Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Hong Kong Demographics

Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), is a multilingual society which is located on the south coast of China, bordering the mainland city of Shenzhen in Guangdong province to its north, and surrounded by the Pearl River Delta and the South China Sea on its east, south and west. Its geography and political history make it linguistically diverse with three principal languages: Cantonese, English and Putonghua, each of which "carries different political, economic, social and cultural values locally" (Chen 2005, p. 528).

Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. In 2018 the population was estimated at 7.42 million (http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/china-hong-kong-sar-population/). According to the 2016 by-census, 92% of the Hong Kong population is ethnic Chinese, and 8% comprise other ethnic groups, including a large number of Filipino and Indonesian foreign domestic helpers, who, together, make up approximately 4% of the population (Census and Statistics Department 2017, p. 29). Cantonese is the socially preferred and most commonly used language at home. As shown in Table 1.1, in 2016, 94.6% of the population aged 5 and over reported being able to speak Cantonese (Census and Statistics Department 2017, p. 31). 88.9% of this group also reported that they spoke Cantonese at home with "a Hong Kong accent and a Hong Kong lexicon, (this) signifies one's status as a local person in contrast to city newcomers, who either do not speak Cantonese or do not speak with a local accent and lexicon" (Chen 2005, p. 528). 5.7% claimed that they could speak Cantonese as a second or further language, whose first language was one of the following Chinese languages: Putonghua, Hakka, Fukienese, Chiu Chow and Shanghainese (Census and Statistics Department 2017, p. 31).

Although the mother tongue of the great majority of the Hong Kong population is Cantonese (Sze 1997, 2000), the written Chinese taught in school is Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), the written equivalent of Putonghua (Tse 2009), the

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Table 1.1 Proportion of population aged 5 and over able to speak selected languages by year

	Proportion of population aged 5 and over								
	Percentage								
	As the usual language			As another language/ dialect			Total		
Year	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016	2006	2011	2016
Language[a]									
Cantonese	90.8	89.5	88.9	5.7	6.3	5.7	96.5	95.8	94.6
English	2.8	3.5	4.3	41.9	42.6	48.9	44.7	46.1	53.2
Putonghua	0.9	1.4	1.9	39.2	46.5	46.7	40.2	47.8	48.6
Hakka	1.1	0.9	0.6	3.6	3.8	3.5	4.7	4.7	4.2
Fukien	1.2	1.1	1	2.1	2.3	2.6	3.4	3.5	3.6
Chiu Chau	0.8	0.7	0.5	3.2	3.1	2.9	3.9	3.8	3.4
Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)	0.1	0.3	0.3	1.5	2.2	2.4	1.7	2.4	2.7
Filipino (Tagalog)	0.1	0.2	0.4	1.3	1.4	2.3	1.4	1.7	2.7
Japanese	0.2	0.2	0.1	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.5	1.8
Shanghainese	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.1

Note: [a]Figures exclude mute persons
Source: Census and Statistics Department. (2017). *2016 Population by-census: Main results*. HKSAR Government: Government Logistics Department

national language of Mainland China. The difference between MSC and Cantonese is in the relative lexicons (Bauer 1988) and in elements of grammar (Sze 2005; Zhan 2002). Cantonese also uses a number of different characters (Snow 2004). Almost all the schools use the romanised alphabetic system: *hanyu pinyin* (a writing system, also based on Putonghua, which was developed for helping Chinese children learn to read Chinese) (Davison and Lai 2007, p. 122). A large number of Chinese characters were also given simplified forms during the language reforms introduced by the Chinese Communist Party. The traditional complex forms are still commonly used, however, outside the Mainland, for example in Hong Kong and Taiwan. When the Hong Kong government and official documents talk about Chinese, Chinese is understood to mean Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), written in the traditional, unsimplified script, and spoken Cantonese. The gap between written Chinese (MSC) and spoken Chinese (Cantonese) can pose a serious problem for students (Llewellyn et al. 1982; Poon 1999; So 1989), in developing literacy in Chinese as what they say in Cantonese is very different from the sounds of Putonghua upon which standard written Chinese is based.

English is prominent in Hong Kong despite the fact that only 4.3% of the Hong Kong population reported using English as a usual language/dialect (Census and Statistics Department 2017, p. 31). As a result of being a British colony for 155 years, English is Hong Kong's dominant language in the domains of legislature, administration, the judiciary, and education (Luke and Richards 1982; Poon 2000, 2010; So 1989, 1996). Chinese only became a co-official language alongside English in 1974 when the government enacted the Official Languages Ordinance

(Hong Kong Government 1974) in response to massive public pressure from the Chinese Language Movement during 1968 and 1971 (Poon 2000; So 1996). Since then, Chinese has been used in official transactions. To a great extent, however, English remains the major medium for intra-governmental written communication and records. Moreover, English is still the language of the high courts and also the preferred language for written contracts and records in the commercial sector (So 1996). As we shall show, English is also the preferred medium of instruction, assessment and examination for most educational institutions at secondary and tertiary levels.

