school leadership / development and in learning and teaching.

It is against this background that the Hong Kong Subsidized Secondary Schools Council conducted a survey of its member schools on the MOI policy in May and October 2002. The findings of the survey show a clear and overwhelming request that schools be given the professional autonomy to choose

their own MOI. Such choice should include the flexibility of MOI by subject, by level and by class with due consideration given to students' abilities, teachers' language proficiency and the nature of the subjects. There is also a clear indication that schools would like to have a gradual increase in the use of English as MOI from Secondary One to Secondary Three. The choice of MOI would be disclosed to parents and the public in the school profile, school plan and school report. There should be strict adherence to the choice of MOI in daily teaching with regular review of the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

The message from schools is clear – schools should make their own choice of MOI when a system of transparency, accountability, and quality assurance is fully in place. As there is a high level of professionalism in the practitioners (principals and teachers), I would argue that the role of the Government should not be that of setting rules or policies that are restrictive and leaving little or no space for exploration of better options and alternatives. Instead, the Government should commission relevant research studies to provide data that can guide the schools to make informed decisions on their MOI, set the standard on language proficiency and provide resources to schools to help students in attaining bi-literacy and trilingualism while also promoting the overall effectiveness of learning and teaching. Society recognizes the importance of a high level of English proficiency and the urgent need to maximize the chances available to students in their language acquisition and exposure to the English environment. Failing to do this means failing to meet the public expectation and severely undermines Hong Kong's competitiveness in the international market.

Cheung Kwok-wah

It seems that the solution to the medium of instruction policy dilemma rests on the balance among some inter-related but separate problems.

The first is the medium of instruction policy itself. In essence, and at the risk of over-simplification, the current policy establishes that there are only two types of schools: the English medium and the Chinese medium schools. But this restriction only applies to the junior forms. In the senior forms, the policy is either EMI or CMI. In reality, different schools have different modes of combining the use of Chinese and English in different subjects. This has given the general public a perhaps misleading impression that the medium of instruction is fluctuating from one side to the other. But it also gives an important clue as to what may happen if the Government does not insist on the strict distinction between Chinese medium and English medium schools.

The Government should decide whether to maintain this either-or approach in the junior secondary schools. The Subsidised Schools Council has made it clear that the either-or approach cannot reflect the complex nature of the problem. However, it is

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not too difficult to imagine that once the Government does not insist on the current either-or approach, the Government will be seen as backing away from its commitment to promoting the use of Chinese as the medium of instruction.

Even if the Government maintains the present policy, it still has to face the question as to whether or not some schools will be allowed to board or leave the “EMI train”.

No matter what the outcome is, one question that cannot be ignored is the allocation of students to secondary schools. Assuming that the Government is not going to adopt a Chinese medium “fundamentalist” view, i.e. forcing all schools to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction in junior forms, English medium classes will still exist, either as standard class in English medium schools, or in schools operating both English and Chinese streams. The Government will still need to decide which students should be sent to the English classes, if the demand for English classes is greater than the supply.

This takes us to the second problem, which is the review of the Secondary School Places Allocation policy. The basic idea underpinning the abolition of the Academic Aptitude Test and other related measures is that primary education should be more concerned with teaching than allocating Primary 6 students to different bands. An initial study by HKU suggests that this is happening. Other related studies also report a much livelier and more productive learning environment in primary schools. The primary school sector is now making clear that they do not want to return to the bad old drilling days. Thus while it is inevitable that the Chinese vs English distinction necessitates certain methods of student allocation, there is a need to avoid the backwash effect on primary schools.

There is thus an apparent structural policy conflict that requires imagination and constant dialogue between various parties. This is not just an issue between the primary and the secondary education sector. This is also an issue between the school sector and parents. Schools need

to demonstrate to parents the importance of English irrespective of the medium of instruction. The problem is that not all Chinese medium schools believe in this and hence it is even more difficult to convince the parents that this must be the case.

Chris Davison

Associate Professor in English Language Education of our Faculty, talks to five practising teachers in Hong Kong schools about the MOI issue. Two are teaching in EMI and three in CMI schools, but their experiences and attitudes are very diverse. Pseudonyms are used to maintain confidentiality. Visit our website at www.hku.hk/education and join in the *Interchange* by voicing your views in our chatroom specially dedicated to the topic!

Chris: I want to start off by asking you what you think of the current policy about medium of instruction...

