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David C. S. Li

Multilingual Hong Kong: Languages, Literacies and Identities

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David C. S. Li
Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Hung Hom, Kowloon
Hong Kong

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Preface

As a student of linguistics and modern languages, I still remember being fascinated, in the early 1990s, by the variety and ubiquity of miscellaneous Chinese-English admixtures in Hong Kong Chinese newspaper columns, in the popular as much as the quality press. My prior training till then – BA in English (Hong Kong), MA in French applied linguistics (France), PhD in general linguistics (Germany) – did not quite prepare me to make sense of those intricate types of language contact phenomena. After collecting newspaper data in the form of clippings for over three years almost every day, ad hoc and randomly as the sundry examples of various linguistic interest came to my attention, I decided to give it a try: to analyze and write up some of the observations based on that body of data and the literature (mainly code-switching and code-mixing, or translanguaging following more recent terminology) that I could find and lay my hands on. These efforts gradually culminated in a departmental research report (Li 1994), which later appeared, unfortunately with neither review nor much alteration, in a monograph published by the same publisher of my doctoral dissertation (Li 1991, 1996). Rather than rejoicing at that 1996 publication, however, I soon realized that the content within its covers was far from something that its author could be proud of, because it was under-researched and did not live up to the high quality and standards expected of rigorous scholarship in academia. I knew this for, when Li (1996) got cited occasionally, it was more often than not for the wrong reason. That was before the Internet era – not so much an excuse as a note for the record, that coping with logographic Chinese data, electronically or in print, was anything but obvious. Since then, I have always wished to be able to follow it up with a piece of work that will not only update the kinds of Chinese-English language contact phenomena discussed in Li (1996), but also contextualize the analysis and discussion against a fuller picture, taking into account insights beyond contrastive linguistics to include relevant factors adduced from neighboring sub-disciplines ranging from psycholinguistics (notably first and second language acquisition) and sociolinguistics to more recent breakthroughs in neuroscience research. As of 2014, when I was invited to propose a book for Springer, such a knowledge gap remained as conspicuous as ever. Compared with the mid-1990s, there has been one significant change however: Chinese word-processing is now a breeze, thanks to exciting breakthroughs in information and communication technologies (ICT) in Greater China. So, some 20 years later, seeing no sign of my fascination subsiding, I am grateful and pleased to have been given this opportunity to write this book which, I hope the reader will agree, will complement what was said in Li (1996) on one hand, and rectify or enrich its rudimentary analyses on the other.

The ‘fuller picture’ alluded to above comprises two key domains where the Chinese-English admixtures are the most ‘rampant’, namely in the friendship domain characterized by informal communication between plurilinguals who are absorbed in making meaning, and in education where teachers and students are engaged in classroom teaching and learning, especially of content subjects. Both domains are implicated, in that ‘code-mixing’ or ‘mixed code’ is widely perceived as pathological and symptomatic of the plurilinguals’ inability to adhere to a ‘pure’ language, Chinese or English. This matters a lot when speaker identity is foregrounded, as in the first encounter between new acquaintances. A heavy ‘code-mixer’ who appears to lose control of inserting chunks of English randomly in his or her Cantonese risks being seen as a show-off, a language attitude or identity attribute (or both) that would likely affect the prospect of growth or development in their friendship (see, e.g., the negotiation of identity between Cantonese-dominant speakers and “overseas returning bilinguals” or returnees, K. H.-Y. Chen 2008). In the school setting, for over two decades, EMI teachers’ professional competence may be questioned if they ‘fail’ to control their impulse of sprinkling Cantonese of various lengths into their otherwise ‘pure’ English. Such a pervasive negative attitude towards ‘code-mixing’, less so in society than in school, is arguably socially constructed, especially via public media. Implicit in this negative attitude is a normative albeit outdated monolingual ideology and yardstick.

The popular perception of ‘mixed code’ being socially objectionable is clearly rooted in the colonial government’s language-in-education policy. In successive, widely publicized education policy consultation papers and official reports since the 1990s, teachers’ allegedly unprincipled ‘code-mixing’ in class is portrayed as the main culprit behind Hong Kong students’ lack-luster performance in their learning and use of English (and Chinese). Such a stance has informed and been inherited by the Hong Kong SAR government’s ‘biliteracy and trilingualism’ policy,[1] and yet the ‘late immersion’ for English, targeting about 30% of primary school-leavers according to the dual medium of instruction (MoI) streaming policy implemented since 1998, has failed to produce better language learning outcomes as measured against secondary school-leavers’ overall results in their HKDSE subjects English and Chinese Language.

Formally launched by the first Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa shortly after the handover in July 1997, the biliteracy and trilingualism policy is almost as old as the history of the SAR itself. It has since exerted and will continue to exert tremendous influence on successive generations growing up in decolonized and renationalized Hong Kong. Why are Hongkongers expected to become

[1] **兩文三語** (*loeng*[23]*man*[21]*saam*[55]*jyu*[23]/*liǎng wén sān yǔ*).

biliterate in Chinese and English, and trilingual in English, Putonghua in addition to Cantonese? What are the geopolitical and socioeconomic forces underpinning these goals? What sorts of language standards are expected of the SAR's citizenry, and how feasible are these goalposts for Chinese and non-Chinese Hongkongers? Some two decades have elapsed since various policy measures have been in place, how effective are these measures? Are there alternative curricular, including MoI, arrangements whereby the language learning efforts could be made more efficient and productive? Further, from the point of view of the deployment of resources to support students' language learning and development from primary to tertiary levels, is there room for rethinking the timing, mode and intensity of language enhancement support, for example, to strengthen the types of language exposure to and quality of input in the target languages provided to kindergarteners? This book was conceived to address these questions.

Since Hong Kong's sovereignty was returned to the People's Republic on 1 July 1997, the medium of instruction debate has been widened to include the possibility of using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject from Primary 1. Since the 1990s, the education authorities have issued a clear guideline advising teachers (especially those in English-medium schools) against using classroom code-switching (CCS) or 'code-mixing' (more commonly referred to as 'mixed code'), on the grounds that it would detract from the pedagogical principle of maximizing students' exposure to English (i.e., the 'maximum exposure, no mixing' guideline). Notwithstanding such a guideline, research evidence to date suggests that it has not put CCS to rest.

Since 1998, Putonghua has become an integral part of the primary and secondary school curriculum (Ho, 1999). The SAR government has made it clear that teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP) will be a long-term goal, if for various reasons TCP could not be implemented in the near future. Evidence-based support to date, however, sounds neither convincing nor promising. According to two news reports in June 2016 (i-Cable report 2016; Sing Tao Daily 2016), an EDB-commissioned longitudinal study since 2012 involving students in four participating TCP schools has failed to yield any compelling evidence that TCP helps Cantonese-L1 pupils learn Chinese more effectively. Details of the commissioned research report have yet to be made public. Based on what has been transpired in public media, there is some indication that students in TCP classes have made moderate progress and some advantage over their Cantonese-medium peers in listening, reading and writing skills, although the advantage in writing gradually narrowed after the TCP students progressed to lower secondary. As for speaking skills, compared with TCP students, their peers in the Cantonese-medium classes were found to be much more active in speaking tasks during Chinese Language lessons. Whether TCP is conducive to the learning of Standard Written Chinese (SWC), therefore, remains a moot point (see Chap. 7 for more in-depth discussion).

My Plurilingual Profile and Use of Autobiographical Language Learning Data Despite being born to Hakka parents, I became Cantonese-dominant after schooling started at about age 6, probably as a result of Cantonese-medium primary schools in post-war Hong Kong being “a melting pot of various local, ethnic cultures” (So 1998, p. 158). As I went up the educational hierarchy from primary to tertiary, I have had the opportunity to learn Mandarin (Putonghua), French and German in addition to English, which gave me plenty of first-hand experiences in foreign-language learning. Part of these personal, autobiographical data will be exemplified for illustration in various parts of the book. This is in keeping with the ‘autobiographical turn’ in applied linguistics research whereby language learners’ life histories, journals, diaries, etc. are no longer seen as unsuitable for research purposes. On the contrary, self-reflection-based language learning and teaching practices are now widely recognized as having a special place in theory-building in additional-language-learning research, even though the use of the researcher’s own autobiographical language-learning experience as data is still relatively rare. Pavlenko (2007) stresses the “interpretive nature of autobiographic data” and points out that “autobiographic narratives [of plurilingual speakers] have become a popular means of data collection” since the 1990s. On this basis, he calls for systematic analysis of plurilinguals’ narratives “on macro- and micro-levels in terms of content, context, and form” (Pavlenko 2007, p. 164; cf. Pavlenko 2008). Mercer (2013) similarly draws attention to studies of Language Learner Histories (LLHs), which allow the learner-researcher to “engage in authentic, personally meaningful communication with others about their identities, experiences, perceptions and emotions related to their language learning histories” (p. 161).

Terminological Problem: Bilingualism, Multilingualism, and Plurilingualism Bilingual interaction – between speakers using two languages or language varieties to make meaning – is an age-old social practice (cf. heteroglossia, Bakhtin 1935/1981), but relatively young as the research focus of academic inquiry. For a long time, under the influence of the ‘one nation, one language’ ideology, bilingual interaction was widely perceived as a “problem” when gazed through the monolingual lens (see, e.g., Mackey’s 1967 critique in *Bilingualism as a world problem*). Mackey’s framing of critical issues pertaining to the emerging field of bi- and multilingualism as “a world problem” echoed the post-war ethos of the ‘one nation, one language’ ideology as well as a popular perception in society that fostering plurilingualism in the child risked jeopardizing the child’s healthy native-language development. This was probably why Mackey found it necessary, in an article published five years earlier, to disentangle the multi-dimensional complexities as follows:

> Bilingualism cannot be described within the science of linguistics; we must go beyond. Linguistics has been interested in bilingualism only in so far as it could be used as an explanation for changes in a language, since language, not the individual, is the proper concern of this science. Psychology has regarded bilingualism as an influence on mental processes. Sociology has treated bilingualism as an element in culture conflict. Pedagogy has been concerned with bilingualism in connection with school organization and media of instruction. For each of these disciplines bilingualism is incidental; it is treated as a special case or as an exception to the norm. Each discipline (…) seems to add little to our understanding of bilingualism as such, with its complex psychological, linguistic, and social interrelationships. (Mackey 1962, p. 84)

Half a century later, much of these perceptions and beliefs has been scientifically discredited and shown to be misguided and empirically unfounded. Research in the last three decades has demonstrated that in multilingual communities, (a) young children are capable of developing plurilinguality more or less at ease given proper exposure to the target languages; (b) the earlier they are exposed to the languages of the locality, the better chance they stand in developing 'balanced plurilinguality'; and (c), for informal communication purposes plurilingual speakers have no hesitation drawing on *all* of the linguistic resources within their repertoires to communicate their meanings, subject to the only constraint whether the linguistic resources in question are shared by their interlocutor(s) or conversation partner(s).

As the number of conventionally labeled languages involved in social interaction often exceeds two, researchers are faced with a problem of a different kind – that of terminology. Much of the growing body of literature on the study of bilingualism to date deals with social interaction involving two or more conventionally discrete languages or language varieties.[2] Since 'bi-' (or 'di-') strictly means two, one common solution is to juxtapose this prefix with 'multi-', so as to do justice to social interaction data involving two or more conventionally labeled languages or language varieties.[3] To minimize the terminological problem of having to say 'bi-/multi-', for our purpose in this book the term 'plurilingual', when used as a substantive, refers to an individual who has two or more languages or language varieties within his or her repertoire regardless of their status (mother tongue, dialect, second language, additional language, etc.) and proficiency level (more or less 'complete', but typically truncated, cf. Blommaert 2010). This is consistent with Coste et al.'s (2009) description of plurilingualism as well as the definition proposed by the Council of Europe (2014) (see Chap. 2 for more in-depth discussion). As such, the term plurilingual functions as a quasi-superordinate of 'bilingual', 'trilingual', etc., whose meaning may be glossed as 'pertaining to two or more languages'. In addition, it will be used in reference to individual speakers' linguistic repertoire. Research has shown that plurilinguals know instinctively when to use which language(s) in dynamic interaction with other fellow plurilinguals (e.g., at a cocktail party hosted by a transnational company), and will deploy linguistic resources differently following a change in the configuration of interlocutors, in accordance with the social role expected of them in changing contexts. 'Plurilingual' is further distinguished from 'multilingual' in that the latter will be used to refer to a specific community or the society at large, where different languages are used by people who speak one or more languages. For instance, in an in-migration multilingual country like Australia, Canada or USA, their nationals may be monolingual (in

[2] Consider established journals like the *International Journal of Bilingualism*, and the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, where it is not rare to find academic articles devoted to linguistic characteristics of trilinguals (e.g., 'Some of the things trilinguals do', Clyne 1997).

[3] See, e.g., *Bilingual and Multilingual Education*, title of the *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Vol. 5* edited by García and Lin (in press); book chapter entitled 'Bi/Multilingual literacies in literacy studies' (Lin and Li 2015).

