

Chapter 9

Comparisons Across the Three Case Study Schools Regarding Trilingual Education



9.1 Introduction

This chapter compares the three case study schools and their implementation of trilingual education based on the stakeholders' views, namely the school principal, the teachers, the students and the parents, focusing on three issues. The first issue is their perceptions of the trilingual education model implemented in the schools, the second issue is their views on code-mixing in teaching and learning, and the third issue is their views on the use of Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject.

9.2 Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Trilingual Education Models Implemented in the Schools

9.2.1 Students

9.2.1.1 Students' Acceptance of the Trilingual Education Model Implemented in the Schools

In general, the students from the case study schools had positive perceptions of the trilingual education models implemented in the schools as shown in Fig. 9.1. However, students from School A enjoyed the trilingual education the most as they gave item 3 (I enjoy the trilingual education model implemented in the school.) the highest mean score of 3.99 (average mean score across the three schools being 3.73). What is noteworthy is that the non-Chinese students of School A showed a desire to learn more languages, especially Cantonese, so that they can communicate with local people. For example, a P6 student from Africa in School A said, "I like learning the three languages because it will be more convenient for me to order food

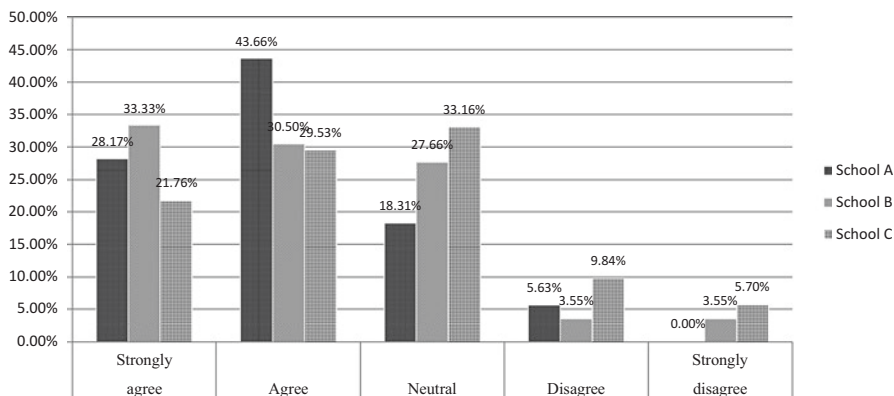


Fig. 9.1 Students' acceptance of the trilingual education model in the researched schools

in a restaurant either in Cantonese or in Putonghua". A P4 Filipino said, "If I learn Cantonese, I can help my mom to translate when buying things in the market". Another Filipino student remarked, "In the past, I could not understand even one word in Cantonese, but now I am happy that I can understand more and more words in Cantonese".

Students from School B were also positive to the trilingual education model implemented in the school though Putonghua played a minor role in teaching and communications, as the Chinese Language subject was taught only in Cantonese and only one lesson per week was assigned to the Putonghua subject. However, the students still enjoyed the current model as they gave item 3 a mean score of 3.89, which is above the average mean score of 3.73. One of the student interviewees said, "We enjoy as we have foreigners and Mainlanders in school, when communicating we will teach them how to speak in Cantonese and Putonghua or vice versa. So we have used to learning the three languages in this way".

In contrast, the students of School C gave item 3 a mean score of only 3.52, which is below the average mean score of 3.73. Not surprisingly, given that they were all locals whose first language was Cantonese, they indicated that they preferred using Cantonese in the study of the Chinese Language subject. The fact that they were all local and L1 speakers of Cantonese may also explain why they reported enjoyed trilingual education the least. An interviewee from School C said, "I preferred using Cantonese in the study of the Chinese Language subject. If Putonghua was used, some classmates would find the lesson boring and became inattentive or fell asleep. Some even failed to answer the teacher's questions, affecting their academic results and thus their learning attitude became worse. This year the situation is improved as Cantonese is used".

Interestingly then, international students appear more supportive of trilingual education than the local students.