Carmel: In my school we support the CMI policy very strongly because CMI is very appropriate for the students in my school banding. The students are in the old band 4, 5 so their English proficiency is very very low ...for example in Integrated Science we used to have English textbooks and exams and only 20% passed. But when we switched to Chinese, then we found that the students got a 90% pass rate for Science. So we thought that this was very very appropriate for our school and therefore we've changed to CMI. And now what has happened is that in Form 1-5, English is the only subject they learn in English...then in Form 6 about 75% of the subjects are still in English.

Chris: Have you found a decline in their English proficiency since you switched to CMI?

Carmel: Hmm... Not that strongly, I find their English proficiency is almost the

same. I don't feel that there's been a lowering of standards but I do feel that the students have tremendous lack of opportunity to use English. On the one hand they treasure the English language subject more than in previous years, but on the other hand some of them lack enthusiasm for English ...Perhaps it is not as important to them compared to other subjects, but the other academic subjects are now more manageable.

Ada: When we started using CMI 8 years ago, there was an increase in the pass rate, but not for English – it dropped tremendously. When we used EMI, our pass rate was around 22, 26 percent every year. But after we switched to Chinese, it was less than 10%. Students feel that English is meaningless. We English teachers are working very hard in school to promote English but still, they don't see the importance of learning it. When we were still using EMI, for economics, for geography they had to use English to answer questions. But after those subjects changed to Chinese, there was no opportunity to use English to write, so it's only in the English language subject that they use English. But in other subjects they are doing a lot better. For geography, before 20 something percent, but now it's 40 something. And for Maths it's a great improvement. Before it's less than 50%, but now it's over 80% pass rate.

Sophie: We started to switch to Chinese as the medium of instruction 4 years ago. We don't have any statistics about students' performance because the coming HKCEE will be the first year that students take it in Chinese. But from my experience, it is very obvious that students lack exposure in English. They don't know there are a lot of words that they don't know. Even very simple words like subtraction, division or whatever. You know, when we were using EMI, these terms were not problems to student because they learned these kind of words from their mathematics lesson or whatever. Now they only learn English in English lessons. And students find it very difficult to express what they mean, in their writing or in their speaking, because they lack exposure of English in other areas. Some of my colleagues comment that students have made very obvious improvements in other subjects like mathematics

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and science. But the fact is that the medium of instruction has been switched to Chinese but students are doing the same type of questions or learning the same type of thing that they learnt in primary school. That's why students find it very easy to cope with, find mathematics or science very easy to cope with. But from my experience, I teach English as well as life education in Chinese, what my students write in their assignment is as poor as what they write for English. It seems to me that they don't acquire a lot even, I mean, they don't acquire a lot of Chinese, even if the medium of instruction is in Chinese.

Chris: A lot of people say that the big debate around the medium of instruction actually takes the focus away from what you do with the language in the classroom, that you need to adopt good language conscious teaching irrespective of the language, for example, to help scaffold the students' learning, to build up their vocabulary. In a way, that is more important for learning than the medium of instruction.

Jane: I agree with that very much. From my experience teaching in an EMI primary school, in general studies, we very often have discussions, for example we have topics or issues related to the work of the government. I think for Primary 5 students, the learning or teaching won't be too meaningful if you don't get them talking about the topic. But it's very obvious that when I force them to speak in English, they just become really quiet. And then when I say oh, ok maybe I let you speak in Chinese then I see dozens of hands coming up and they just feel very easy and it is a very good collaborative way to learn. And for music it's also very obvious because actually my principal strongly encourages us to use English as the medium of instruction. The first year I entered this school, I tried to be a very good employee and I really stuck to what she prescribed. But with music lessons, because I guess it involves the students' affective needs, when I speak in English all the time, I think a distance is created between me and my students. They are simply not so motivated

compared to what is going on now when I use lot of Cantonese. So I think, I agree it's not the language used which is important, but many other things.

Alice: My situation is completely different. Many people know my school – it has a long history, and it started off as an EMI school, so even for my Primary 1 boys, they are only 6 to 7 year old, they have to learn religious education in English. They really understand what the teacher says but because of their level of proficiency they don't usually speak in English. They will ask you questions, they understand what you say, but most likely they will speak in Cantonese. But for my Primary 6 boys, they are very capable of communicating with teachers in English because we got two Native English Teachers (NETs) well before the Education Department put through the NET system. So they're used to communicating in English. I always ask them to talk to me and it's pain free. They will try even if they are not using the correct grammar or pronunciation. So I guess it's the way the teachers, how they motivate the children.