English) or plurilingual (typically English plus one or more supranational or heritage languages). As such, the term multilingualism (and its derivatives) is an attribute of a social group, a speech community or the society within a locality. In an increasingly globalized world, just as native speakers of English are already outnumbered by so-called non-native speakers of English, so monolinguals are fast becoming a minority compared with plurilinguals.

Terminological Problem: Mandarin Versus Putonghua Another pair of quasi-synonyms is ‘Mandarin’ and ‘Putonghua’. In its contemporary use, Mandarin refers to one of the seven major Han Chinese dialect groups which is mainly spoken in the northern, northeastern, northwestern, and to a lesser extent, southwestern parts of China. While sub-varieties within the Mandarin dialect group are more or less mutually intelligible, there is considerable internal variation from region to region. Putonghua (literally ‘common speech’)[4] refers to the standardized, national spoken language, which is essentially but not entirely based on the Mandarin ‘dialect’ spoken in Beijing (P. Chen, 1999, pp. 37–41; Duanmu, 2007, p. 5; for further terminological clarification, see Chap. 3).

Status of English and Putonghua There is as yet no consensus regarding the status of English and Putonghua in Hong Kong – as a second language or foreign language (see Chaps. 6 and 7). As I hope to make clear in this book, whether English is more appropriately analyzed as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) depends crucially on the socioeconomic well-being of the students’ family. With ample resources and strong home support for English, the learning conditions would approximate those that are more characteristic of ESL. In the absence of such resources and support, the students from more modest households will more likely be learning English under EFL conditions. A similar analysis applies to learners of Putonghua, which has been characterized as L1.5, that is, half way between a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) (Lai-Au Yeung 1997; see Chap. 7 for more in-depth discussion).

Transliteration Chinese characters[5] are written with a non-alphabetic or logographic writing system. To facilitate literacy acquisition, the PRC government developed a Roman alphabet-based *Hanyu pinyin* system[6] (hereafter pinyin) in the 1950s and adopted it officially in 1979. Since then, pinyin has served several important auxiliary functions. In addition to being a tool to help quicken the pace for schoolchildren – in Mandarin- and ‘dialect’-speaking areas alike – to develop their Putonghua and literacy in Chinese characters, it is also used to organize Putonghua vocabulary in Chinese as well as bilingual dictionaries. Pinyin is also the standard system used to transcribe Putonghua-based Chinese characters in academic publications worldwide.

[4] 普通話 (*pou*^{35}*tung*^{55}*waa*^{35}/*pǔtōnghuà*).
[5] 漢字 (*hon*^{33}*zi*^{22}/*hànzì*).
[6] 漢語拼音 (*Hon*^{33}*jyu*^{23} *ping*^{33}*jam*^{55}/*hànyǔ pīnyīn*).

For readers who can read Chinese, illustrations in Chinese characters will be more direct and convenient. This is why examples from both written and spoken sources will be presented in Chinese characters, to be accompanied by Romanization. As most of the written Chinese expressions are pronounceable in Cantonese and Putonghua (and in principle, other Chinese 'dialects' as well), in general, Chinese examples will be transcribed in both Cantonese and Putonghua, except for a few extended excerpts and examples specific to Cantonese or SWC. Putonghua will be transcribed using pinyin, while the JyutPing system,[7] devised and promoted by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (LSHK, Tang et al. 2002), will be used to transcribe Cantonese (a space will be used to separate words, be they mono- or polymorphemic).[8] There are six tonemes in Cantonese: three level tones (55, 33, 22), two rising tones (35, 23) and one falling tone (21). As shown in some of the footnotes in the preface, the tone contour of a Cantonese morpho-syllable will be indicated using two numbers in superscript. Where plurilingual interaction is the focus (Chap. 2), Chinese characters will be used in the main text examples, while their Romanization will be shown in footnotes.

Target Audience of This Book Who may find this book potentially of interest or useful? As I hope the reader will discover, this book aspires to be a contribution to ameliorating the Hong Kong SAR government's language-in-education policy measures. The chapters are so structured and sequenced as to meet this goal. Accordingly, the book provides:

(a) an overview of the Hong Kong language situation as a multilingual society (Chap. 1);
(b) a description of the typical kinds of Chinese-English language contact phenomena, in speech and in writing, plus a discussion of the implications of translanguaging[9] as social practice in society and in the school setting (Chap. 2);
(c) an appraisal of the linguistic challenges faced by Cantonese-L1 students when striving to reach the goalpost of being biliterate in written Chinese and English, and trilingual in Cantonese, English and Putonghua (Chaps. 3 and 4);
(d) a critique of the questionable ideological premises underpinning the dual MoI streaming policy implemented in 1998 (Chap. 5);
(e) an analysis of the tensions and social forces behind the concerns of various groups of stakeholders whose views have impacted on the government's dual MoI streaming policy ('mother tongue education' policy) formulation and subsequent changes (Chap. 6);
(f) a review of the scientific evidence – notably in empirical research conducted by psycholinguists and neuroscience researchers – showing at which biological stage in a person's life the learning of multiple languages is linguistically at its

[7] 粵拼 (*Jyut*^{22}*ping*^{33}/*Yuè pīn*).

[8] In Cantonese and Putonghua, as in other Chinese varieties, morphemic boundaries are not always clear.

[9] As it will be made clear in Chap. 2, the term 'translanguaging' is increasingly preferred to 'code-switching' and 'code-mixing' (see, e.g., García and Lin, in press).

prime, in the sense of heightened sensitivity and productivity in language learning, plus implications for the TCP policy (Chap. 7); and

(g) a study of 15 South Asian undergraduate students' previous experiences learning Cantonese, written Chinese and English, plus implications for useful policy measures to help South Asian schoolchildren cope with the challenge as they strive to extend their pluriliteracies to include Chinese and English, and plurilinguality to include Cantonese and English (Chap. 8).

As such, this book will be relatively short on theorizing and theory-building, but long on descriptions of empirically attested language learning difficulties and reviews of research-based evidence, which will be presented from multiple, complementary perspectives: linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and neurocognitive. Resources for language enhancement support being scarce and precious, in the interest of optimizing Hong Kong students' language learning outcomes, it is primordial that the thrust of such resources be deployed in a biologically more sensitive and productive life stage of our students. It is my wish that this book will have some reference value for the education authorities, experts in language acquisition, language teachers and teacher educators, students of Chinese, English, language studies, plurilingualism and multilingualism, and all those who have a genuine interest in helping Hong Kong students to meet the SAR government's biliteracy and trilingualism goalpost.

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Ma On Shan, Hong Kong David C. S. Li

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[10] The Hong Kong Institute of Education, which was officially renamed as The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) with effect from 27 May 2016.

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

1pl	First person plural pronoun: 我們 (*ngo*^{23}*mun*^{21}/*wǒmén*)
2pl	Second person plural pronoun: 你們 (*nei*^{23}*mun*^{21}/*nǐmén*)
3pl	Third person plural pronoun: 他們 (*taa*^{33}*mun*^{21}/*tāmén*)
1sg	First person singular pronoun: 我 (*ngo*^{23}/*wǒ*)
2sg	Second person singular pronoun: 你 (*nei*^{23}/*nǐ*)
3sg	Third person singular pronoun: 他/她, both pronounced as *taa*^{33}/*tā*
Adj	Adjective
AmEng	American English
ASP	Aspect marker
C	Consonant
CALP	Cognitive academic language proficiency
CL	Classifier
CLI	Cross-linguistic influence
CMI	Chinese-medium instruction (i.e., Cantonese-medium, unless otherwise stated)
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis
DISP	Disposal construction marker 把 (*baa*^{35}/*bǎ*) or 將 (*zoeng*^{55}/*jiāng*)
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ECR1	Education Commission Report No. 1
ECR2	Education Commission Report No. 2
ECR3	Education Commission Report No. 3
ECR4	Education Commission Report No. 4
ECR5	Education Commission Report No. 5
ECR6	Education Commission Report No. 6
EDB	Education Bureau
EEG	Electroencephalography
EFL	English as a foreign language
EM	Ethnic minority
EMI	English-medium instruction
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
ERPs	Event-related Potentials

ESL	English as a second language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FG	Focus group
FL	Foreign language
fMRI	functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
F.P.	Final particle
H	High
HKALE	Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (phased out in 2012)
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (phased out in 2012)
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (from September 2012)
HKWC	Hong Kong Written Chinese
K1	Kindergarten level 1
K2	Kindergarten level 2
K3	Kindergarten level 3
L	Low
L1	First language
L2	Second language
L3	Third language
LAD	Language Acquisition Device
MEG	Magnetoencephalography
MIGA	Medium-of-Instruction Grouping Assessment
MoI	Medium of instruction
MSC	Modern Standard Chinese
NCS	Non-Cantonese-speaking
NGO	Non-government organization
NIRS	Near-Infrared Spectroscopy
NLNC	Native language neural commitment
NOM	Nominalizer 的 (*dik*^{55}/*de*)/嘅 (*ge*^{33})
NP	Noun phrase
OSV	Object-subject-verb word order
P1	Primary One
P2	Primary Two
P3	Primary Three
P4	Primary Four
P5	Primary Five
P6	Primary Six
PEVS	Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme
PMI	Putonghua medium of instruction
PTH	Putonghua
PRC	People's Republic of China
RP	Received Pronunciation
S–P	Subject–Predicate structure
SA	South Asian
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SWC	Standard Written Chinese

SCOLAR	Standing Committee on Language Education and Research
SOV	Subject-object-verb word order
SVO	Subject-verb-object word order
SWC	Standard Written Chinese
T–C	Topic–Comment structure
TCP	Teaching Chinese in Putonghua (普教中, *pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}/*pǔ jiào zhōng*)
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UG	Universal Grammar
UGC	University Grants Committee
V	Vowel
VP	Verb phrase

Chapter 1
The Hong Kong Language Context

1.1 Introduction

On 1 July 1997, after being colonized by the British for over 150 years (1842–1997), Hong Kong was renationalized as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. According to the Basic Law, the SAR's mini constitution, it is stated that:

> In addition to the Chinese language, the English language may also be used by the executive authorities, legislative and judicial organs of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (Article 9, Hong Kong SAR Basic Law, March 2015)

While the status of English as a co-official language is spelled out unambiguously, given the linguistic diversity in China, it is not clear what exactly 'the Chinese language' refers to. Yau (1992) finds it regrettable that there is no mention of 'Cantonese', the vernacular of the vast majority of Hongkongers and a vibrant regional lingua franca in the Pearl River Delta. He surmises that such a glaring omission may be due to the central government's wish to "keep the ambiguous element in the term 'Chinese', so that there would be more leeway for them in the interpretation and implementation of the language policy in post-1997 Hong Kong" (Yau 1992, p. 16) (Fig. 1.1).

Under the first Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, the SAR's language-in-education policy has been framed as 'biliteracy and trilingualism',[1] with the primary objective of graduating students with a high level of competence in spoken English and Putonghua in addition to Cantonese, and written Chinese and English. Conceived before the handover, the dual MoI streaming policy, officially known as the 'mother tongue education' policy, was implemented in September 1998 amidst plenty of social tension and controversies. Some 18 years down the road, the language learning outcomes of secondary school-leavers and university graduates alike leave much to be desired. That policy is largely conditioned by Hong Kong's geopolitical

[1] **兩文三語** (*loeng*[23] *man*[21] *saam*[55] *jyu*[23]/*liǎng wén sān yǔ*). Written Chinese in Hong Kong is largely Mandarin- or Putonghua-based but pronounced in Cantonese (see Chap. 3).

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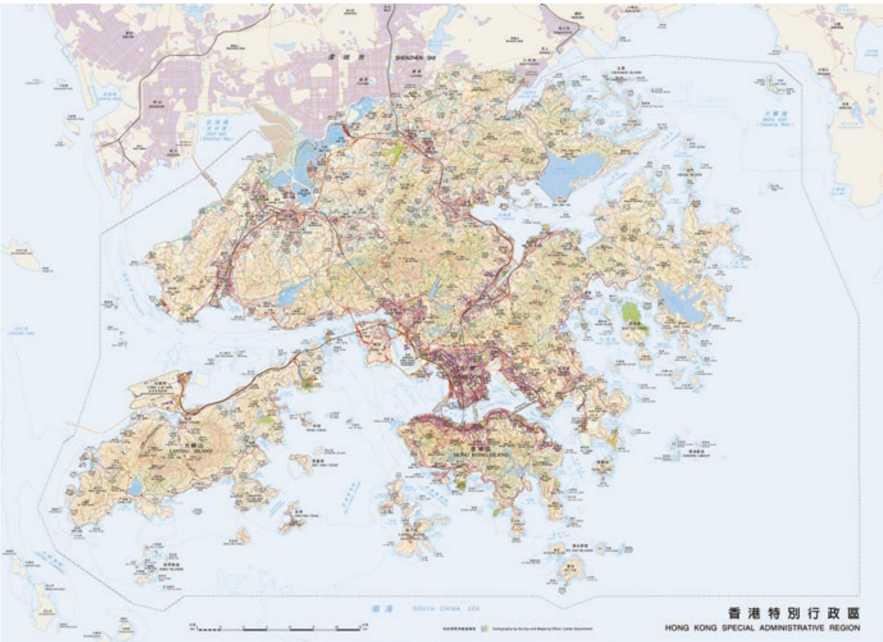

Fig. 1.1. Map of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (This map was downloaded and extracted from data made available by the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region at https://DATA.GOV.HK/. The provision of information copied or extracted from or a link to **DATA.GOV.HK** at this website or in relation to the product or service shall not constitute any form of co-operation or affiliation by the Government with any person in relation to this website, the product or the service or any contents herein.)

position, until the end of the twentieth century, as a window or principal gateway between mainland China and the rest of the world. In response to rising woman- and man-power needs as Hong Kong gradually evolved from a manufacturing-centered to a knowledge-based economy since the 1980s, trilingual and biliterate competencies became indispensable skill areas in the white-collar workplace, as shown in job adverts, big and small, for senior and middle-ranking management positions across a wide range of business sectors. In addition to English, the rise of 'China trade' has accentuated the need for capable personnel who can converse fluently with Putonghua-dominant clients in mainland China and visitors from across the border. Apart from the logical outcome of renationalization – that the national language of China, Putonghua, should be added to the local curriculum – for one work-related reason or another there is a practical need on the part of Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers to learn at least some Putonghua. More and more Hongkongers are learning Putonghua, a trend which is evidenced in self-reported census figures in the past 15 years (2001, 2006, 2011; see Table 1.1).