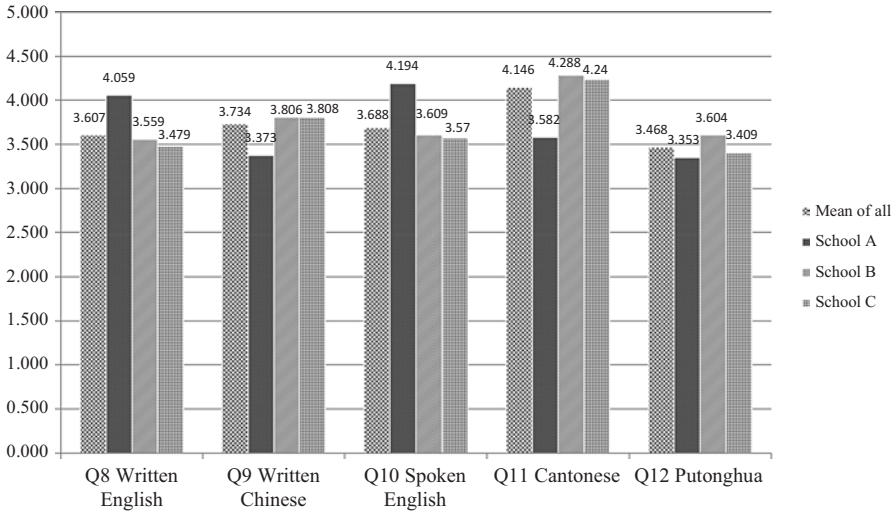


Fig. 9.2 Students' learning progress of the three languages

9.2.1.2 Students' Learning Progress of the Three Languages

Figure 9.2 shows a comparison of students' feedback on their learning progress of the three languages. Students from School A were most satisfied with their progress in the study of written English (item 8: I am satisfied with my progress in the study of written English.) and spoken English (item 10: I am satisfied with my progress in the study of spoken English.), while they were least satisfied with their progress in the study of Putonghua (item 12: I am happy with my progress in the study of Putonghua.). A P4 Filipino said, "I am most satisfied with my progress in the study of English and I am trying to learn more Cantonese and Putonghua". Nine out of eleven interviewees in School A showed that they were not satisfied with their progress in the study of Putonghua. A P4 Canadian pointed out, "I can't speak in Putonghua, but only know how to count the numbers in Putonghua". The one student who was satisfied with her progress in the study of Putonghua comes from Taiwan, and Putonghua is her mother tongue.

Students from both School B and School C were most happy with their progress in the study of Cantonese (item 11: I am happy with my progress in the study of Cantonese.). They gave the highest mean scores to this item (4.29 and 4.24 respectively) which are above the average mean score of 4.15. They were also happy with their progress in the study of written Chinese (item 9: I am satisfied with my progress in the study of written Chinese.). The mean scores of this item from both schools are 3.81 which are above the average mean score of 3.7. Students from School B were least satisfied with their progress in the study of written English. For example, they gave a mean score of 3.56 to item 8 (I am satisfied with my progress

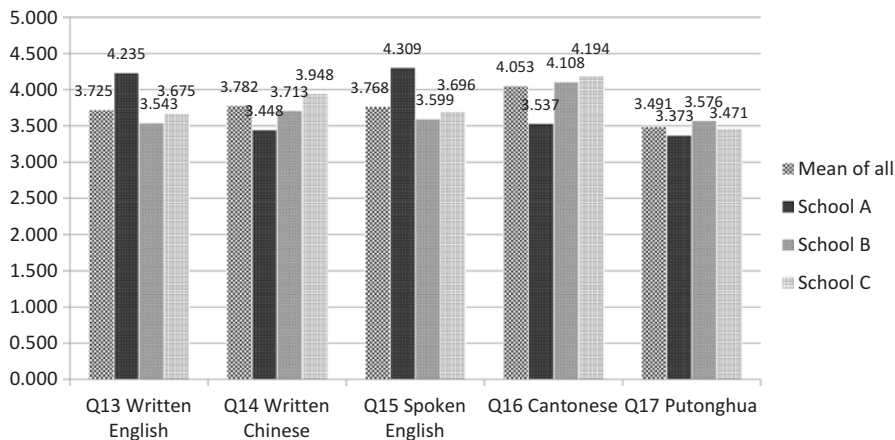


Fig. 9.3 Students' confidence in achieving good proficiency in the three languages

in the study of written English.) which is below the average mean score of 3.61. Indeed, only two out of eight interviewees were satisfied with their progress in the study of written English, while all were satisfied with their progress in the study of spoken English, and five were satisfied with their progress in the study of Putonghua. Students from School C were least happy with their progress in the study of Putonghua. They gave a mean score of 3.41 to item 12 (I am happy with my progress in the study of Putonghua.) which is below the average mean score of 3.47. But half of the eight interviewees reported that they were happy with their progress in the study of Putonghua. The reasons they gave included the improvement in their written Chinese which meant that they could now avoid using Cantonese expressions in writing; they also said that they had passionate Chinese Language subject teachers who taught them well in Putonghua pronunciation.

9.2.1.3 Students' Confidence in Achieving Good Proficiency in the Three Languages

A comparison of students' views on their confidence in achieving good proficiency in the three languages is shown in Fig. 9.3. Students from School A were most confident in achieving good proficiency in both spoken and written English on graduation as they gave item 15 (I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in spoken English.) and item 13 (I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in written English.) the highest mean scores of 4.31 and 4.24, above the average mean scores of 3.77 and 3.73 respectively. A P4 interviewee said, 'Both my spoken and written English can be enhanced when I complete P6 because we have a good English-language environment in school.' Students in this school were least confident in achieving good proficiency in Putonghua as they gave the lowest mean score of 3.36 to item 17 (I am confident that when I

graduate I will achieve good proficiency in Putonghua.) which is below the average mean score of 3.47. A P5 local student said, “My Putonghua is bad. I lose my confidence in it and I don’t think I can make progress in Putonghua when I graduate next year”.

Students from both School B and School C were most confident in achieving good proficiency in Cantonese as they gave the highest mean scores to item 16: I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in Cantonese (4.11 and 4.19 respectively) which are above the average mean score of 4.05. The reason accounting for their confidence in achieving good proficiency in Cantonese is almost certainly because Cantonese is their mother tongue. Students who speak Cantonese at home will not worry about their proficiency in Cantonese, regardless of the languages used in school. Students from both School B and School C were also confident in achieving good proficiency in written Chinese as they gave item 14 (I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in written Chinese.) the second highest mean scores, but only the mean score of School C (3.95) is above the average mean score of 3.78. Students from School B were least confident in achieving good proficiency in written English when they graduate as they gave the lowest mean score of 3.54 to item 13 (I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in written English.), which is below the average mean score of 3.73. In the Focus Group Interview, all the interviewees in School B showed that they were confident in achieving good proficiency in spoken English when they graduate as they agreed the school has provided them with a rich English language environment.