Wendy: But in my school if subjects are taught in English, the students are not motivated. They don't want to listen to the teacher and the teacher just spends all their time explaining the text, it's meaningless. So yes, actually we sacrifice English to increase motivation. The teacher explains in Chinese and the students ask questions in Chinese. Actually even in my English lessons, if I ask them to ask questions in English, they won't say anything. So I'll let them ask me questions in Chinese and I'll give the answers in English. But for some questions, which are concerned with the examination, sometimes I still use Chinese. Because I want to save time and also I want to make sure that they know the strategies and techniques they should have to get through the exams. Our school is quite flexible in fact, and even last year, the Form 5 students, they are taught in English, but in the last few months the school told them if they wanted to take the cert exam in Chinese, they could. It's surprising but the results were quite good.

Much better than those of the students who took the exams in English. Also the results in English were very good.

Chris: So what do you think of government policy on the MOI issue?

Wendy: I think it is quite confusing, to be honest... actually I don't mind whether it's CMI or EMI, I think it should be consistent.

Carmel: But they are promoting mother tongue instruction, that's CMI. I advocate CMI but I think it's like a promotion that's gone bad. Because if they are promoting mother tongue as the medium of instruction and then they say, all these good schools should stay EMI, it's telling people that English is for smart schools or for high banding schools only, privileged schools, and people who are choosing CMI are labeled... inferior... this is terrible. It gives the teachers and the parents the notion that ok, if my child goes in to a CMI school, it means that this is a low level school. So I think although the proposal is a good one, it's the way they've promoted it, it gives the teacher and society the wrong image of the, I shouldn't say the wrong image, perhaps it's the labeling effect. So if they say: "OK now we should promote mother tongue instruction, we'll start with the best school", and then I think that this would be a more positive way of promoting mother tongue instruction.

Jane: I just wonder why the government has used schools as a unit, to decide whether school should be EMI or CMI, because within one school there could be 70 different teachers, and classrooms. I really think that there should be more flexibility because which way is more suitable really depends on who the teacher is, how proficient he or she is, how proficient the students are, and also what the student intend to achieve in terms of language proficiency. Schools should be able to decide themselves based on their own needs....

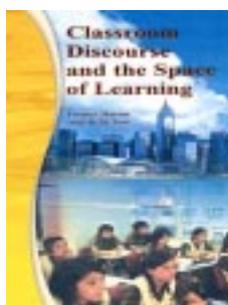
To complement the *Interchange* section which focuses on the ‘Medium of Instruction’ controversy, this issue will cast its spotlight on recent publications from the Language and Literature Division:

**Medium of Instruction Policies
Whose Agenda?
Which Agenda?**

By
Amy BM Tsui
and
James Tollefson

***Medium of Instruction Policies – Whose Agenda? Which Agenda?* co-edited by Amy BM Tsui (Chair Professor, Faculty of Education) and James Tollefson (Professor of Linguistics, University of Washington). Lawrence Erlbaum 2003**

This book discusses the centrality of medium of instruction in socio-political processes. It examines the tension between the educational agenda and other underlying social and political agendas in a number of sociopolitical contexts, including the effort made by linguistic minorities in English dominant countries to revitalize and maintain their languages, namely the Maori in New Zealand, the Welsh in Wales (United Kingdom), and the indigenous Indians in the United States; postcolonial countries and the paths that they have taken towards nation building through their medium of instruction policies, for example, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, India, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, and the Philippines; the conflicts between ethnolinguistic groups, how they were managed, and the political consequences in post-apartheid South Africa, Ecuador and Bolivia, and Yugoslavia.



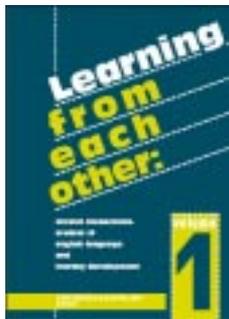
***Classroom Discourse and the Space of Learning* co-authored by Amy BM Tsui, Ference Marton (Professor of Education, University of Goteborg) and a number of collaborating authors in this Faculty and the University of Goteborg. Lawrence Erlbaum 2003**

As the title of the book suggests, it is about learning in schools, and the role of language in learning. This book proposes that whatever you are trying to learn, there are certain necessary conditions for succeeding. The limits of what is possible to learn, are called “the space of learning”. The book further proposes that language plays a central role in learning: that it does not merely *convey* meaning; it also *creates* meaning. An understanding of how the space of learning is linguistically constituted in the classroom is best achieved through investigating “classroom discourse”, which is what this book aims to do. Throughout the book, the discussions are illustrated by many examples from Hong Kong classrooms in a wide range of subjects.