Controversial policy measures aside, it would be unfair to put the blame of lackluster language learning outcomes from secondary to tertiary levels on the education

Table 1.1 Proportion of the population self-rating their ability to speak Cantonese, English and Putonghua: 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 (Census and Statistics Department 2007, 2012; cf. Poon 2010, p. 7)

	Proportion of population aged 5 and over (%)											
	As the usual language				As another language/dialect				Total			
Language/Dialect	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2011**
Cantonese	88.7	89.2	90.8	89.5	6.6	6.8	5.7	6.3	95.2	96.1	96.5	95.8
English	3.1	3.2	2.8	3.5	34.9	39.8	41.9	42.6	38.1	43.0	44.7	46.1
Putonghua	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.4	24.2	33.3	39.2	46.5	25.3	34.1	40.2	47.8
Hakka	1.2	1.3	1.1	0.9	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.8	4.9	5.1	4.7	4.7
Chiu Chow	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.7	3.9	3.8	3.2	3.1	5.0	4.8	3.9	3.8
Fukien (including Taiwanese)	1.9	1.7	1.2	1.1	2.0	2.3	2.1	2.3	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.5
Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.2	1.5	2.2	0.9	1.3	1.7	2.4
Filipino (Tagalog)	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	1.6	1.7	1.3	1.4	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.7
Japanese	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.5
Shanghainese	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	1.1	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.1

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2007, 2012)
Note: The figures exclude mute persons.

reform entirely. After all, no administration, pre- or post-handover, could afford to be blind to the market-driven demand for proficient speakers of English and Putonghua. What is remarkable is that, the language learning outcomes are grossly disproportional to successive Hong Kong governments' aggregate investment and annual funding support for language learning in the past two decades, which in dollar terms is huge by any national or regional standard. Back in 1998, a senior executive of a local bank lamented that:

> In Hong Kong, the government accords high priority to education and to upgrading the quality of education. In 1996–97, approved public spending on this area represented 21 percent of the government's total current expenditure and 8 percent of capital expenditure. Unfortunately, the Hong Kong education system has failed to produce a sufficient number of the quality staff that employers are looking for. In the area of language proficiency, which is the single most important tool for effective business communication, I have observed a decline in standards. (Au 1998, p. 179)

Some 18 years later, Au's sentiments and viewpoint here are still widely shared by many in the local business sector. Why is it so? What are some of the major problems, what policy measures have been adopted to cope with them, and how effective are such measures? This book attempts to address these questions from multiple perspectives. First, ***linguistically***, what is it that makes (Modern Standard) Chinese,[2] (spoken) Putonghua, and (spoken and written) English so difficult for Cantonese-L1 learners to master? Second, ***sociolinguistically***, what are the patterns and conditions of language use in Hong Kong society, and to what extent are these languages related to Hongkongers' lifeworld? Third, ***psycholinguistically***, how feasible is it to foster additive bilingualism through classroom instruction, including using the target languages as medium of instruction for teaching English and the Chinese Language subject, respectively? Fourth, ***neuro-cognitively***, is there a stage of life, in terms of biological age, at which the learning of one or more languages is relatively more fruitful, over which the learning outcomes – the return of funding support for various language learning initiatives so to speak – are likely to be more productive or, to use the Chinese idiom, **事半功倍**: 'yielding twice the result with half the effort'?[3] Finally, ***pedagogically***, is it possible to bring about greater synergy between teachers of English and EMI (English medium of instruction) content subjects, so that input obtained in English lessons can be more effectively extended to and applied in the learning of content subjects in English, and likewise for the teaching of Putonghua, as a separate subject or MoI, to facilitate the teaching of the Chinese language and Chinese literacy development? Without unequivocal answers to crucial questions such as these, the SAR government's biliteracy and trilingualism policy appears to ring hollow like an empty slogan, and borders on being a

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[2] For the conceptual and terminological distinctions between 'Modern Chinese', 'Modern Standard Chinese', 'Standard Written Chinese', etc., see Chap. 3 (cf. Li 2006, pp. 152–153; Li 2015).

[3] *Si*^{22} *bun*^{33} *gung*^{55} *pui*^{23}/*shì bàn gōng bèi*. This four-syllable idiom has an antithesis involving the same morpho-syllables but in a slightly different order: **事倍功半** (*si*^{22} *pui*^{23} *gung*^{55} *bun*^{33}/*shì bèi gōng bàn*), 'getting half the result with twice the effort'.

utopian ideal, making one doubt whether precious resources are directed to the needy in an effective and timely manner.

Research in the past two decades on various aspects of the language situation in Hong Kong, published in English and Chinese, has enlightened us on various Cantonese-English contact phenomena (especially code-switching and code-mixing), the typical sociolinguistic profile of Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers, their attitudes toward English and Putonghua, and some of their salient non-standard features (errors) in the process of learning English and Putonghua. All of these empirical insights have good potential to provide informed answers to one or more of the above questions. What is lacking, to my knowledge, is systematic contrastive studies between Cantonese and English.[4] While there has been some research on Cantonese-Putonghua contrastive phonology (e.g., Ho 1999, 2005), which has shed some light on optimal strategies for teaching Putonghua, this body of knowledge has yet to be trickled down to front-line teachers of Chinese/Putonghua in need, and to be reflected in the support measures for fostering additive bilingualism in Putonghua through classroom instruction. Insights from systematic contrastive studies are crucial for identifying students' learning difficulties in the target languages as the baseline or starting point for conceptualizing effective teaching strategies. In addition, with regard to biliteracy development in Chinese and English, while it is well-known that Cantonese, the preferred vernacular of the majority of Hongkongers, is generally not used for writing Chinese, we know relatively little about how big a challenge is faced by Cantonese-L1 speakers when learning to write in two of the most learner-unfriendly writing systems in the world: logographic, non-alphabetic written Chinese, and alphabetic written English which is deep in its orthography – deep because the ways in which English spelling relates to pronunciation are rather inconsistent.

To address the above questions and issues, this book provides a holistic account of the Hong Kong language situation by drawing on research insights in a number of areas: contrastive studies at different linguistic levels between Cantonese and English (phonological and lexico-grammatical), Cantonese and Putonghua (phonological), and Cantonese and Putonghua-based Standard Written Chinese (lexico-grammatical). Other research areas include the medium of instruction debates – teaching content subjects in English and teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP)[5]; Hongkongers' perceptions of their identities as gleaned through their attitudes toward Cantonese, English and Putonghua; and home-grown South(east) Asian students' needs for Cantonese and written Chinese. The main objective of this book is to try to come to grips with the following research questions:

[4] There are two exceptions to my knowledge: Chan and Li's (2000) contrastive study between Cantonese and English phonology (see Chap. 4), and Hung's (2005) use of Chinese-English contrastive grammar to help EFL learners understand salient non-standard, learner English features.

[5] **普通話教中文** (*pou*^{35}*tung*^{55}*waa*^{35} *gaau*^{33} *zung*^{55}*man*^{35}/*pǔtōnghuà jiào zhōngwén*), more commonly known as **普教中** (*pou*^{35} *gaau*^{33} *zung*^{55}/*pǔ jiào zhōng*).

(a) What is it that makes biliteracy and trilingualism such a formidable task and lofty goal for Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers and ethnic minority students of South(east) Asian descent?
(b) Given the linguistic and sociolinguistic constraints, plus what we know about the biologically determined critical (optimal time) period in terms of heightened sensitivity to speech sounds and lexico-grammatical structures in a (plurilingual) person's life stages, would it be more desirable to refocus the language-in-education policy by deploying language support resources differently, with a view to optimizing the effectiveness of students' learning outcomes towards becoming trilingual and biliterate?

The relevant critical issues will be dealt with progressively from Chaps. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. This will culminate, in the closing chapter (9), in a synthesis of the foregoing discussion and critical analysis before drawing implications and presenting a number of recommendations for strategic changes to the SAR's existing language-in-education policy measures. In the rest of this chapter, we will outline the macro-linguistic situation in Hong Kong along three dimensions: (a) individual plurilinguality and societal multilingualism, (b) biliteracy in Chinese and English, and (c) ethnolinguistic identities.

1.2 Plurilingual Hongkongers, Multilingual Hong Kong

Until the 1980s, Hong Kong was regarded as an essentially monolingual, Cantonese-speaking society (see, e.g., Luke and Richards 1982; So 1998, pp. 161–162; cf. So 1989). This was by and large true for Cantonese speakers who made up about 95% of the local population. Throughout the history of the former British colony until the end of June 1997, the English-speaking communities – colonizers and colonized together – rarely exceeded four percent (So 1998, p. 161). As the principal economic activities underwent a gradual shift towards those that are more characteristic of a knowledge-based economy, and following the implementation of the 9-year free compulsory education policy in 1978, the number of people with basic knowledge in English has increased considerably.[6] One consequence is that more and more Hongkongers reported having English as 'another language' according to (by-)census figures from 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2011 (Table 1.1, cf. Bacon-Shone and Bolton 1998; Bolton and Luke 1998).

As shown in Table 1.2, only 2.8% of the respondents indicated that their Cantonese was 'not so good' (1.2%) or they had 'no knowledge' of Cantonese (1.6%). This shows that Cantonese is widely used and understood in Hong Kong society. As for English, Table 1.1 shows that the percentage of people who claimed

[6] So (1998, p. 168) notes that in the 30 years between 1965 and 1994, as a result of steady expansion of educational opportunities, the number of people who gained access to one form of English-medium education or another increased by 700 percent.

Table 1.2 Self-rated competence in Cantonese, spoken English, Putonghua, written Chinese and written English (estimated number of people aged 6–65: 5,615,100 persons; 2011 Population Census)

Speaking and writing	Very good 非常好 (%)	Good 良好 (%)	Average 一般 (%)	Not so good 較遜色 (%)	No knowledge 不懂 (%)	Total (%)
Percentage of persons aged 6 to 65 by perceived language competence on using **Cantonese**	53.1	32.8	11.3	1.2	1.6	100
Percentage of persons aged 6 to 65 by perceived language competence on using **spoken English**	5.1	18.6	36.9	22	17.4	100
Percentage of persons aged 6 to 65 by perceived language competence on **written English**	5	19.2	37.5	21.5	16.8	100
Percentage of persons aged 6 to 65 by perceived language competence on using **Putonghua**	5.8	18.3	39.8	23.9	12.2	100
Percentage of persons aged 6 to 65 by perceived language competence on **written Chinese**	23.7	42.8	28.6	2.4	2.5	100

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2013, pp. 3–4)

to use English as 'another language' increased from 34.9% (1996) to 42.6% (2011). A marked increase was in evidence with regard to Putonghua as 'another language', from 24.2% (1996) to 46.5% (2011), surpassing that of English by nearly 4 percent. If the figures for using English (3.5%) and Putonghua (1.4%) as the 'usual language' are added, the total percentages of people who perceived a need to use English and Putonghua in their everyday lives amounted to 46.1% and 47.9%, respectively.

What is even more revealing from Table 1.2 is that the percentage of people who self-rated their spoken English and written English as 'good' or 'very good' amounted to (5.1 + 18.6) 23.7% and (5.0 + 19.2) 24.2%, respectively, while the self-ratings for Putonghua and written Chinese were (5.8 + 18.3) 24.1% and (23.7 + 42.8) 66.5%.

Also noteworthy is that over one-third of the respondents rated their spoken English (36.9%) and written English (37.5%) as 'average', while those who gave the same rating for Putonghua and written Chinese stood at 39.8% and 28.6% respectively. All this suggests that about 60.6% (5.1 + 18.6 + 36.9) of the local population were reportedly conversant in English, 63.9% (5.8 + 18.3 + 39.8) could interact with others in Putonghua, while 61.7% (5 + 19.2 + 37.5) were literate in English. These figures indicate that, by 2010, some 13 years after the return of sovereignty to China, the SAR was developing towards a multilingual society, and the trend is clearly pointing upwards.