Students from School C were the least confident in achieving good proficiency in Putonghua when they graduate as they gave the lowest mean score of 3.47 to item 17 (I am confident that when I graduate I will achieve good proficiency in Putonghua.) which is below the average mean score of 3.49. Only four out of eight interviewees expressed confidence in their language proficiency in Putonghua. One P6 interviewee said, “I have more confidence in English than in Putonghua. In English, we just need to spell the words but we need to put more time on practicing pinyin (聲母及韻母) in Putonghua which is rather difficult. Otherwise, we cannot learn Putonghua well”.

However, when we compare the mean scores provided by the 155 school principals (see questionnaire survey discussed in Chap. 5) with those of students from the three case study schools, the students were more optimistic towards their proficiency level in the three languages on the occasion of their graduation than the principals. In general, the students gave higher mean scores to the proficiency level of Cantonese, spoken English, written Chinese and written English. The exception was Putonghua. Putonghua received a mean score of 3.49 from the students, which is lower than the mean score of 3.7 given by the principals. These results are shown in Fig. 9.4.

In summary, students in School A (a mixture of many nationalities) were most positive about the trilingual education model adopted in their school. Students in School C (100% local Hongkongers) were least positive about the trilingual education model adopted in their school. Students in School B (67% local Hongkongers,

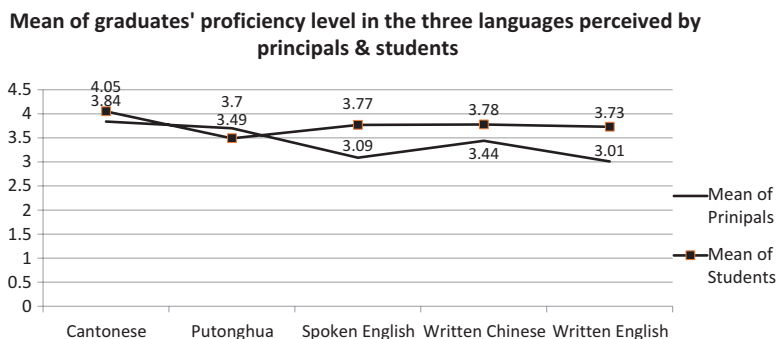


Fig. 9.4 Mean of graduates' proficiency level in the three languages perceived by principals & students

the rest from other ethnic backgrounds) hold a view in-between. Using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject in Hong Kong is still controversial. Local Cantonese students prefer using Cantonese as the MoI, but students from other ethnic backgrounds seem to be more positive towards using Putonghua. It is important to note, therefore, how the linguistic backgrounds of the students influence their views towards trilingual education. It is also important to note how the schools shape the ways they implement trilingual education, based on the needs and linguistic backgrounds of the students. We return to this point later.

9.2.2 Parents

The trilingual education model implemented in the three schools might not have been the most compelling feature for parents when choosing the primary schools for their children as only seven (22.6%) took the trilingual education model in school into their consideration. Parents also considered other factors such as the closeness of the school, the school motto, and the school ethos etc. Parents from the Mainland were supportive of their children language learning in Cantonese as they realised Cantonese is the mother tongue of local people in Hong Kong. This echoes Bacon-Shone and Bolton's (2008, p. 27) view that immigrants and their children from the different dialect areas of China can (and most do) quickly learn Cantonese. The parents, including both the local and those came from the Mainland, were not in opposition to the teaching of Putonghua as a subject, but nine (29.03%) disapproved of using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject.

When considering if English could be used in teaching other subjects in school, 27 parents (87.1%) suggested that Computing, Mathematics and the science topics in General Studies could be taught in English so that their children could adapt well to the EMI secondary schools that they all wanted to send their children to. These parents are thus no different from the majority of parents in Hong Kong who favour EMI secondary schools (Kan et al. 2011). As noted earlier, parents prefer EMI sec-

ondary schools and are reluctant to send their children to CMI schools (Pan 2000, p. 61) because six of the eight government-funded universities are all English medium, as are all of the private universities (Kirkpatrick 2014). Parents from School A and School B were confident that their children's English language proficiency would be adequate when they graduate as they feel that the schools have provided students with an English language environment enhanced by the presence of students who are not ethnic Chinese.

Parents' views vary on whether children should learn other languages together with their mother tongue in the early years in schooling. 79.97% of parents agreed that children should learn the three languages at the same time in the early years in schooling. They believed that small children can learn languages easily, especially the able students. Those who did not agree did so because they were afraid that learning three languages at the same time would cause confusion to their children and they believed that children learn better in their mother tongue and this should therefore be taught first and be the MoI. Parents' views were also influenced by the languages they themselves spoke and some were worried that they would not be able to help their children in all three of the languages.