***Understanding Expertise in Teaching* by Amy BM Tsui. Cambridge University Press 2003**

The book is very much inspired by an English teacher, Marina, a former PCEd and MEd student of the author’s. The book explores how Marina developed expertise in teaching English and the critical differences between her and three other non-expert teachers in her school. It provides a thick description of these four teachers, their professional development, their conceptions of teaching and enactment of the English curriculum. On the basis of these case studies, the book argues that expertise is not a state reached after a number of years of experience but rather is a process of continuous search for excellence. The book further argues that expertise must be distinguished from expert performance. While the expert performance is automatic, effortless and unreflective, the development of expertise is conscious, deliberative and reflective.

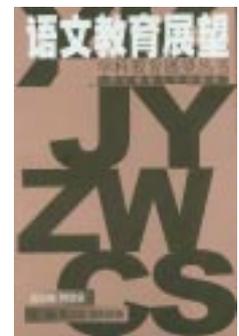


Learning from Each Other: Critical Connections. Studies of Child English language and Literacy Development K-12, Vol.1 by Chris Davison (Associate Professor, Faculty of Education) and Alan Williams (La Trobe University). Language Australia, Melbourne 2002

This volume, the first of a two-part series, explores English language and literacy development from kindergarten to senior secondary school. The book had its genesis in a large scale collaborative research project involving over 50 schools and a number of tertiary institutions in Victoria, Australia, and provides the first systematic analysis of the oral and written language development of students from a range of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds as they move through the Australian school system. It also shows how teachers at a variety of levels responded to demands to apply new assessment and reporting frameworks in their day-to-day teaching. The issues raised in the book are very relevant to Hong Kong, given the current move from norm to standards based assessment and ongoing concerns about English standards.

Outlook on Language Education (語文教育展望) by Ni Wenjin (Professor, East China Normal University) and Auyeung Yu Wing (Winnie Auyeung Lai) (Associate Professor, Faculty of Education). East China Normal University Press 2002

This book is part of a series on subject-based teacher education commissioned by the Ministry of Education, PRC, and edited by the Curriculum and Teaching Research Institute of the East China Normal University. The book is intended to be a quality reference for pre-service and in-service Chinese Language teachers teaching Chinese as a first language. It outlines and highlights the most recent research findings and practices in Chinese language education, and discusses related issues. It also provides comparative perspectives in first language education, focusing on crucial issues, namely, first language curriculum, language teaching materials, language teaching, extra-curricular activities for language learning, language assessment and evaluation, and language teacher education and teaching technology.



The Functions of Language and the Teaching of Chinese - Application of Systemic Functional Linguistics to Chinese Language Education (語言功能與中文教學-系統功能語言學在中文教學上的應用) Mark SK Shum (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education). HKU Press 2002

This book pioneers the application of the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory to the research and teaching of Chinese language. It is characterized by the author's attempt to explore and develop the theory of functional grammar by summarizing the methodology and findings of preceding scholars who studied Chinese language from the SFL perspective in the past quarter of a century. The book consists of three sections: Section One – *The Functions* – introduces the basic and central concept of SFL. Section Two – *The System* – describes the common instruments and methodology of text analysis and language study based on the SFL theory. Section Three – *The Application* – demonstrates the author's experience in applying the SFL theory to enhance Chinese language teaching.

An Analysis of Chinese Practical Writing in Schools (學校實用文圖釋) by Mark SK Shum, et al. HKU Press 2002

The book explores the genres used in school environments by collecting authentic Chinese correspondence and documents from schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI). Text analyses are conducted to establish the relationship between contexts, social functions, schematic structures and linguistic features. The book has two characteristics: first, it includes all sorts of genres that function in school settings; second, the book analyzes different sorts of genres in terms of social functions, contexts, schematic structures and linguistic features. The information collected for this book will provide a useful reference to teachers. This is the first book of its kind not only in Hong Kong but also in China. It is tailored to provide timely support to teachers using CMI.