Increasing multilinguality notwithstanding, it is not uncommon to find situations that may be characterized as 'mono-bilingual interaction', in that one side would use only Cantonese, the other side would respond completely in Putonghua. Such a recurrent scenario may be found on television. For instance, on the i-CABLE Finance Info Channel,[7] before Hong Kong Stock Exchange operation hours begin at 9 am on working days, the two or three Cantonese-speaking anchors would sometimes seek the views of mainland Chinese investment experts in Shanghai or Guangzhou, and their conversation would be broadcast live, with no evidence of either side's input being scripted. Whereas the Hong Kong anchors' questions are raised invariably in Cantonese, the non-Cantonese-speaking mainland expert would routinely respond in Putonghua. Their give-and-take, however, appears to be seamless, with no signs of disfluency, repair or misunderstanding, suggesting that both sides have (at least field-specific) receptive competence in the other's preferred language. Such a mode of mono-bilingual interaction constitutes strong evidence that despite gaps in the interactants' 'truncated' repertoires (Blommaert 2010), here Putonghua or Cantonese, effective, field-specific communication can still take place between Putonghua-dominant mainlanders and Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers.

1.3 Biliteracy in Chinese and English

Literacy is a matter of concern to the government of every polity, partly because the effectiveness of governance depends, among other factors, on a citizenry literate in the local language(s). Research worldwide shows that illiteracy correlates strongly with social problems such as poverty and poor hygiene. According to UNESCO (2014), illiterate people tend to be more vulnerable to poverty:

> Whereas poverty can be directly observed, vulnerability cannot: it is essentially a measure of what might happen in the future. Measuring vulnerability to poverty is generally aimed at the likely sources of vulnerability and who is vulnerable. A study in Ethiopia, for example, examined the impact and potential interactions of health, education and consumption among the poor, finding that those with both chronic undernutrition and illiteracy are more vulnerable to poverty and more likely to stay longer in deep poverty. (UNESCO 2014, p. 28)

Hong Kong is fortunate in that illiteracy has not been a major concern. As shown in the self-reported percentages in census data over two decades until 2011 (Tables 1.1 and 1.2), the literacy rates for written Chinese and English in Hong Kong are by no means low. This is corroborated with other evidence, such as the number and variety of newspapers and magazines, in English and Chinese (among other

[7] **有線電視財經資訊台** (*jau*^{23}*sin*^{33} *din*^{22}*si*^{22} *coi*^{21}*ging*^{55} *zi*^{55}*seon*^{33} *toi*^{21}/*yǒuxiàn diànshì cáijīng zīxùn tái*).

languages) with community-wide circulation.[8] What is obscured in these statistics is that the average Hongkonger must make a great deal of effort in order to become biliterate in *both* Chinese and English. A major source of learning difficulty lies in the fact that Chinese adopts a logographic, non-alphabetic writing system. The basic unit of writing is known as a 'character' (字, *zi*^{22}/*zì*),[9] or written graph. The logographic characters contain little or no clue as to how they are pronounced, for, unlike the English alphabet, no phonemic sound values could be deduced from the shape or written form of a character. It is not true, however, that Chinese characters contain no phonetic information (DeFrancis 1984) – thanks to the dominant 'phonetic compound' character formation principle.[10] Within the inventory of 47,021 Chinese characters included in *Kāngxī Zìdiăn* (康熙字典, 'Kangxi Dictionary'), which was compiled and first published in the early eighteenth century, about 90 percent are phonetic compounds in which a semantic radical and a phonetic component are discernible (Lee 1989, p. 1). For example:

岡 (*gong*^{55}/*gāng*, 'ridge')
崗 (*gong*^{55}/*găng*, 'mound', semantic radical 山, *saan*^{55}/*sān*, 'hill')
鋼 (*gong*^{33}/*gāng*, 'steel', semantic radical 金, *gam*^{55}/*jīn*, 'gold')

門 (*mun*^{21}/*mén*, 'door')
悶 (*mun*^{22}/*mèn*, 'bored', semantic radical心, *sam*^{55}/*xīn*, 'heart')
聞 (*man*^{21}/*wén*, 'hear', semantic radical耳, *ji*^{23}/*ĕr*, 'ear')
問 (*man*^{22}/*wèn*, 'ask', semantic radical口, *hau*^{35}/*kŏu*, 'mouth')

As shown in these examples, the phonetic information may be direct (e.g., 岡 acting as a phonetic in 崗 and 鋼) or rather indirect. For instance, in Cantonese, the reference value of 門 [*mun*^{21}/*mun*^{22}] as a phonetic applies to the onset consonant [*m*], but it may not apply to the rime [*man*^{21}/*man*^{22}]; in Putonghua, it is the reverse – note the divergence in tone contours. In other words, any phonetic information in a Chinese character is opaque and only apparent to a literate or semi-literate person who has already learned the written forms and pronunciations of hundreds of characters (Erbaugh 2002). As a result, therefore, the pronunciation (音, *jam*^{55}/*yīn*) of a given character must be learned and memorized along with its written form (形, *jing*^{21}/*xíng*) and meaning (義, *ji*^{22}/*yì*). With regard to each of the thousands of Chinese characters needed in everyday life, these three sources of lexical informa-

[8] As of May 2016, there are about a dozen paid Chinese newspapers and three paid English dailies with a community-wide circulation. In addition, there are half a dozen tabloid-like free newspapers – five in Chinese, one in English – published bi-modally (print and online), with the print version being delivered on working days (*Headline Daily* also on Saturday) at designated points of distribution. As for magazines, there is a multitude of types and topics, published weekly or monthly, mainly in Chinese, catering for the tastes and interests of a wide range of readers from different age groups.

[9] 方塊字 (*fong*^{55}*faai*^{33}*zi*^{22}/ *fāng kuài zì*).

[10] 形聲字 (*jing*^{21}*sing*^{55}*zi*^{22}/*xíng shēng zì*). For other character formation principles, see Hao (2001a) and Taylor and Taylor (2014).

tion are organically fused together (Dai 2001a, p. xv).[11] Such a characteristic of the Chinese writing system has inspired a multitude of literacy teaching models and methods in mainland China (e.g., pronunciation-focused, form-focused, and meaning-focused, or any combination of these; Dai 2001b) and Hong Kong (e.g., a phenomenographic method guided by an integrated perceptual approach, Tse 2001; Tse et al. 2007). One consequence of this indirect sound-graph relationship is that when a Chinese character has not been used for some time, it may become cognitively obscure, and the speaker/writer may have difficulty recalling its actual written form (Kwan-Terry and Luke 1997). All these literacy issues will be examined and discussed in greater detail in Chap. 3.

To master the 3000+ high-frequency Chinese characters needed for reading a Chinese newspaper with a reasonably good understanding, considerable class time and after-class practice are needed to familiarize pupils with their pronunciations and written forms. In general, teachers of Chinese across Greater China routinely advise their pupils to copy the characters repeatedly and, in the process, to commit their written forms and pronunciations to memory. Apart from encouraging pupils to learn Chinese characters in context, copying and rote learning have traditionally been the dominant methods through which productive competence of the target Chinese characters, including the proper sequence of strokes, is assured. Literacy training in Chinese is thus a laborious, time-consuming process. Towards the need and goal to speed up schoolchildren's cognitive and intellectual development through reading, Hao (2001b) describes the learning of Chinese characters as a major stumbling block,[12] which is an area where curricular reform, informed by rigorous empirical research, is urgently needed:

> Chinese characters consist of so many strokes, which makes them difficult to recognize, write and remember. As soon as children have entered school, they must overcome the literacy hurdle. Teachers take pains to teach schoolchildren to write, requiring them to copy the characters repeatedly and mechanically. Teachers and schoolchildren alike spend most of their time and efforts struggling to get over the literacy gap, which is a major impediment, indeed a stumbling block [攔路虎] towards developing their overall language learning abilities. Such a predicament must be overcome by reforming the pedagogies in Chinese literacy teaching and learning. (Hao 2001b, pp. 107–108, my translation)[13]

To give a quick and rather extreme example, 鬱 is one of the kanji characters in Japanese which is also taught and learned in the Japanese curriculum. It is written in the same way as in traditional Chinese script in Hong Kong (*wat*[55]) and Taiwan (*yū*) and has a very similar meaning. With its 29 strokes, it has been rated as among the most complex. Its compositional complexity has attracted a comment by a netizen as follows:

[11]『漢字有「音、形、義」有機地結合在一起的三個信息源可以充分利用』(Dai 2001a, p. xv).

[12]攔路虎 (*laan*[21]*lou*[22]*fu*[35]/*lán lù hǔ*, literally 'road-blocking tiger').

[13]「漢字筆畫繁多,難認難寫又難記,兒童一邁進學校的大門,就要過識字關,教師要花大力氣教,兒童要反覆地機械地抄寫,師生的精力主要是耗費在識字上。識字成爲攔路虎,它是妨礙語文學習能力整體發展的主要矛盾,所以必須改革識字教學。」(Hao 2001b, pp. 107–108)

> 鬱 is a Japanese character famous for its high stroke count and complex composition of elements. It means 'depression', which seems appropriate… it's depressing that you have to work this hard just to write a single character. ('Crazy kanji: what's the highest stroke count?', http://nihonshock.com/2009/10/crazy-kanji-highest-stroke-count/)

No wonder it was targeted for simplification in mainland China (郁, *yū*). Since the 1950s, the PRC government has made great efforts to mitigate literacy acquisition problems, especially among rural populations. There was a lot of serious discussion about alphabetization as an alternative writing system, which in the end was abandoned in favor of simplifying the existing stock of Chinese characters. Under the 'one country, two systems' arrangement, however, Hong Kong, like the other SAR Macao, continues to use traditional Chinese characters, which consist of more strokes and therefore require more effort to learn and to write (compare, e.g., the character for 'dragon', *lung*^{21}/*lóng*: 龙 vs. 龍).

Apart from acquisitional problems rooted in the logographic writing system itself, Cantonese-L1 speakers in Hong Kong have to baffle with another literacy problem. Being 'dialect' speakers of Cantonese, naturally they have a tendency to write the way they speak. Colloquial elements of their vernacular literacy, however, are not accepted in formal writing and, if they surface in students' school work, are systematically banned and replaced with their normative SWC equivalents. For instance, as a verb meaning 'to sleep', 瞓 (*fan*^{33}) must be replaced with 睡 (*seoi*^{21}). For historical and sociocultural reasons, however, 'written Cantonese' has been given social space to flourish, especially in informal, 'soft' sections of Chinese newspapers and magazines (Li 2000; Snow 2004). Such vernacular-based, non-school literacy elements are commonplace in social media like Facebook and Twitter, and other online communication platforms such as blogs, MSN, and discussion forums. From the educational point of view, written Cantonese elements are seen as 'interference' when students are engaged in producing literacy-focused school work.

A further problem is related to the status of written Chinese in Hong Kong. As Shi (2006) and Shi et al. (2006/2014) have observed, written Chinese in Hong Kong, being influenced heavily by Cantonese and English, have evolved its own norms, which may be characterized as Hong Kong Written Chinese (HKWC). Such a trend is especially clear in Hong Kong Chinese news discourse. From Hongkongers' point of view, however, the dividing line between SWC and HKWC is often unclear; of those elements that are recognized as part of HKWC and distinct from SWC, few are incorporated into the local Chinese language curriculum.

What about English literacy? For Cantonese-L1 speakers, developing literacy skills in English is no simple task either. Most Chinese Hongkongers learn their ABC from kindergarten. While English is alphabetic and is written with Roman letters, its spelling-pronunciation relationships are not so consistent and, for that reason, not so learner-friendly as a second or foreign language. Other linguistic challenges include the fact that, unlike Cantonese which follows syllable-timed rhythm, English words are pronounced with stress-timed rhythm. For instance, in a polysyllabic English word like *ele<u>men</u>tary*, English-L1 speakers would pronounce all syllables in quick succession, with the stressed syllable in the middle pronounced in higher pitch. This is a major area of learning difficulty for Cantonese-L1 learners who, following syllable-timed rhythm, have a tendency to apportion the same amount of time to every single syllable of a printed word (*e-le-men-ta-ry*), in effect making no distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables.

In EFL settings, the bulk of the learning of English takes place through reading. English is an alphabetic language; the phonetically based spelling system, while inconsistent, makes it sometimes possible for English speakers to pronounce a given English word regardless of its length, including vocabulary words that have never been encountered before. For instance, for upper intermediate EFL learners, the meaning of a long English word such as *anti-establishmentarianism* may be unfamiliar, but based on their knowledge of the recognizable embedded segment *establish* and English pronunciation rules, the average EFL learner with an intermediate level of competence has a fair chance of spelling and pronouncing it correctly. Of interest here is that knowledge of Chinese characters or literacy practices has little reference value when EFL learners are struggling to make sense of the complex sound-spelling relationships in English. Quite the contrary, in the absence of training and practice in phonics in English lessons, Chinese EFL learners tend to commit long English words to memory through rote learning, in the same way that they are trained to memorize the written forms of Chinese characters through extensive copying and practice. This was also my experience when I was in Primary (Grade) 5 or 6; I still remember reciting '*t-e-r-r-i-t-o-r-i-e-s, ter–ri–to–ries*' on my way home after school, being anxious of the dictation of an English passage related to 'New Territories' (the northern part of Hong Kong) the following day. A lack of phonological awareness is thus one important reason why advocates of phonics teaching feel so strongly that it should be introduced as early as possible into the EFL curricula.