9.3 Stakeholders' Views on Code-Switching/Code-Mixing in Teaching and Learning

9.3.1 Students

In response to questions about the use of code-switching, students from School A were more accepting of switching from one language to another when studying different subjects in the school as they gave the highest mean score of 3.83 to item 4 (I find it acceptable switching from one language to another when studying different subjects in the school.) which is above the average mean score of 3.69. Students from this school also found code-mixing in different subjects most useful for their language development in general as they gave a mean score of 4 to item 7 (I find code-switching in different subjects useful for my language development in general.) which is above the average mean score of 3.68, while the mean scores of the other two schools are below the average mean score. The P5 interviewees who are not ethnic Chinese in School A would like their teachers to code-mix between Cantonese/Putonghua and English in Chinese Language subject lessons, and between Cantonese and English in Mathematics lessons. A P5 Filipino said, "I prefer the teachers code-switching between English and Cantonese/Putonghua in Chinese Language lesson so that I can remember the content better and learn more Chinese words". Another P5 Filipino said, "Most of the subjects are taught in Cantonese and we really do not understand if the teachers do not explain in English. I would like the teachers to use English to help me understand the content". Two P4 Filipinos pointed out that they sometimes used code-mixing when communicating with local students because they thought this would be easier and could be understood, e.g.,

“你有冇(in Cantonese) finish your homework?” meaning ‘Have you finished your homework?’

“我爸爸 (in Putonghua) is good” meaning “My father is good”.

Students’ opinions on code-mixing varied in School B. On one hand, the mean scores of items 4–6 from School B are above the average mean scores while the mean score of item 7 is a bit below the average. In School B, about half of P4-P6 students found code-mixing in different subjects useful for their language development in general; but 15% of them did not agree to this and 27% of them had no opinion (item 7: I find code-switching in different subjects useful for my language development in general). On the other hand, five out of the eight interviewees said that they did not find code-mixing in different subjects useful for their language development in general. One student said, “We can’t learn a language if we are too dependent on teachers’ translation”. Students from School B found themselves code-mixing between English and Cantonese while studying English, as they gave the highest mean score of 3.53 to item 5 (I find myself code-switching between English and Cantonese regularly during the study of the English subject.) which is above the average mean score of 3.41. One student said, “We can easily understand what the teachers say if Cantonese is used to explain the English vocabularies”.

Fewer students from School C found code-mixing acceptable as the mean scores of items 4–7 of this school are below the average mean scores. There are reasons to explain this phenomenon. First, all the students in School C are local Hongkongers and are L1 speakers of Cantonese. Second, Cantonese is the major MoI in most subjects in the school. Third, teachers insist on using almost 100% English in English Language lessons and almost 100% Putonghua in Chinese Language subject lessons (P1–P4) and in Putonghua subject lessons (P1–P6).

To conclude, students from School A were found more accepting of switching from one language to another when studying different subjects based on the survey. The opinions on this issue from the non-Chinese students in School A varied in the Focus Group Interview. Four of them did not accept mixed code in Chinese Language and Putonghua learning even though they liked to use mixed code between English and Cantonese/Putonghua when communicating with the Hongkongers. In the Focus Group Interview, one said, “I don’t like my teacher to teach me in mixed code. My teacher encourages me to listen to her and she will speak every word in Cantonese/Putonghua so that I will understand and then I will just understand people when they speak in Cantonese/Putonghua. But sometimes I have difficulty in speaking both languages”. Another four non-Chinese students accepted mixed code with one of them noting, “I can learn and understand more Chinese words if the teachers express the words in English and I can remember them better”. Only one of the interviewees, a Taiwanese, did not object to her English Language subject teacher using mixed code in teaching, saying “I have lost confidence in my English proficiency as my English Language subject teacher uses 100% English in teaching and I cannot understand her well”.

In the survey, students’ opinions on this issue from School B varied. In the interview, three out of eight students in this school accepted mixed code in learning. As one said, “We can easily understand what the teacher says if Cantonese is used to

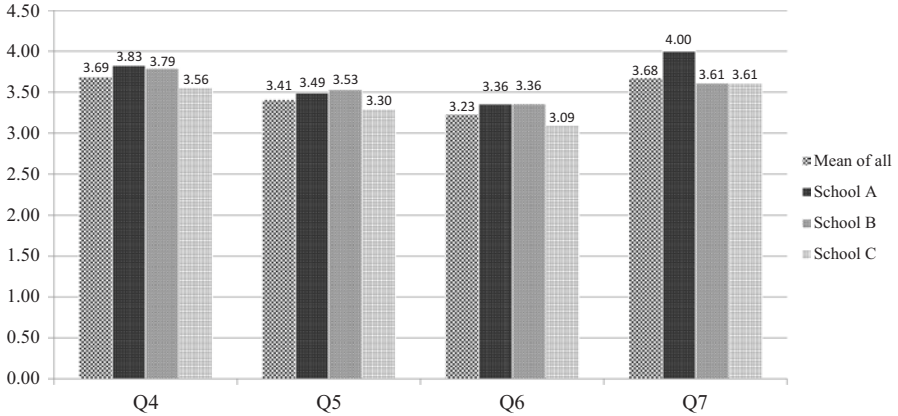


Fig. 9.5 Students' feedback on code-mixing in learning

explain the English vocabularies". Mixed code is not acceptable because students did not want to be too dependent on teacher's translation and they wanted to take the initiative to learn. In School C, the majority (six out of eight interviewees) accepted mixed code which contradicts the results from the survey that fewer students from this school were accepting of the use of mixed code in teaching and learning. One of them pointed out, "Using 100% English can benefit us when we are going for an interview in the future" (Fig. 9.5).

9.3.2 Teachers

From class observations, teachers' reflections and teacher interviews in the three case study schools, two significant points can be identified concerning their perceptions of the role of code-mixing.