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aculty Highlights

HONOURS & AWARDS

Congratulations to:

- **Gwyn Edwards**, Associate Professor, on receipt of a University Teaching Fellowship awarded in recognition of his teaching excellence
- **Frederick Leung Koon-shing**, Associate Professor and former Dean of the Faculty, on receipt of the *Universitas 21* Fellowship and the Fulbright Fellowship; and on election to the Executive International Committee of Mathematical Instruction (ICMI) for a four-year term from January 2003 through December 2006

Congratulations to:

- **Eva Ng**, BEd (Language Ed) graduate of 2002, on receipt of the Equilibrium Cultural Education Foundation Award
- **Ng Kwok Wing**, PCEd graduate 2002, on receipt of the Jing Kung Scholarship
- **Joanne C Chow** and **Tsang Yu Sun**, PCEd graduates 2002, on receipt of the Rowell Prizes in Education
- **Brenda Ip Pui Man** and **Lai Wan Yim**, PCEd graduates 2002, on receipt of the True Light Middle School of Hong Kong Prizes in Education
- **Mandy Lo Yuen Fan**, MEd graduate 2002, **Chan Yee Wah** and **Lau Yu Yee**, BEd graduates 2002, on receipt of the Longman Awards

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

NEW PROGRAMMES

To provide quality life-long opportunities for education professionals, the Faculty expects to launch two new programmes in September 2003:

Doctor of Education (EdD)

The Doctor of Education (EdD) programme comprises both coursework and research-based work, and can be completed in four to six years. It is tailor-made for experienced professionals, who are leaders or aspire to be leaders, in education-related institutions and services, and who seek to extend their capacity for inquiry and evidence-led decision-making. The programme will initially be offered on a part-time basis, and will have intakes in the September of relevant academic years. For further information, please contact the Office of Research by phone at 2241 5728 or by email: hkuedd@hku.hk, or visit our website (www.hku.hk/education).

Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Educational Studies

The Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Educational Studies programme provides education professionals with highly flexible individualised pathways either to studies for a Master of Education or for a Master of Science (Information Technology in Education) degree or to upgrade and extend educational knowledge and skills through a combination of accredited assessed MEd-level professional development modules. For further information, please contact the Programme Office at 2859 8058.

WEBSITE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS

The Faculty is keen to maintain ties with its alumni and friends. A website devoted to alumni and friends has been launched. Do spare a minute and visit: www.hku.hk/education/alumni !

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Economics Genre Workshop for CMI Teachers

Date: 26 April 2003
Enquiry: Vivian Chau Email: hschau@hku.hk
Tel: 2241 5167 Fax: 2517 4403

Chemistry Genre Workshop for CMI Teachers

Date: 3 May 2003
Enquiry: Vivian Chau Email: hschau@hku.hk
Tel: 2241 5167 Fax: 2517 4403

Annual Faculty Research Postgraduate Students' Conference

Date: 31 May 2003 (tentative)
Enquiry: Samuel Lau Email: sylau@hkusua.hku.hk
Tel: 2859 2781 Fax: 2547 1924

Conference of the International Association of Special Education

Date: 22-25 June 2003
Enquiry: Samuel Lau Email: sylau@hkusua.hku.hk
Tel: 2859 2781 Fax: 2547 1924

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aculty Highlights

MAJOR EVENTS

JUPAS Open Day — 19 October 2002

The annual JUPAS Open Day was held on Saturday 19 October 2002. Hundreds of students and parents visited the exhibitions and attended the admissions talks organised by the Faculty of Education.



Comparative Study Conference of the International Commission on Mathematical Instruction 2002 — 21 to 25 October 2002



57 scholars specialising in mathematical instruction from all over the world attended the ICMI Conference held in the Faculty, as invited participants.

Faculty of Education Graduation Ceremony — 23 November 2002

The Faculty held its annual Graduation Ceremony at the City Hall. Philanthropist, Dr KP Tin MBE, was the guest of honour. The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor CF Li, officiated at the event.



Vice-Chancellor's Visit to the Faculty — 17 December 2002



Professor Tsui Lap-chee, the new Vice-Chancellor, visited the Faculty in his first round of familiarisation tours, meeting and discussing with academic staff and students various issues of concern such as Faculty direction.

Faculty Retreat – 18 December 2002

Academic staff in the Faculty participated in a Faculty retreat at the new Medical Faculty Building. The main aim of the retreat was to discuss the strategic direction of the newly integrated Faculty.



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Alumni and friends are most welcome to suggest topics for, and make contributions to, the Newsletter.
Please get in touch with our Editorial Board !