In his book-length treatise, *Writing and Society*, Coulmas (2013, p. 8) notes that in many cultures, literacy was historically associated with prestige and social status (e.g., in imperial China and pre-modern Korea before the twentieth century), which is why knowledge of writing has never been, and still is not distributed fairly in society. In this connection, Coulmas echoes Ferdinand de Saussure's remark made about a century earlier, namely the 'tyranny of writing'. With that note, the father of modern linguistics was alluding to writing as an obstacle to the scientific study of language which, in his view, should be guided by speech as the primary focus. Can we speak of 'tyranny' in the literacy practices in postcolonial Hong Kong? To the extent that under the biliteracy and trilingualism policy since 1998 every Hong Kong citizen regardless of ethnicity is expected to become biliterate in Chinese and English, plus the learner-unfriendliness of the two writing systems, I think there is a grain of truth in the tyranny of written Chinese and written English in the SAR.

1.4 Ethnolinguistic Identities

Plenty of research since Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) seminal work has confirmed their original insight time and again how a plurilingual speaker's language or stylistic choice (L1, L2, L3, heritage language, indigenized or localized language, pidgin and creole, sociolect pertaining to a specific ethnolinguistic group, etc.) is closely bound up with multiple layers of speaker/writer identity, in accordance with the 'orders of indexicality' pertaining to the perceived status of the language varieties and speech styles as semiotic resources in situated and dynamic communicative acts (Blommaert 2010; cf. Blommaert 2005; Kirkpatrick 2007; Rampton 1995).

In Hong Kong, there is a body of language attitudes research showing a gradual shift in the Chinese community's attitude towards English. Until the early 1980s, many Chinese student respondents indicated a concern for speaking English, suggesting that for them, English played a marginal role in their lifeworld at best. It would be unthinkable for them to use or interact with others in English unless when they had no choice, for example, in gate-keeping situations such as responding to questions at job interviews or attending oral and writing examinations (Fu 1975; Pierson et al. 1980). About half of the secondary school respondents felt uneasy when their classmates spoke to them in English outside the classroom (Fu 1975), while many agreed to such statements as the following:

> When using English, I do not feel that I am Chinese any more.
> At times I fear that by using English I will become like a foreigner.
> If I use English, it means that I am not patriotic.
> Speaking English seemed to betray one's national identity. (Fu 1975)

Part of the lack of motivation to use or even to learn English may be attributed to Hong Kong Chinese students' national pride during the 1970s. In 1978, Margaret N.-Y. Ng, a politician, barrister, columnist and former Legislative Councilor (1995–2012) who regarded pro-CMI arguments based on national pride as "dangerous", provided an instructive example in a newspaper feature as follows:

> I think arguments from national pride […] are dangerous [because they] often lead us to irrational decisions which will benefit nobody. I remember a friend of mine who, to his infinite regret, speaks English badly although he had an excellent English teacher in school. The reason he never learned any English from this teacher was that my friend, then a youngster filled with intense nationalistic pride, felt that such an undertaking would have been despicable. Logically, putting Chinese first and a second language second does not necessarily result in your under-achieving in the second language; but logic works least effectively where emotions dominate. What happens most often is that one falls between two stools, and ends up being proficient at neither language. (Ng 1978/1979, pp. 159–160)

Ng then drew implication by extrapolating the moral of the story thus: "it is easier to refuse to learn a despicable foreign language than to put work into learning the noble mother tongue really well" (Ng 1978/1979, p. 160).

From the 1980s onwards, however, such a concern for betraying one's Chinese identity was gradually overtaken by an awareness of the instrumental value of 'global English', as more and more student respondents expressed being proud when speaking better English than their peers elsewhere in Asia, for example, in mainland China and Taiwan (e.g., Hyland 1997; Lin and Detaramani 1998). The greater readiness to use English and the increasingly positive attitude toward English are corroborated by self-reported census figures discussed above. More and more Hongkongers find it necessary to use English as 'another language'.

Table 1.3 Social identity of Hong Kong young people in 1996 and 2006.

	1996	2006
Hong Kong people	33.9%	28.7%
Hong Kong people, and next option is Chinese	40.0%	39.4%
Chinese people, and next option is Hong Kong people	15.8%	22.3%
Chinese people	10.4%	9.6%

Sources: Lam et al. (2007), Executive Summary

Students' language attitudes toward Putonghua, on the other hand, were lukewarm at best. Far from embracing Putonghua as a natural sequel to the renationalization of Hong Kong as the most international metropolis in China, most of the student respondents considered their social or ethnic identity as Hongkongers or Hongkongers residing in China rather than Chinese or Chinese Hongkongers. In a more recent language attitudes study, Lai (2009) observes that:

> it was surprising to find students expressing stronger integrative orientation towards English, the colonial language, than Putonghua, the national language of China. As in the instrumental domain (…) English was the most highly valued as a gatekeeper for upward and outward social mobility. Cantonese ranked second (...) Putonghua ranked last. (Lai 2009, p. 81)

The findings of the language attitudes studies cited above are consistent with another body of public opinion research, which points toward steady numbers of respondents who perceive themselves as 'Hongkongers', as opposed to 'Chinese'. The figures in Table 1.3, adapted from Lam et al. (2007), are indicative of this trend (cf. Poon 2010, p. 24).

The lukewarm emotional attachment to Putonghua, as shown in Lai's (2009) study, is also consistent with survey results of Hongkongers' social or ethnic identity collected biannually by the Public Opinion Programme based at the University of Hong Kong from August 1997 to December 2014. With few exceptions, the percentage of respondents who claimed to be 'Hongkongers' or 'Hongkongers in China' consistently exceeded those who regarded themselves as 'Chinese in Hong Kong' or 'Chinese' (HKU Pop Site 2015).

These perceptions have a direct impact on Hong Kong Chinese students' motivation to learn the two target languages: English (spoken and written) and Putonghua (spoken). Their types and levels of motivation in turn will determine to what extent they have ownership over the target languages, and how intellectually engaged they are in the process of 'investing' in language learning activities. As Norton (2013) has pointed out, language learning and literacy practices involve not just reading and writing, but also:

> relationships between text and reader, student and teacher, classroom and community, in local, regional, and transnational sites. As such, when students invest in a set of literacy practices, they also invest in a range of possible and imagined identities. As language educators, we need to take seriously the findings that suggest that if learners have a sense of ownership over meaning making, they can engage actively in a wide range of literacy practices; however, if there is little ownership over meaning making, learning becomes meaningless and ritualized. (Norton 2013, pp. 116–117)

In short, language learning takes place not in a linguistic vacuum but in a real social world. To engage learners, language teachers would have a better chance of success if they understand how their learners' efforts are shaped and determined by actual social forces in the 'literacy ecology' of institutional practices in the home, school, and community. Is a target language seen as a form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) which is worth spending time to acquire, or is it perceived as the language of a group that learners hate to identify with? To optimize teaching and learning effectiveness, learners' identities and their attitudes toward the target languages must be tackled strategically, with a view to complementing the give-and-take in the actual classroom language teaching and learning process.

1.5 Synopsis of the Book

To address the research questions and delve into the issues outlined above, we will proceed by first gaining a micro, contrastive linguistic perspective before assessing the effectiveness of macro language-in-education policy measures. Chapter 2 will describe and illustrate the typical language contact phenomena, notably what is traditionally referred to in the literature as code-switching, code-mixing or code-alternation, and more recently termed translanguaging or translingual practice. In Hong Kong, where Cantonese/Chinese and English have been in contact for over 150 years, many English words have been borrowed and incorporated into the Cantonese lexicon. Apart from lexical borrowing, English words and phrases, especially monosyllabic ones, tend to be inserted into Cantonese, displacing the corresponding open-class words in Cantonese, resulting in translanguaging. Such a trend is not limited to speaking, but writing as well. With the help of five short texts covering a half-a-page column in the soft section of a tabloid-like Chinese newspaper distributed free of charge, we will exemplify some of the typical language contact phenomena between informal HKWC and English. As we will see, both datasets exhibit considerable influence from English, suggesting that translingual practice involving Cantonese, SWC and English is a society-wide phenomenon among Chinese Hongkongers, in speech as well as in writing.

Chapter 3 will address the question: why is it such a big challenge for Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers to develop literacy in SWC and to master Putonghua? By analyzing the orthographic characteristics of the logographic Chinese script and some of the systematic lexico-grammatical differences between Cantonese and SWC on one hand, and phonological differences between Cantonese and Putonghua on the other, we will try to unpack some of the typical learning difficulties encountered by Cantonese-L1 learners in Hong Kong. In Chap. 4, we will exemplify and discuss a number of non-standard EFL features commonly found in the English outputs of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) learners and users in Hong Kong. The purpose is to demonstrate how cross-linguistic influence (CLI) from Cantonese impacts on their English outputs as they are engaged in meaning-making. Much of the CLI may be accounted for by the tremendous typological distance between

Cantonese/Chinese and English, whose linguistic subsystems (phonology, lexis, grammar, discourse, writing system) have very little in common. This is essentially why the majority of Cantonese-L1 learners find English so difficult to master.

In Chap. 5, we will outline the sociopolitical background and important milestones leading to the 'mother tongue education' or dual MoI streaming policy implemented in September 1998. We will do this by conducting a fairly comprehensive review of a number of critical studies occasioned by various reports produced by government-appointed education panels at different times as well as Education Commission Reports, notably ECR4 (1990). In so doing, we will try to elucidate the widely perceived adverse impact of and controversial issues surrounding the dual MoI streaming policy. Chapter 6 will extend the discussion in the previous chapter by focusing on the concerns of various groups of stakeholders towards CMI and EMI education from their respective vantage points. Apart from the SAR government, the dilemmas faced by employers, school principals, teachers and educationists, parents and students will also be discussed. In view of divergent views regarding the status of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) in Hong Kong, we will address this question by examining the sociolinguistic conditions under which English is learned and used in Hong Kong.

Chapter 7 will be devoted to another MoI debate concerning the feasibility and desirability of Teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP) in primary school.[14] After outlining the background to the introduction of Putonghua into the local curricula since the 1990s and updating progress made since then, we will review a body of the TCP literature, with a view to teasing out the main pedagogical challenge faced by the education authorities and the community of Chinese Language teachers. The main concerns of various stakeholders who are disinclined to accept TCP will be elucidated and discussed. This will be followed by a review of a separate body of psycholinguistic and neuroscience research, the purpose being to examine the question, in which life stage, in terms of biological age, language acquisition in monolingual or multilingual environments is neuro-cognitively facilitated in terms of accuracy and relative ease.

In Chap. 8, we will discuss how ethnic minorities are disadvantaged by the post-1997 language policy of biliteracy and trilingualism: the ability to read and write Chinese and English, and to be conversant in Cantonese, English and Putonghua. Our focus is on the needs of Hong Kong students of South(east) Asian descent for the vernacular Cantonese and SWC, in which ways they are disadvantaged by a new language policy in place since 1998, and how such socio-educational inequities could be redressed through a number of amendments in the SAR's policy measures. The book will close with Chap. 9, where we will recapitulate the critical issues pertaining to the language-in-education policy to date and assess the effectiveness of its implementation. Then, on the basis of this critical review, a number of recommendations will be proposed, with a view to addressing the research questions and related problems identified in the previous chapters.

[14] 普教中 (*pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}/*pǔ jiào zhōng*) in popular parlance.

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Chapter 2
Language Contact: Sociolinguistic Context and Linguistic Outcomes

2.1 Impact of English on Hong Kong Cantonese

For over 100 years until the 1970s, Hong Kong was looked upon as a haven for successive generations of economic migrants from the war-torn and socially insecure parts of mainland China. Political instability and socioeconomic despondency drove many mainlanders to leave their homelands in search of job opportunities and brighter prospects in this British colony (So 1998; Tsou 1997; Zhang 2009). Many of them originated from the province of Guangdong, where Cantonese is the dominant regional lingua franca. After the Second World War, many of the new arrivals considered this "borrowed place [in] borrowed time" (Hughes 1976) a stepping stone in transition toward some other dream destinations. Some managed to leave, while many more had no choice but to call Hong Kong home. Life gradually stabilized after their families settled down and their children grew up to become linguistically Cantonese-dominant through socialization and education, including those born to non-Cantonese-speaking parents (e.g., Hakka [Kejia] and Chaozhou [Teochew]), especially after the universalization of vernacular primary education since 1971 (So 1998, pp. 157–159). This is why, roughly since the 1990s, younger generations of Chinese Hongkongers increasingly report Cantonese as their usual language, as shown in (by-)census figures since 1996, see Table 1.1, Chap. 1).[1]

As of the mid-2010's, practically all home-grown Chinese Hongkongers below 50 are bilingual in Cantonese and English to different extents. This language profile

[1] The present writer is one of those whose parents were among many who sought refuge in a makeshift hillside settlement on Hong Kong Island. Growing up in a Hakka-speaking family but interacting with neighbors and school buddies only in Cantonese, I regret missing the opportunity to learn and speak Hakka. Over time, language shift gradually leveled off linguistic diversity in an essentially Cantonese-speaking neighborhood; like me, other children my age from families speaking other Chinese varieties in the same 'dialect enclave' also grew up to become Cantonese-dominant, with or without developing plurilinguality to include their parents' language(s).