First, regarding language teaching, the English Language subject teachers in the three schools (two from each school) were consistent regarding their beliefs and classroom practices in that they all felt it was important to provide students with a rich English language environment. In practice, they all used 100% English in their teaching, and insisted their students to raise and answer questions in English so that they could practise the language as much as possible. Only one of the teachers, who was teaching P1 English in School C, stated in her reflection form that she would only use Cantonese if her students could not understand her instructions. The Chinese Language subject teachers who used Putonghua as the MoI (Schools A and C) varied in their perceptions. Those who taught the Chinese Language subject in senior grades insisted on using 100% Putonghua, while those teaching the junior grades were more flexible and tolerant, explaining the content with some Cantonese and allowing their students to raise and answer questions in Cantonese. In regard to teaching the Putonghua subject (Schools B and C), the teachers shared the same

views with the English Language subject teachers, saying that they used 100% Putonghua in class and believed this would help their students enhance their Putonghua proficiency. The students also agreed that the language teachers strictly followed the MoI policies in language teaching. In general, the practice of code-mixing is relatively rare in language teaching classrooms in the case-study schools.

To turn now to the subject teachers, they were more flexible and tolerant towards code-mixing, especially when the MoI of the subjects was English for a number of reasons: first, teaching Mathematics, General Studies, Music, Visual Arts, Physical Education and Computer Science is unlike teaching languages as the focus is teaching students the subject knowledge but not the language itself; second, teachers believe students could learn and understand better in their mother tongue if the MoI of the subjects is an L2.

Code-mixing to any extent is found only in Schools A and B because, as noted earlier, Cantonese is the only MoI (other than for English and Putonghua) in School C. When teachers in Schools A and B used code-mixing they did so for a variety of reasons, including emphasis, clarification, mode shift and translation. In School A, the MoI in teaching P6 General Studies is half in English and half in Cantonese as there were nine students who are not ethnic Chinese in the class. The teacher prepared PowerPoint presentations and learning materials in both languages. Mixed code was used for instructions. For instance, she said, “仲未有書的,自己起身”。 Those who have no books, stand up”. In this case, the teacher just translated her instruction from Cantonese to English. This use of code-mixing for classroom management is common (Ferguson 2003). The theme of the lesson was to introduce the signing of Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Mainland China and Hong Kong. Instead of using the standard Chinese translation of 更緊密經貿關係安排, the English term ‘CEPA’ was used throughout the lesson even when the teacher was explaining in Cantonese. This is probably because the Chinese translation requires an additional five characters or syllables and there is no workable Chinese abbreviation (Li 2008, p. 83). Moreover, the ‘principle of economy’ is at work in bilingual conversation (Li 2000, 2008) and by so doing, the teacher can help introduce or consolidate students’ bilingual lexicon (Li 2008, p. 84). The teacher also switched between English and Cantonese for elaboration, clarification and checking for understanding. Students answered questions in the same language as used by the teacher. This is code-mixing to help pupils understand the subject matter of their lessons and also to help to establish interpersonal relations and rapport. The other teacher from School A who taught P1 General Studies used 100% English in her class as the MoI is English. However, she wrote down in her reflection form that she would switch to Cantonese if her students failed to follow her instructions given in English.

In School B, an English textbook is used for P3 Mathematics and the teacher used mainly Cantonese, supplemented by English as the MoI. For example, when the teacher wanted to express “three times two equals six”, she would say, “三 times 二就係六” in mixed code. In another case, the teacher said, “There are eight hats. 個度有八隻帽!” She switched for translation and focus. In her interview, the teacher noted that using the mother tongue to explain the abstract mathematical concepts would be easier for student understanding, and the student interviewees agreed as well.

Our findings show that the functions of code-mixing are similar to those identified by McClure (1977), Guthrie (1983), Camilleri (1996), Ferguson (2003) and Li (2008). These functions are for clarification, easy understanding, elaboration and building rapport with students. Hirvela and Law (1991) suggest that teachers can use their judgement about when to use, and when to avoid, mixed code instruction. In the case studies, the language teachers preferred not to use mixed code in language teaching in general so as to provide students with a good language learning environment. Teachers teaching other subjects like Music and General Studies, however, used mixed code for a variety of well-established reasons.

9.3.3 Principals

The principals all indicated their disapproval of code-mixing, as the schools had to follow the language policies laid down by the Education Bureau. Moreover, they appeared to believe that students could best learn a language effectively without switching or mixing with other languages. However, the principal in School B had to condone code-mixing when the situation changed in his school. Recently, the school had changed the MoI of Mathematics from Cantonese to English, starting with P1 and gradually moving up the grades year by year. However, the mathematical concepts are usually abstract and it is not easy for less able children to understand. In this situation, the teachers sometimes had to use both Cantonese and English when teaching Mathematics. Therefore, the principal had to condone code-switching. Moreover, as mentioned in Chap. 2 (Sect. 2.2.1), Gauci and Camilleri Grima (2013) pointed out that code-switching and the use of Maltese (L1) were employed as pedagogical tools in teaching Italian in Malta and the younger and weaker learners could benefit more. We think some principals were prepared to allow code-switching if it helped children learn.

9.4 Stakeholders' Views on Using Putonghua as MoI in Teaching the Chinese Language Subject

Currently, primary and secondary schools may choose to use either Cantonese and/or Putonghua as the MoI for teaching the Chinese Language Subject having consideration of their own circumstances, such as proficiency and expertise of their teachers, the levels of their students, and the availability of learning and teaching resources/support (Legislative Council 2016). 16.4% of Hong Kong primary schools fully adopted PMIC (Putonghua as the MoI for teaching Chinese) in the 2015/2016 school year (The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) 2016), largely as a result of parental preference and government policy to subsidise school's financial outlay in employing more Putonghua subject teachers under the Support Scheme which operated from 2008–2009 to 2013–2014.