English is maintained as a co-official language alongside Chinese despite the change of sovereignty in June 1997 when Britain 'handed over' Hong Kong to China. Article 9 of The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China states that "In addition to the Chinese language, English may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" (The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau 2017, p. 3). The reasons for keeping English are associated with the "changing status of English as well as the changing economy in Hong Kong" (Poon 2010, p. 6).

After the handover of sovereignty in 1997, The Hong Kong SAR government has put vigorous efforts into fostering the national identity of Hong Kong people through the school curriculum, the media, community activities, and territory-wide events and exhibitions, etc. (Poon 2010) In addition, Putonghua is promoted through a new language policy, namely the 'biliterate and trilingual' policy (兩文三語政策). Putonghua is now taught as a subject in all Hong Kong secondary and primary schools and being trialled as a medium of instruction for the Chinese Language subject in selected schools. Cantonese is used as the medium of instruction in the great majority of primary schools and in those secondary schools which use Chinese as a medium of instruction (Pan 2000). English is the medium of instruction in selected secondary schools and in all but two of the eight government-funded universities and in all private universities. We discuss this in greater detail below. The promotion of Putonghua aims to facilitate communication and exchange with Mainland China. The move to Putonghua soon gained momentum and spread within the society (Poon 2004). The increased use and significance of Putonghua that has accompanied the handover has deepened the complexity of the linguistic situation in Hong Kong (Adamson and Lai 1997).

1.2 Language Policies of Hong Kong

The language policies of Hong Kong have always been an "unresolved thorny issue" (Poon 2004, p. 53) as debates on the language policies governing the three principal languages have continued for more than two decades. 'Diglossia' (Ferguson 1972; Fishman 1971) and 'superposed bilingualism' (So 1989) can best depict the language situation since early colonial days until the late 1980s. As a colonial

language, English enjoyed supreme status despite the relatively small population of English speakers before the 1997 handover. According to the 1991 population census only 2.2% of the population used English as the language of normal communication (Census and Statistics Department 1991, p. 43). English was considered a 'high' language in the domains of government administration, the legislature and the judiciary, while Chinese was the 'low' language and used at home and in daily social contact by the majority of the population (Fu 1987; Lord 1987; Luke and Richards 1982; Poon 2000; So 1989). As noted above, the use of Chinese in government administration was legalised only when Chinese became a co-official language in 1974. Despite this, the English version of government documents was considered the final correct version when disputes arose (Poon 2004). More recently, however, bilingual versions of ordinances, government reports and announcements are recognised (Poon 2010).

All Hong Kong children studying at local government-aided schools learn both Chinese language (to be further elucidated below) and English language from Primary 1 for 12 years through the end of senior secondary education. In other words, both Chinese Language subject and English Language subject are part of the core curriculum and are the compulsory subjects in primary and secondary education (ages 6–17). Schools in Hong Kong are not required by law to follow a particular language curriculum (So 1996). In theory, schools may develop their own language curricula according to the school missions and their own needs, as long as the developed curricula have the ratification of the Education Bureau. However, in practice, instead of developing their own Chinese and English curricula, most of them follow past, established practices within the professions, which have been heavily influenced by public examinations, and also the curricula guidelines and syllabuses developed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC).

Before the 1990s, in primary education, Cantonese was used as the major medium of instruction in all schools with English taught as a foreign language. There were two main streams of secondary schools defined by the languages used for medium of instruction. They were the Anglo-Chinese Schools, which used English as the medium of instruction (MoI) and the Chinese Middle Schools, using Cantonese as the MoI. In the Chinese-medium schools (CMI schools), English Language is taught as a subject and in the EMI schools, Chinese Language is taught as a subject. Nearly all kindergartens in Hong Kong used Cantonese as the language of instruction while a basic form of English was taught, largely in response to parents' demands, but against the advice of the Education Department (Government Secretariat 1981, p. 16). Meanwhile a few missionary schools used English as the medium of instruction. Despite their names medium of instruction in secondary schools was actually not strictly determined by the type of school (e.g., Anglo-Chinese Schools and Chinese Middle Schools), as individual schools were free to use whichever medium of instruction they considered their pupils could cope with; moreover, they might use Cantonese and English for different subjects and at different class levels. Parental demand meant that many so-called Chinese medium schools used English as a medium of instruction but with varying degrees of success (Luke and Richards 1982).