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may be explained by recurrent patterns of language choice in society since 1970s, especially in the home and school, and in the domains of friendship and media. Under the nine-year compulsory education policy since 1978 (extended to 12-year in 2012), all parents are obliged to send their children to primary school. Although English is formally taught from Primary 1 (age 6), most P1 students have already had up to three years of basic English literacy training in kindergarten. Through formal education, school-age children of Chinese descent who are already more or less Cantonese-dominant gradually develop plurilinguality to include English and SWC, which, with few exceptions, is taught in Cantonese in Hong Kong (and Macao) Special Administrative Region (SAR). Since English is seldom used among Chinese Hongkongers for intra-ethnic communication (see Chap. 6), education is an important and arguably indispensable means for fostering students' knowledge and grasp of English (spoken and written) and Chinese literacy.

In terms of language learning outcomes, the amount of home support is an important variable and predictor. In general, in those households where parents can afford setting aside resources to provide extra support, such as engaging a private tutor (native English-speaking tutor often preferred where possible), hiring an English-speaking domestic helper, and increasing exposure to English through games and other literacy-focused activities, their children tend to stand a better chance of attaining a higher level of English proficiency. Indeed, many thrifty parents are reportedly keen on setting aside precious money to buy their children such extra support, in the hope that they would not 'lose at the starting line/point'.[2] According to an Oxford University Press survey conducted by Richard Wong concerning the attitudes of middle-class parents with one or two children up to age six toward home support for their children's English language development, over half of the 950 respondents wished that English be their children's first language (Ngai 2015; Lui 2015). While all of the respondents hired a Filipino domestic helper to alleviate their household chores, most expected their helper to assist their children with English, even though in some cases, the helper's English accent and accuracy was a matter of concern (e.g., saying **no have* for 'do not have', **eat rice* for 'have lunch/dinner' and **open gun* for 'shoot'). Quite a few parent respondents indicated they did not mind spending up to HK$3000 (ca. US$400) per month, just to give their children extra exposure to English in one way or another (Ngai 2015; Lui 2015). Parents from more affluent families clearly have more options, including sending their children to elite boarding schools in UK or USA. The lead of a news story entitled 'Price is worth paying for an elite schooling' is very instructive in this regard: "Chinese parents are willing to pay hefty fees for British boarding schools, and some are sending children away as early as the age of seven" (Zhao 2015). John Ing, head of London-based *Quintessentially Education*, which had an office in New York and which opened an office in Hong Kong in May 2015 to "cash in on the demand", indicated that "Hong Kong and mainland China contribute more students

[2] 輸在起跑線上 (*shū zài qǐpǎoxiàn shàng*/*syu*[55] *zoi*[22] *hei*[35]*paau*[35]*sin*[33] *soeng*[22]).

than any other single group" (Zhao 2015). Ing also noted that some Korean and mainland parents would not mind sending their children to UK or USA at an early age (e.g., age 3), which he advised against. There is also some evidence that young people's life chances, as defined by their ability to secure a place in a local English-medium university, correlate strongly with their family income. Such a socioeconomically sensitive 'English divide' appears to be attested by the findings of one 2011 study conducted by K.-L Chou concerning the university enrolment of young people (Fung 2013). Chou's findings showed that, in 2011, the university enrollment rate of 19- and 20-year-olds from the richest 10% of households was about 3.7 times higher than those from households with incomes of less than half of the median level, whereas two decades earlier, in 1991, the difference was only 1.2 times (Fung 2013). In terms of the actual numbers of admittees, 48.2% from the wealthiest families were at university compared with 13% from families living in poverty (SCMP editorial 2013).

The typical language profile of Chinese Hongkongers outlined above is crucial for understanding various language contact phenomena between Cantonese, English and SWC. In the rest of this chapter, we will examine the impact of English on Cantonese and Hong Kong Written Chinese (HKWC, Shi 2006; Shi et al. 2014), as shown in Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers' informal social interaction with one another in speech, and an excerpt of a sample newspaper column featuring the informal use of written Chinese.

2.2 Plurilingual Interaction: Mobilizing All Linguistic Resources to Make Meaning

Where no linguistic norms prevail to restrain their language choice, plurilingual speakers will naturally mobilize all their linguistic resources to make meaning and, in the process, they are guided, often subconsciously, by an awareness of the social role and linguistic repertoire of the interlocutor(s) they are interacting with. For illustration, let us begin with one instructive example from my field notes, a 'slice of life' I observed over 10 years ago.

On my way home one day, entering the lift of the building where I lived, I overhead a short English conversation between a 7- or 8-year-old boy and (presumably) a Filipino domestic helper, who was carrying a school bag on her shoulder that in all likelihood belonged to the boy. I did not know them other than finding their faces familiar and that they lived on a higher floor. The boy was visibly excited about something that had happened to him during the day. From the segment of his mini narrative I heard during the 30-second lift ride, there was one sentence that I retained with interest and jotted down in my field notes after I got home:

(1)	…I tou saliva on the spider…
	'…I spit on the spider…'

I did not have the larger context to tell the circumstances under which the young boy would utter that sentence in (1). What was clear to me was that the boy came from a middle-class family, a socioeconomic status that was typical of families in my neighborhood, of which one visible indicator was one or more English-speaking domestic helpers they hired. That young boy's English was fluent and he could make meaning clearly with the domestic helper, whose English accent was reminiscent of people from the Philippines. Their conversation in the lift was entirely intelligible to me, although I missed the rest of the details in that young boy's story.

Several points are of interest in (1) from the linguistic point of view. First, for bilingual interlocutors who understand Cantonese, the insertion of [*tou*], pronounced like in Cantonese high level tone *tou*^{55}, is comprehensible in context as the lexical equivalent of Cantonese 吐 (*tou*^{33}, 'spit'). Second, whereas (1) is syntactically well-formed, it does not sound so idiomatic, in that Standard English would require the use of the verb *spit* instead of *tou saliva* ('spit saliva'), the object of *spit* being semantically subsumed and therefore redundant (compare: *color* in **yellow-color car*). Third, the use of the low-frequency word *saliva* suggests that the young boy was mapping the Cantonese V-O verb phrase 吐口水 (*tou*^{33} *hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}, literally 'spit mouth water') onto English. Compare:

(2)	**我吐口水落隻蜘蛛度**						
	ngo^{23}	*tou*^{33}	*hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}	*lok*^{22}	*zek*^{33}	*zi*^{55}*zyu*^{55}	*dou*^{22}
	1sg	spit	saliva	on	CL	spider	place
	'I spit on the spider.'						

In sum, (1) is a clear example showing how, despite an apparent gap in a bilingual speaker's English lexicon (i.e., the English verb *spit*), that speaker would turn to the equivalent in some other language within his or her linguistic repertoire to make meaning (in this case Cantonese). Whether it was due to a momentary lapse of memory or ignorance of the verb *spit*, the young boy probably first acquired that meaning in Cantonese, which is expressed in a V-O phrase (吐口水, *tou*^{33} *hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}), which motivated him to look up the meaning of or asked his caretaker for that everyday expression 口水 (*hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}, 'saliva'), whose equivalent in English is a low-frequency word that is hardly needed by his age-relevant English-L1 peers. In terms of communicative effectiveness, other than the flouting of a grammatical norm in Standard English, the intended meaning of (1) was not adversely affected or lost in what was virtually bilingual speech involving both English and Cantonese.

Traditionally, the embedding of Cantonese 吐口水 (*tou*^{33} *hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}) in an English sentence as in (1) may be variously analyzed as 'code-switching', 'code-mixing', 'code-alternation' or 'lexical borrowing', among others. In general, if the source language (SL) element follows the pronunciation norms of the SL (here, Cantonese) rather than that of the recipient language (RL), it is usually analyzed as an instance of switching, mixing or alternation. By contrast, if its pronunciation has been accommodated to the phonological system of the RL (here, English), it is more customary to analyze it as an instance of lexical borrowing. The problem is that determining whether the pronunciation of a given SL word (string) deviates from the SL or approximates the RL is often not as straightforward. To avoid terminological complications, we will follow Clyne (1997, 2003), and use the related terms 'transfer' and 'transference', as follows:

> A 'transfer' is an instance of transference, where the form, feature of construction has been taken over by the speaker from another language, whatever the motives or explanation for this. 'Transference' is thus the process and a 'transfer' the product. (Clyne 2003, p. 76)

Accordingly, 吐口水 (*tou*^{33} *hau*^{35}*seoi*^{35}, 'spit saliva') in (1) will be analyzed as an instance of transfer from Cantonese into English at the lexical level. As Clyne (2003, p. 76) has made clear, transference may take place at different levels – phonetic/phonological, prosodic, tonemic, lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic, graphemic, in any combination. For instance, as a result of the transference of English words into Hong Kong Cantonese, its phonological system has gradually been expanded to accommodate those 'loanword syllables' (e.g., [$k^hɔ^{55}$] < *call*; [$wɛn^{55}$] < *van*; [dzel ^{55}] < *gel*), which are "non-occurring syllables or unused syllables which represent both accidental and systematic gaps in the syllabary" (Bauer and Wong 2010, p. 7). Notice that traditionally there were no Cantonese syllables ending with the lateral [l]; owing to the transference of English words like *feel*, *gel* and *sell*, the phonological system of Hong Kong Cantonese has been expanded to include the loanword syllables [ɪl] and [el]. From 1997 to 2006, such loanword syllables increased from 40 (Bauer and Benedict 1997) to 49 (Bauer 2006), and was further extended to 78 in 2010 (Bauer and Wong 2010; cf. Li et al. 2016). Lexically, while it cannot be denied that the extent of integration varies from one case to another, including 'nonce borrowing' or 'nonce loans' that would never occur again owing to a low level of acceptability in society (for a critical discussion, see Onysko 2007, pp. 37–38), Clyne's (2003) terminological distinction has the advantage of freeing us from a concern, namely, to what extent a given context-bound SL transfer has been integrated into the RL. This in turn allows us to focus on the possible reasons behind specific instances of transference in context.

In plurilingual interaction, when all linguistic resources within a speaker's repertoire are used to make meaning, their language outputs naturally contain elements which are traditionally associated with different languages, and more or less discrete styles, genres or registers within the same language. Where two or more natural languages are involved in plurilingual interaction, depending on the structural distribution of such elements at the utterance (spoken) or sentence (written) level, one could usually identify the dominant or matrix language, into which elements of the embedded language(s) are inserted. Broadly speaking, transference may take place *inter*-sententially at clause level, or *intra*-sententially within a clause, both of which are exemplified in the following excerpt adapted from a bilingual radio programme on Metro Radio.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">(3)</td><td colspan="4">An Excerpt of a Radio Programme (Li 2001a, p. 9; my approximate translation on the right)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date and time:</td><td>Channel:</td><td>Speaker:</td><td>Gender:</td></tr>
<tr><td>24-7-2000, 3:30 pm</td><td>Metro Radio (精選 104)</td><td>Disc Jockey</td><td>Male</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">(i) 我希望呢 今日喺呢個長途電話訪問裏面呢 真係可以面對面, 咀對咀, 唔係, phone 對 phone 問佢 Chanel O’Connor 一條問題 (ii) once and for all, just tell us, are you … or are you not…? (iii) 呢首作品歌曲名字叫做 ‘No man's woman’. (iv) How’s your weekend? (v) 呢個weekend你過成點呢? (vi) Anything special? (vii) 我聽之前節目啲聽眾講都非常之唔錯喎, 有人話去南灣, 有人話去大嶼山, 鬼咁健康! (viii) 我就去咗見Sasha…</td><td colspan="2">(i) I hope, in the long-distance call today, I can really, face to face, mouth to mouth, no, phone to phone, ask her, Chanel O’Connor, a question, (ii) once and for all, just tell us, are you … or are you not…? (iii) The name of this song is ‘No man’s woman’. (iv) How's your weekend? (v) How are you doing this weekend? (vi) Anything special? (vii) I heard from a few (radio) fans earlier that they’re doing fine, some said they went to South Bay, others to Lantau Island, so healthy! (viii) As for me, I went to see Sasha…</td></tr>
</table>

For convenient reference, the disc jockey’s utterances are reproduced below in linear order:

(i) **我希望呢 今日喺呢個長途電話訪問裏面呢 真係可以面對面**, **咀對咀**, **唔係**, **phone 對 phone 問佢 Chanel O’Connor 一條問題**[3]
(ii) **once and for all, just tell us, are you … or are you not…**?
(iii) **呢首作品歌曲名字叫做 ‘No man's woman’**.[4]
(iv) **How's your weekend**?
(v) **呢個weekend你過成點呢**?[5]
(vi) **Anything special**?
(vii) **我聽之前節目啲聽眾講都非常之唔錯喎**, **有人話去南灣**, **有人話去大嶼山**, **鬼咁健康**![6]
(viii) **我就去咗見Sasha**…[7]

In this excerpt consisting of eight more or less discrete utterances of varying lengths, some are entirely in English (ii, iv, and vi); one only in Cantonese (vii); the rest of the four utterances have Cantonese as the matrix language, with English words inserted (i, iii, v, and viii). If we think of alternation between languages metaphorically as an operation of switching, we may say that an *inter*-sentential, clause-

[3] Ngo^{35} hei^{55}mong^{22} ne^{55} gam^{55}jat^{22} hai^{35} ni^{55}go^{33} coeng^{21}tou^{21}din^{22}waa^{35} fong^{35}man^{22} leoi^{23}min^{22} ne^{55} zan^{55}hai^{22} ho^{35}ji^{23} min^{22}deoi^{33}min^{22}, zeoi^{35}deoi^{33}zeoi^{33}, m^{21}hai^{22}, ***phone*** deoi^{33} ***phone*** man^{22} keoi^{23} ***Chanel O’Connor*** jat^{55}tiu^{22} man^{22}tai^{21}.