There has been much public debate about the effectiveness of using Putonghua versus Cantonese as the medium of instruction in Chinese language lessons (Tse 2009, p. 245). Is PMIC indeed beneficial for students' learning of the Chinese language? Some believe that PMIC can boost students' Chinese Language enhancement; while others object to the implementation of PMIC as they are worried that too much emphasis would be placed on Putonghua proficiency, at the expense of the learning of Chinese language and literature, the two most important aspects in learning Chinese. Some are also concerned that students' Cantonese proficiency would be undermined (Legislative Council 2016). This is why it is enlightening to study the students' attitudes towards using Putonghua as the MoI in the study of the Chinese Language subject.

9.4.1 Students

In School A, Putonghua has been the MoI for the Chinese Language subject since September 2008. School B first used Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject when it opened in 2000. In September 2009, however, Cantonese replaced Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject when the present Principal in School B found that using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject was ineffective, as many students were unmotivated in class, being unable to follow PMI. Therefore, the discussion on the use of Putonghua as an MoI excludes School B. School C used Putonghua as the MoI for the Chinese Language subject in September 2008, starting at P2 and gradually including the later levels until all Chinese Language subject classes from P2 to P6 were PMI. Cantonese remained the MoI for P1. From September 2014 onward, School C changed this system adopting Putonghua as the MoI for the Chinese Language subject from P1 to P4 but using Cantonese as the MoI for P5–P6.

In the survey, students from School C were more negative towards using Putonghua in studying the Chinese Language subject. They gave a mean score of 2.63 to item 1 (I find it appropriate to use Putonghua to study the Chinese Language subject.) while students of School A gave this a mean score of 3.44. Moreover, Fig. 9.6 shows that 30% of students from School C chose 'strongly disagree' regarding this item compared to only 4% of the students in School A.

In the interview, the non-Chinese students in School A noted that it was easier for them to learn how to speak Chinese (Putonghua) than to learn how to write in Chinese. The reason might be that it is comparatively easy to learn *pinyin* (the alphabetic writing system developed for Putonghua), but it is difficult to learn to write Chinese characters. Although there are Romanisation methods for Cantonese, they are not taught in school. Some teachers allowed the students in School A to use English to raise questions in the Chinese Language lessons. The teachers would then show the students how to ask the questions in Cantonese or Putonghua and then require them to repeat the questions in Cantonese or Putonghua. A Canadian student in P4 stated, "When we ask questions in English, the teachers will show us how to say it in Cantonese/Putonghua and we are encouraged to repeat it in Cantonese/Putonghua".

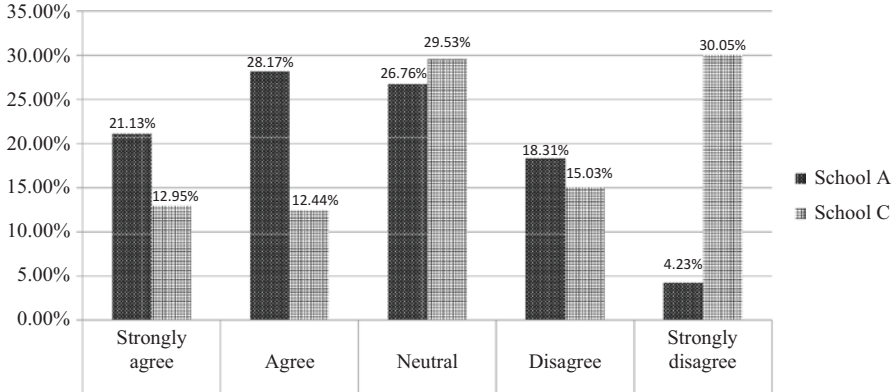


Fig. 9.6 Students' feedback on the appropriateness of using Putonghua in studying the Chinese Language subject

The P5–P6 student interviewees from School C said that they preferred Cantonese as the MoI for the Chinese Language subject and this might explain why students of this school reported enjoying trilingual education the least, remembering that these students are all local L1 speakers of Cantonese. A P6 student (who had been using Putonghua to study the Chinese Language subject in the past 5 years) said, “I think it’s better to use Cantonese to study the subject. It is because some students could not understand the teacher well when Putonghua is used”. A P5 student (who had been using Putonghua to study the subject in the past 4 years) said, “I prefer using Cantonese. My Dictation performance would be affected if the words are pronounced in Putonghua as there are always misunderstandings when hearing the pronunciations”.

In addition, Putonghua grammar matches the standard written Chinese grammar and there is a slogan for using Putonghua: 我手寫我口 (My hand writes down what I say). However, students who do not favour the use of Putonghua are, not surprisingly, those who do not understand Putonghua. As a result, they are inattentive and noisy in class as they find the Chinese Language lessons boring. There are fewer interactions between teachers and students and fewer students are willing to answer the teachers’ questions when using Putonghua. For example, a student from School C said, “I also prefer using Cantonese because some of the words in Putonghua are retroflex and when we do not pronounce them properly, they will become other words with different meanings, making classmates laugh. Since we learnt Cantonese when we were very young, it is easier to understand the teachers”.