The teaching of Putonghua (or Mandarin) and its use as a medium of instruction were very limited before the 1990s (Adamson and Lai 1997; Zhang and Yang 2004). Putonghua played a minor role in the school system, either being learned as an extracurricular or optional subject (Zhang and Yang 2004). In preparation for and since the handover in 1997, Putonghua has been promoted in Hong Kong (Adamson and Lai 1997; Kan et al. 2011; Zhang and Yang 2004). In September 1995, the Report of the working group on the use of Chinese in the civil service was published, which stated: 'It is already the Government's ultimate objective to develop a civil service which is biliterate (in English and Chinese) and trilingual (in English, Cantonese and Putonghua)' (Civil Service Branch 1995, p. 5). This represented the Government's initial declaration of the 'biliterate and trilingual' policy (BTP) (兩文三語). This has also become the de facto language policy for schools and Civil Service (Education Department 1997; Tung 1999). The plan to promote biliteracy and trilingualism, was officially announced in 1997 in the first policy address of Hong Kong SAR's inaugural Chief Executive, C. H. Tung. Since then, Putonghua has become a central element of the primary and secondary curricula (Davison and Lai 2007) and more recently increasingly as the MoI for the Chinese Language subjects (Evans 2013). In addition, more people have come to recognise the need to learn Putonghua.

1.3 Trilingual Education in Hong Kong Primary Schools

The language policy after the handover in 1997 is now guiding the curriculum design in Hong Kong language education. Government policy, at least for primary schools, encourages the use of the mother tongue (Cantonese) as the medium of instruction, believing that it is the best way to learn. Many experts (Benson 2008; Garcia 2009) also concur with this view. Others hold the view that the use of Cantonese is not conducive to the learning of written Chinese as the two "languages" are quite different (Bray and Koo 2004), despite evidence that suggests the opposite (Tse et al. 2007). Kirkpatrick and Chau (2008) and Clem (2008) have argued for the establishment of schools as trilingual sites and urge that it is 'time to give trilingual a try'. Currently, however, Hong Kong primary schools do not have an agreed approach or method for the implementation of trilingual education. No guidelines have been suggested by the government despite its desire to create a biliterate and trilingual citizenry. There is thus an urgent need to explore current models, so that primary schools can be better informed on how trilingual education can be implemented effectively.

This was the impetus that led us to conduct a detailed case study of the trilingual education model adopted in a selected primary school in 2009–2010 school year. Views of key stakeholders (the principal, teachers, students and parents) on how successful the model was thought to be were collected, and a number of lessons taught using English, Cantonese or Putonghua as the medium of instruction were recorded and analysed. On the basis of the research findings, a possible model for

implementing trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools was suggested. Following the successful preliminary pilot study into the implementation of trilingual education in this single Hong Kong primary school (Wang and Kirkpatrick 2013), a larger scale research on trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools was carried out. The aims of this larger study were to explore two major questions, namely:

(1) What sort of models and methods in implementing trilingual education are being adopted in Hong Kong primary schools? and
(2) Which of these models and methods are the more effective in fostering trilingualism?

In this large scale study, we also focused on the 'proficiency' issue and measured selected students' proficiency in all the three languages on graduation in an attempt to define what it might mean to be 'trilingual and biliterate'. We designed and sent a survey questionnaire to 474 primary schools in Hong Kong in late February 2014. One hundred and fifty-five Hong Kong primary schools participated in this questionnaire survey. The findings suggest that the implementation of trilingual education varied significantly from school to school, and the effectiveness of the trilingual education models varied as well. For example, we found that individual primary schools had adopted their own medium of instruction (MoI) policies in teaching different subjects. In order to answer unanswered questions and to have a clearer picture of how the trilingual education model was being implemented in different schools, follow-up case studies were carried out in three of the surveyed schools in the school year 2014–2015. This book represents the report of this major study.

1.4 The Outline of the Book

This book consists of 10 chapters including a literature review, the methodology, the findings, a discussion of such findings and finally a conclusion stating the significance of the whole study. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, examines the previous research and literature on multilingual/trilingual education, code-switching/code-mixing, and the historical development of the language policy in Hong Kong. Chapter 3, Research Design and Methods, describes the research design for the pilot study, the major survey on trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools and the three case studies. Chapter 4 reports the data collected and analysis on the pilot study. The data collection and findings of the larger scale survey on trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools are reported in Chap. 5. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 report the findings of the three case studies. Discussions and reflections comprise Chap. 9. Finally, Chap. 10 concludes with a discussion of the implications of our findings for the implementation of trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools and their possible relevance beyond Hong Kong.

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