[4] Nei^{55}sau^{35} zok^{33}ban^{35} go^{55}kuk^{55} ming^{21}zi^{22} giu^{33}zou^{22} ***‘No man’s woman’***.

[5] Nei^{55}go^{33} ***weekend*** nei^{23} gwo^{33}sing^{21}dim^{35} ne^{55}?

[6] Ngo^{35} teng^{55} zi^{55}cin^{21} zit^{33}muk^{22} di^{55}ting^{33}zung^{33} gong^{35} dou^{55} fei^{55}soeng^{21}zi^{55}m^{21}co^{33} wo^{33}, jau^{35}jan^{21} waa^{22} heoi^{33} naam^{21}waan^{55}, jau^{35}jan^{21} waa^{22} heoi^{33} daai^{22}jyu^{21}saan^{55}, gam^{33}gwai^{35} gin^{22}hong^{55}!

[7] Ngo^{35} zau^{22} heoi^{33}zo^{35} gin^{33} ***Sasha***…

level switch from Cantonese to English occurs between (i) and (ii), between (iii) and (iv), and between (v) and (vi), while a switch from English back to Cantonese is found between (ii) and (iii), between (iv) and (v), and between (vi) and (vii). Those scholars who analyze *intra*-sentential code-switching as 'code-mixing' would regard utterances (i), (iii), (v), and (viii) as instances of 'mixed code', which is characterized by the insertion of elements from the embedded language (here, English) into the matrix language (here, Cantonese). Such a pattern of language use, blending Cantonese and English seamlessly in what may be called 'infotainment discourse', is rather typical of disc jockeys' speech style as well as talk shows hosted by bilingual commentators of local radio or TV programs. Beyond such bilingual programs on broadcast media, however, the speech style of the disc jockey is less typical of the way Chinese Hongkongers speak and therefore less often encountered in society. This is largely because expressing ideas at clause length entirely in English, as shown in utterances (ii), (iv) and (vi) above, is less common – except in (ii), which is arguably triggered by an imagined question raised to Chanel O'Connor, a non-Cantonese speaker.

Unlike the young boy in (1) and the disc jockey in (3), who were ready to interact with others in English spontaneously, the majority of Chinese Hongkongers, children and adults alike, tend to use much more Cantonese than English in their bilingual interaction with one another. The syntactic structures are clearly Cantonese ('matrix language', Myers-Scotton 1993a), with short English expressions inserted (Muysken 2000; cf. 'embedded language', Myers-Scotton 1993a), typically in accordance with the grammatical requirement in Cantonese. That is, an English noun or noun phrase is inserted where a Cantonese noun or noun phrase is expected; with few exceptions, very much the same is true of English words from the other open word classes: verbs (or verb phrases) and adjectives (or adjective phrases). One good illustration is (4), which is an excerpt of a conversation between a male and a female speaker in their early 30s. That excerpt was carefully reconstructed by a group of three students who were present when the conversation took place; they had been trained to collect and record field work data using pen and paper without the support of an intruding tape-recording device (an approximate translation is provided on the right hand side).[8]

[8] This data collection method, which may be termed 'snap listening', clearly has its limitations. While it has the merit of not infringing the interactants' privacy, it captures mainly content information, relying on the collective short-term memory and overall impression of the field workers who are co-present in the situation. Where negotiation of identity is in evidence, however, the absence of prosodic data retrievable from a recording device – including raised volume and the amount of time elapsed in a pause – would make it difficult to pin down on the exact speaker meaning(s) intended. In all of the local examples presented in this chapter, negotiation of identity is a non-issue (see Myers-Scotton 1993b for instructive examples how negotiation of identity is closely bound up with language choice in multilingual contexts; cf. the intricate relationship between language choice and ethnolinguistic identity in a sociopolitically perilous multilingual context like Rwanda during the 1990s, Blommaert 2010, Ch. 6).

(4)	**Place: On an MTR train compartment**	**Relationship: Couple or close friends**	**Age: About 30 years old**	**Gender: 1 Male & 1 Female**
	(i)	M: **呢個樓盤唔錯喎**! [pointing at the brochure][9]	M: This [new] commercial property looks nice! [pointing at the brochure]	
	(ii)	F: **係咩**? **有無會所**㗎?[10]	F: Is it? Is there a club house?	
	(iii)	M: **有呀**! **個*club house* 仲好大添呀**,**又有泳池**[11]	M: Yes, there is! The ***club house*** is real big, and there's also a swimming pool.	
	(iv)	F: **個*club house*有咩玩呀**,**有無健身室**㗎?[12]	F: What facilities are there in the ***club house***, is there a gym?	
	(v)	M: **有呀**! ***Gym room*** **一定有啦**,**而且仲有好多健身器材添呀**![13]	M: Yes! Certainly, there is a ***gym*** [***room***], and a lot of fitness equipment as well!	
	(vi)	F: **哦**,**咁都*OK*喎**…**我地可以一齊做*gym*如果我地住呢度**! [pointing at the brochure]。**近海喎**,**個*view*一定勁正**[14]	F: Oh, sounds ***OK***…we could do [exercise in the] ***gym*** together if we live here! [pointing at the brochure]. So close to the sea, the ***view*** must be super fantastic.	

Structurally speaking, the language use pattern of this extract is representative of Hong Kong Cantonese-English 'mixed code' (**中英夾雜**, *zung*^{55}*jing*^{55} *gaap*^{33}*zaap*^{22}/*zhōngyīng jiázá*) in many ways. First, except for 'OK', which is a frequently used 'discourse marker', the English elements are mainly nouns inserted within a clause (i.e., *intra*-sententially rather than *inter*-sententially), a tendency which is relatively more common compared with the insertion of English verbs, adjectives and adverbs into Cantonese. Second, the English insertions are sometimes used in free variation with their Cantonese equivalents. For instance, *club house* and *gym [room]* occur twice; both were initiated by the male speaker in (iii) and (v), after the female speaker first mentioned their Cantonese equivalents in her preceding questions, that is, **會所** (*wui*^{22}*so*^{35}) in (ii) and **健身室** (*gin*^{22}*san*^{55}*sat*^{55}) in (iv). In (iii) and (v), the male speaker's switch to English may have been influenced

[9] M: *Nei*^{55}*go*^{33} *lau*^{21}*pun*^{35} *m*^{21}*co*^{33} *wo*^{33}! [pointing at the brochure].

[10] F: *Hai*^{22} *me*^{55}*?* *Jau*^{23}*mou*^{23} *wui*^{22}*so*^{35} *gaa*^{33}?

[11] M: *Jau*^{23} *aa*^{33}! *Go*^{33} ***club house*** *zung*^{22} *hou*^{35}*daai*^{22} *tim*^{55} *aa*^{33}, *jau*^{22} *jau*^{23} *wing*^{22}*ci*^{21}.

[12] F: *Go*^{33} ***club house*** *jau*^{23} *me*^{55} *waan*^{35} *aa*^{33}, *jau*^{23}*mou*^{23} *gin*^{22}*san*^{55}*sat*^{55} *gaa*^{33}?

[13] M: *Jau*^{23} *aa*^{33}! ***Gym room*** *jat*^{55}*ding*^{22} *jau*^{23} *laa*^{55}, *ji*^{21}*ce*^{35} *zung*^{22} *jau*^{23} *hou*^{35}*do*^{55} *gin*^{22}*san*^{55}*hei*^{33}*coi*^{21} *tim*^{55}*aa*^{33}!

[14] F: *O*^{22}, *gam*^{35} *dou*^{55} ***OK*** *wo*^{33}…*ngo*^{23}*dei*^{22} *ho*^{35}*ji*^{23} *jat*^{55}*cai*^{21} *zou*^{22} **gym** *jyu*^{21}*gwo*^{35} *ngo*^{23}*dei*^{22} *zyu*^{22} *nei*^{55}*dou*^{22}! [pointing at the brochure]. *Gan*^{22} *hoi*^{35} *wo*^{33}, *go*^{33} ***view*** *jat*^{55}*ding*^{22} *ging*^{22} *zeng*^{33}.

by the printed information in the brochure he was browsing, which was most likely bilingual in Chinese and English. Third, it can be seen that many of the English insertions are monosyllabic, for example, *club house*, *gym room*, and *view*. Monosyllabic English words (MEWs) may also be combined with Cantonese morphemes to form verb phrases, as in the case of 做*gym* (*zou*^{22} *gym*, 'do gym [exercise]') in (vi). As Li et al. (2015, 2016) have shown, the frequent transference of MEWs into Cantonese is probably due to a typological characteristic in the recipient language, Cantonese, such that high-frequency MEWs are treated collectively by Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers like Cantonese morphemes. We will have more to say below about this salient pattern of transference into Cantonese.

Local university students are among those whose informal Cantonese is commonly embedded with English words. Very often, English expressions are preferred because no semantically satisfactory translation equivalents (are thought to) exist. This is clearly the case of words like *project* and *presentation* (see, e.g., the video production, '*Multilingual Hong Kong: Present*一個*project*' by Chen and Carper 2005). Apart from lexical gaps in Cantonese, very often an English term is used largely because its putative equivalent in Cantonese is semantically incongruent and therefore not useable from the speaker's or writer's point of view. This is one of the findings in an experimental study conducted by Li and Tse (2002) who, following the ethnomethodological principle of 'revelation through disruption', instructed 12 English majors not to use English for one day, with a view to seeing whether and if so under what circumstances English was considered indispensable in their context-specific interaction with others (cf. Li 2011a, b). One instructive example was reported by a female participant (F3), who was tempted to invite a new male acquaintance to play wargames in the countryside. In Hong Kong, wargame is rendered in colloquial Cantonese as打野戰 (*daa*^{35} *je*^{23}*zin*^{33}, literally 'fight wild battle'), which, however, is also commonly used in soft-porn literature referring to illicit sexual activities. Being mindful of the artificial no-English-allowed rule of speaking on the day of the experiment, F3 used Cantonese (i.e., *daa*^{35} *je*^{23}*zin*^{33}) to invite that new male acquaintance to 'fight wild battle' with her, which turned out to be extremely embarrassing for both. At the subsequent focus group interview where participants could give fuller details of 'rich' events that left them a deep impression, F3 pointed out somewhat emotionally that she would have no doubt followed the common parlance and used the code-mixed expression *daa*^{35} *wargame* if she had not been obliged to observe that funny no-English-allowed rule of speaking. Similarly, many examples of calquing in Cantonese, when first introduced, tend to have limited currency and a low level of social acceptance. This is clearly the case of various renditions of 'mobile phone' in the 1990s, when different Chinese translations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and in the two SAR's competed for currency, including 流動電話 (*lau*^{21}*dung*^{22} *din*^{22}*waa*^{35}, 'flow phone'), 移動電話 (*ji*^{21}*dung*^{22} *din*^{22}*waa*^{35}, 'move phone'), and 手提電話 (*sau*^{35}*tai*^{21} *din*^{22}*waa*^{35}, 'hand-held phone'). It took about five years, around the beginning of the new millennium, when communities across Greater China collectively settled for the bisyllabic 手機 (*sau*^{35}*gei*^{55}/*shǒujī*, literarily 'hand machine' or 'hand phone'; compare *Handy* in German and 핸드폰 [*haendeupon*] in Korean). Another high-frequency example is the calquing of the word *deadline* as 死線 (*sei*^{35}*sin*^{33}), which was typically regarded as a joke when it first occurred some 15 years ago in the 1990s. Today, there is some indication that死線is in the process of being naturalized and increasingly felt to be acceptable, as shown in its use in more or less formal HKWC texts, with or without scare quotes (angle brackets in Chinese texts). For example:

(5)	**傳 亞 視 續 牌 今「死 綫」蘇 錦 樑 拒 評 論** [headline]		
	cyun^{21} *aa*^{33}*si*^{22} *zuk*^{22} *paai*^{21} *gam*^{55} *sei*^{35}*sin*^{33}	*Sou*^{55}*gam*^{35}*loeng*^{21}	*keoi*^{23} *ping*^{21}*leon*^{22}
	rumour ATV extend licence today deadline	Greg So	decline give comment
	'Rumour has it that ATV's "deadline" for extending its licence is today		
	Greg So declined to give comments.' (*Sky Post*, 晴報, 31/03/2015, p. A2)		

(6)	**…過 晒 交 建 議 書 的 死 線…**		
	gwo^{33} *saai*^{33} *gaau*^{55} *gin*^{33}*ji*^{23}*syu*^{55}	*dik*^{55}	*sei*^{35}*sin*^{33}
	pass completely submit proposal	NOM	deadline
	'…the deadline for [ATV to] submit a proposal [to extend the licence] has passed…'		
		(*Headline Daily*, 頭條日報 2/4/2015, p. 4)	

Examples such as these (*wargame*, *mobile phone, deadline*) suggest that avoiding unwanted semantic loss or gain is one of the main reasons for preferring the English expressions while using Cantonese/HKWC, resulting in lexical transference or mixed code (cf. Li 2001b; for more examples and discussion of borrowing from English, see Shi et al. 2014, Ch. 6 and 7).