The above findings show that students’ attitudes towards PMIC varied and depends on their linguistic backgrounds and attitudes. This means that schools need to take these matters into consideration when designing ways of implementing trilingual education. Local contexts and the needs and abilities of the students, coupled with the expertise and proficiency of the teachers are all factors which need to be taken into consideration. As we shall suggest later, the actual model for the implementation of trilingual education needs to be decided at the school level when the local context and situation can be factored in to the decision making.

9.4.2 Parents

Thirteen of the thirty-one parent interviewees in the three schools, explicitly supported the schools' policies of using Putonghua as the MoI in the teaching of the Chinese Language subject. They believed that Putonghua is a global language that students need to learn as soon as possible for the future and they thought using PMI could enhance students' writing skill in Chinese. Those who were not in favour of this policy believed that students could learn the Chinese Language subject better in their mother tongue. Since some of the parents did not themselves speak Putonghua, they pointed out that they could not help their children and would need to pay extra tuition fees for extra Putonghua classes and tutors.

9.4.3 Teachers

The majority of the Chinese Language subject teachers of the three schools had reservations about using Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject. They did not believe that using PMI could enhance the student writing skills. In reality, they doubted the effectiveness of using PMI. They found students were not motivated in class activities when using PMI, resulting in less interaction between teachers and students and between students and students.

9.4.4 Principals

Only the principal of School A, who shared the same views as his School's Sponsoring Body, was supportive of using Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject. The principal of School B was not in favour of using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject. He firmly believed that using mother tongue was the most effective way of enhancing students' language proficiency in Chinese. Therefore, he changed the school policy from using PMI to using CMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject. The principal of School C faced parents who were opposed to the use of PMI for teaching Chinese and poor TSA results. He decided on a compromise, using PMI to teach the Chinese Language subject from P1 to P4 and then Cantonese to teach it for the final 2 years of primary school.

9.4.5 Concluding Remarks

The different attitudes of the stakeholders towards using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in the three researched schools are summarised in Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 respectively. The different views show that using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject remains a controversial issue in Hong Kong primary schools.

Table 9.1 Different attitudes towards using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in School A

School sponsoring body	Principal	Chinese Language subject teachers (3)	Student interviewees (11)	Parents (10)
The Catholic Diocesan schools began to use Putonghua as MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in 2008, believing that using PMI not only can enhance students' writing skill but also help students further their studies or develop future careers in Mainland	He supported the language policy laid down by the sponsoring body. He pointed out that students should start learning Putonghua, which is a global language, as early as possible	They did not agree that using PMI could enhance student writing skills in Chinese and they pointed out that students could enhance their writing skills by reading more books. They believed students could learn better in their mother tongue. Also the language environment for learning Putonghua was not so rich in HK, hindering the student learning in Putonghua	Two local students disagreed with the policy and they would prefer to use their mother tongue in learning the Chinese Language subject. As for the non-local students, they were neutral but stated that the Romanisation system of <i>pinyin</i> made it easier for them to learn Putonghua	Five local parents and three that came from Mainland agreed with using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject as they thought Putonghua was becoming more important in the world and it could help enhance students' writing skill in Chinese. Two non-local parents were neutral

9.5 Issues of Language Policies in the Researched Schools

The implementation of the Internationalised Curriculum in School A and the increasing number of non-Chinese students has paved the way for changing the MoI of subjects including Mathematics, General Studies, Visual Arts, Music, Physical Education and Computer Science. While these subjects are not taught 100% in English across the whole school, the school has gradually changed the MoI of these subjects into 100% English from junior grades to senior grades. In addition, Putonghua is used as the MoI in the teaching of the Chinese Language subject from P1 to P6. It is possible, therefore, that Cantonese will play an increasingly minor role as a language of education in the school in future. The non-local students at School A are more likely to develop better proficiency in Putonghua and English than in Cantonese.

School B is also experiencing an increase of students who are not ethnic Chinese and the school has adopted English as the MoI in teaching Mathematics and Science topics, initially in junior grades while gradually moving up to senior grades. In the future, English is likely to play a more important role in the school as English could be adopted as the MoI for subjects like Visual Arts, Music, PE and Computer Science. Cantonese will still be used as one of the major MoIs in subjects such as the Chinese Language subject. Only the Putonghua subject itself is taught in Putonghua. One would therefore expect students from School B to be more proficient in Cantonese and English than in Putonghua upon graduation.

Table 9.2 Different attitudes towards using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in School B

School sponsoring body	Principal	Chinese Language subject teacher (1)	Student interviewees (8)	Parents (10)
The school adopted Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject when it started to operate in Sept 2000 because they believed using PMI could enhance student language proficiency in Chinese	When the present principal came to the school in 2008, he found that students were unmotivated in learning the subject and obtaining poor results. He believed using PMI was a gimmick and a political issue which cannot enhance student language proficiency in Chinese. It took time for him to persuade the teachers to use Cantonese instead	She considered using Putonghua as the MoI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in the school was not very effective and students were as interested in learning as when using Cantonese as the MoI in teaching the subject	Two P6 students had experienced using PMI in learning the Chinese subject and they were not in favour of this policy as they wanted to learn in their mother tongue. They also pointed out that they could not easily understand the content when using PMI and there was always laughter in class because of the mispronunciation of the words. Others were happy about using their mother tongue in learning the subject	Three parents agreed with using PMI in teaching the Chinese subject as they thought Putonghua was a world-wide language which could help students write better Chinese without using colloquial language. Another three strongly opposed the use of PMI as they believed students learnt the subject better in their mother tongue and because they could not provide a rich language environment in Putonghua at home. The others were neutral

Trilingual education is implemented across fewer subjects in School C when compared with the other two schools. English is used as the MoI only for the teaching of the English Language subject itself and Putonghua is used only as the MoI for teaching the Putonghua subject and the Chinese Language subject from P1 to P4. Cantonese remains the MoI for all other subjects. One would expect graduates from this school to be highly proficient in Cantonese, but less so in both Putonghua and English.

What these three case studies have shown is how individual schools have adopted trilingual education in ways that are tailored to the needs of the school and the linguistic backgrounds and needs of the students. All three schools will be able to produce graduates who are functionally trilingual and biliterate, but with different levels of proficiency in each of the three languages. We would argue that ways of implementing trilingual education in Hong Kong is indeed best left to the schools to decide for themselves, rather than having a model of trilingual education imposed upon them. Each school is different and no one knows the school and its students as well as the Principal and the teachers. We suggest therefore, that the Principal and teachers should be allowed to decide the model of trilingual education they would like their school to adopt. A school-based bottom-up approach to developing a

Table 9.3 Different attitudes towards using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject in School C

School sponsoring body	Principal	Chinese Language subject teachers (2)	Student interviewees (8)	Parents (11)
The sponsoring body thought using PMI could be one of the strategies to attract more parents to choose the school as the use of PMI was becoming increasingly popular.	The present principal was not the initiator of the policy. He faced a dilemma of complaints from parents who urged the use of Cantonese in teaching the Chinese Language subject while some teachers were not competent enough to teach Chinese in PMI. To make a balance, he decided to use Cantonese in P5–P6 in the hope that students could achieve better results in the TSA oral test	The teacher who used PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject thought the policy was more desirable for more capable students. The Panel (Head) of Chinese Language subject agree that using PMI could enhance student language proficiency in Chinese but she also pointed out that students were not motivated when learning the subject in Putonghua. However, the teachers would follow the school policy	Among the eight interviewees, six were from P5 to P6. Having experienced the use of PMI in learning the Chinese Language subject, they welcomed the change of the policy, using Cantonese in the subject as they could understand better and be more involved in class activities. As for the two P4 interviewees, they were neutral to the policy	Six parents were opposed to using PMI in teaching the Chinese Language subject as they had not seen any significant impact from using PMI on the improvement of their children's language proficiency in written Chinese. They also thought the use of the mother tongue could be used for understanding. They added they could not help their children do revisions as they did not know Putonghua. Five supported the policy as they believed PMI could enhance their children's language proficiency in Chinese

policy for trilingual education in Hong Kong is far more likely to be successful than a top-down policy devised by 'experts' in the Education Department.

References

- Bacon-Shone, J., & Bolton, K. (2008). Bilingualism and multilingualism in the HKSAR: Language surveys and Hong Kong's changing linguistic profile. In K. Bolton & Y. Han (Eds.), *Language and society in Hong Kong* (pp. 25–51). Hong Kong: Open University of Hong Kong Press.
- Camilleri, A. (1996). Language values and identities: Code-switching in secondary classrooms in Malta. *Linguistics and Education*, 8(1), 85–103.

- Ferguson, G. (2003). Classroom code-switching in post-colonial contexts: Functions, attitudes and policies. In S. Makoni & U. Meinhof (Eds.), *AILA review 16: Africa and applied linguistics* (pp. 38–51). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Gauci, H., & Camilleri Grima, A. (2013). Code-switching as a tool in teaching Italian in Malta. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 16(5), 615–631.
- Guthrie, L. F. (1983). *Contrasts in teachers' language use in a Chinese-English bilingual classroom*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED275140.pdf>
- Hirvela, A., & Law, E. (1991). A survey of local English language subject teachers' attitudes towards English and ELT. *Institute of Language in Education Journal*, 8, 25–38.
- Kan, V., Lai, K. C., Kirkpatrick, A., & Law, A. (2011). *Fine-tuning Hong Kong's medium of instruction policy*. Hong Kong: Strategic Planning Office & Research Centre into Language Education and Acquisition in Multilingual Societies, The Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2014). The language(s) of HE: EMI and/or ELF and/or multilingualism? *Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 4–15.
- Legislative Council. (2016). *Background brief on using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese language subject in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong* (LC Paper No. CB(4)1181/15-16(03)). Retrieved from <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr15-16/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20160702cb4-1181-3-e.pdf>
- Li, D. C. S. (2000). Cantonese-English code-switching in Hong Kong a Y2K review. *World Englishes*, 19(3), 305–322.
- Li, D. C. S. (2008). Understanding mixed code and classroom code-switching: Myth and realities. *New Horizons in Education*, 56(3), 75–87.
- McClure, E. F. (1977). *Aspects of code-switching in the discourse of bilingual Mexican-American children* (Technical Report, 44).
- Pan, S. (2000). Hong Kong's bilingual past and present. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 10(1), 57–65.
- The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR). (2016). *Territory-wide survey on the use of Putonghua as medium of instruction to teach Chinese Language (PMIC) in schools of Hong Kong*. Retrieved from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201802/07/P20180207000609.htm>
- Tse, S. K. (2009). Chinese language education in Hong Kong: Twenty-five years of educational research in Hong Kong. *Educational Research Journal*, 24, 231–255.