Other linguistic motivations of lexical transference in Hong Kong mixed code may be illustrated with the following examples featuring conversations between university students.

(7)	Place: University Computer Centre	Relationship: Schoolmates	Age: About 22 years old	Gender: Both female (F1, F2)
	(i).	F1: 琴日**in** 成點呀?[15]	F1: The **in**terview yesterday, how was it?	
	(ii).	F2: 我一去到佢就叫我簽約咯, 根本就唔算係**second in**![16]	F2: [You know what?] As soon as I got there, he asked me to sign a contract, [it was] not at all a **second in**terview!	
	(iii).	F1: 咁咪好囉, 咁易就請, 你就好啦, 咁快搵到嘢做[17]。	F1: That's great, you got the job so easily; good for you, found a job so quickly.	
	(iv).	F2: 我根本就唔想做, 你睇下我呢份聘書, 成張學校通告咁, 根本就唔**pro**。唔講住喇, 做完呢份**report**先講啦![18]	F2: I don't really want to take it up. Look at my employment letter; it's like a school announcement, not **pro**fessional at all. Don't chat about it [now]; [let's] get this **report** done first!	

There are two features of interest in (7). First, there is a tendency for polysyllabic English words to be clipped to just one syllable, with their denotation and connotation remaining intact. Thus the verb *interview* in (i) is reduced to monosyllabic *in* [pronounced in high level tone *in*^{55}], while the noun phrase *second interview* also gets simplified as *second in* in (ii). Likewise, three of the four syllables in the adjective *professional* are deleted, making the initial syllable *pro* the de facto exponent of that meaning in (iv) (compare *gymnasium* → *gym*). There is no evidence of any communication problem, suggesting that the clipping of long English words to one syllable is widely recognized and used. In Li et al.'s (2015, 2016) studies of the 'Monosyllabic Salience Hypothesis' (MSH), it was found that in a Hong Kong Chinese newspaper corpus of about 600,000 characters (Li et al. 2014), such a tendency to reduce or truncate polysyllabic English words to one syllable is statistically more marked with verbs and adjectives compared with nouns (cf. Luke and Lau 2008). This is especially clear with regard to polysyllabic English lexemes which are identical in spelling and pronunciation except for their word class. For instance, whereas the noun *copy* is usually rendered bisyllabically as [kʰɔːp^{55}pʰiː^{21}], as a verb *copy* is systematically truncated to one syllable as [kʰɔp^{55}]. Similar con-

[15] F1: *Kam^{21}jat^{22}* ***in*** *sing^{21} dim^{35} aa^{33}*?

[16] F2: *Ngo^{23} jat^{55} heoi^{33}dou^{33} zau^{22} giu^{33} ngo^{23} cim^{55} joek^{33} lok^{33}, gan^{55}bun^{35} zau^{22} m^{21}syun^{33} hai^{22}* ***second in***!

[17] F1: *Gam^{35} mai^{22} hou^{35} lo^{55}, gam^{33} ji^{22} zau^{22} ceng^{35}, nei^{23} zau^{22} hou^{35} laa^{55}, gam^{33} faai^{33} wan^{35}dou^{35} je^{23} zou^{22}*.

[18] F2: *Ngo^{23} gan^{55}bun^{35} zau^{22} m^{21}soeng^{35} zou^{22}, nei^{23} tai^{35}haa^{23} ngo^{23} nei^{55}fan^{22} ping^{33}syu^{55}, sing^{21}zoeng^{55} hok^{22}haau^{22} tung^{55}gou^{33} gam^{23}, gan^{55}bun^{35} zau^{22} m^{21}* ***pro***. *M^{21}gong^{35}zyu^{22} laa^{33}, zou^{22}jyun^{21} nei^{55}fan^{22}* ***report*** *sin^{55} gong^{35} laa^{55}*!

trasts occur with *fail, minor, major, reply, report*, and *tips* (see Table 5, Luke and Lau 2008, p. 353).

Second, while there is a standard, semantically congruent translation of *report* (報告, *bou*[33]*gou*[33]), this English word is still preferred in (iv), probably because it is felt to be more specific when making reference to a particular course assignment (compare: *project report*, *lab report*). This is consonant with Li's (2011a, b) study involving data obtained from participating university students after going through a 'one day with only Cantonese' (Hong Kong) or 'one day with only Mandarin' (Taiwan) experiment. One of the key findings in these 'one day' studies is that when technical concepts or academic/school jargon are first introduced or learned in language X (here English), those terms or jargon tend to be cognitively mediated by language X, even though their translation equivalents in another language (language Y) have subsequently been encountered. Such a psycholinguistic motivation, termed 'medium-of-learning effect' (MOLE, Li 2011a, b), may be traced back to Gibbons' (1987) observation of 'learning effect', which he conjectured was one of the main reasons why students at Hong Kong University were so prone to mixing English into their Cantonese, resulting in a language use pattern he called 'MIX'. Interestingly, being field-specific, MOLE is consistent with Fishman's (1972, p. 439) "topical regulation of language choice", for "certain topics are somehow handled 'better' or more appropriately in one language than in another in particular multilingual contexts". As for the various "mutually reinforcing factors" leading to such topical regulation, Fishman explains as follows:

> Thus, some multilingual speakers may 'acquire the habit' of speaking about topic *x* in language X (a) partially because this is the language in which they are *trained* to deal with this topic (e.g., they received their university training in economics in French), (b) partially because *they* (*and their interlocutors*) may *lack the specialized terms* for a satisfying discussion of *x* in language Y, (c) partially because *language Y itself may currently lack as exact or as many terms* for handling topic *x* as those currently possessed by language X, and (d) partially because *it is considered strange* or inappropriate to discuss *x* in language Y. (Fishman 1972, pp. 439–440, emphasis in original)

In a footnote on the same page, Fishman explains his point (b) further as follows:

> This effect [i.e. lacking the specialized terms for a satisfying discussion of x in language Y] has been noted even in normally monolingual settings, such as those obtaining among American intellectuals, many of whom feel obliged to use French or German words in conjunction with particular professional topics. English lexical influence on the language of immigrants in the United States has also been explained on topical grounds. (Fishman 1972, p. 439)

In light of the topical regulation of language choice, which in turn may be accounted for by MOLE, it is not difficult to understand why the conversation in (8) between two hall-mates regarding their ideal choice of a minor in their undergraduate degree studies is sporadically 'sprinkled' with academic/school jargon in English (highlighted), including the word 'minor' itself.

(8)	**Place: University hostel**	**Relationship: Hall-mates**	**Age: About 20 years old**	**Gender: Both female (F1, F2)**
	(i).	F1: **你有無諗過讀minor呀**?[19]	F1: Have you thought about studying a **minor** [subject]?	
	(ii).	F2: **我想讀Psychology 做minor呀**…**你呢**?[20]	F2: I want to study **Psychology** as **minor**…what about you?	
	(iii).	F1: **無呀**…**我唔想讀多成十五個credits 呀**.[21]	F1: No. I don't want to study an extra 15 **credits**.	
	(iv).	F2: **我都係**……**但係好似好有用咁**……[22]	F2: Neither do I……But [it] looks very useful [to minor in Psychology].	
	(v).	F1: **都係**…**咁你諗住讀咩科呀**?[23]	F1: True…Which courses will you choose?	
	(vi).	F2: **無呀**… **Basic principles of Psychology**… **Abnormal Psychology**…**Movie and Psychology**…**不過我都未諗定呀**.[24]	F2: Not sure…**Basic principles of Psychology**… **Abnormal Psychology**……**Movie and Psychology**……but I haven't decided yet.	
	(vii).	F1: **其實我都有諗過minor Global B** 㗎![25]	F1: Actually I also thought about studying a **minor** in **Global B**.	
	(viii).	F2: **Global B**? **咩嚟**㗎?[26]	F2: **Global B**? What's that?	
	(ix).	F1: **Global Business囉**.[27]	F1: **Global Business**.	
	(x).	F2: **都好吖**! **好似好有用咁**![28]	F2: That's good! Sounds very useful.	
	(xi).	F1: **唔知呀**…**都係睇定吓先**…[29]	F1: Don't know…better wait and see.	

[19] F1: *Nei*^{23} *jau*^{23}*mou*^{23} *nam*^{35}*gwo*^{33} *duk*^{22} ***minor*** *aa*^{33}?

[20] F2: *Ngo*^{23}*soeng*^{35} *duk*^{22} ***Psychology*** *zou*^{22} ***minor*** *aa*^{33}*…nei*^{23} *ne*^{55}?

[21] F1: *Mou*^{23} *aa*^{33}*…ngo*^{23} *m*^{21}*soeng*^{35} *duk*^{22} *do*^{55} *sing*^{21} *sap*^{22}*ng*^{23}*go*^{33} ***credits*** *aa*^{33}.

[22] F2: *Ngo*^{23} *dou*^{55} *hai*^{22}*……daan*^{22}*hai*^{22} *hou*^{35}*ci*^{23} *hou*^{35} *jau*^{23}*jung*^{22} *gam*^{33}……

[23] F1: *Dou*^{55} *hai*^{22}*…gam*^{35} *nei*^{23} *nam*^{35}*zyu*^{22} *duk*^{22} *me*^{55}*fo*^{55} *aa*^{33}?

[24] F2: *Mou*^{23} *aa*^{33}… ***Basic principles of Psychology***… ***Abnormal Psychology***…***Movie and Psychology****…bat*^{55}*gwo*^{33} *ngo*^{23} *dou*^{55} *mei*^{22} *nam*^{35}*ding*^{22} *aa*^{33}.

[25] F1: *Kei*^{21}*sat*^{22} *ngo*^{23} *dou*^{55} *jau*^{23} *nam*^{35}*gwo*^{33} ***minor Global B*** *gaa*^{33}!

[26] F2: ***Global B****? me*^{55} *lai*^{21} *gaa*^{33}?

[27] F1: ***Global Business*** *lo*^{55}.

[28] F2: *Dou*^{55} *hou*^{35} *aa*^{55}*! Hou*^{35}*ci*^{23} *hou*^{35} *jau*^{23}*jung*^{22} *gam*^{35}!

[29] F1: *M*^{21}*zi*^{55} *aa*^{33}*…dou*^{55} *hai*^{22} *tai*^{35}*ding*^{22}*haa*^{23} *sin*^{55}…

Except for course titles in (vi), all the other English terms have SWC equivalents:

副修	*fu^{33}sau^{55}*	'minor'
學分	*hok^{22}fan^{55}*	'credit (point)'
心理學	*sam^{55}lei^{23}hok^{22}*	'psychology'
環球企業管理	*waan^{21}kau^{21} kei^{23}jip^{22} gun^{35}lei^{23}*	'Global Business Management'

For students like the two hall-mates in (8), however, the corresponding Chinese terms have little currency in speech, probably because at English-medium universities, Chinese (Cantonese/HKWC) is seldom used in the public discourse of university administration, internal communication with students (by email or on the intranet), and course titles such as those listed in program handbooks. That is probably why it sounds strange to use Chinese to refer, for example, to miscellaneous school jargon (e.g., *credits, GPA, major, minor, program*), names of locations within the university (e.g., *Computer Centre*, *Learning Commons, Red Zone*), academic disciplines (e.g., *phonology, robotics*) and course titles (e.g., *Abnormal Psychology*, *Global Business*), even though their Chinese equivalents may be cognitively retrievable by the speaker/writer at the time of speaking or writing. Here again, the truncation of polysyllabic words is found with regard to course titles: *Global Business Management* → *Global B* (cf. *Education Psychology* → *et^{55}saai^{22}*, often abbreviated in writing as '*Ed Psy*').

MOLE is not at all restricted to educated users at tertiary level. The following conversation extracted from a dialogue between a private tutor and her 10-year-old Primary 4 (Grade 4) tutee is similarly 'littered' with technical terms and academic jargon in English (here: English grammar).

(9)	**Place: Tutee's home**	**Relationship: Private tutor & Tutee**	**Age: Tutor (F1) over 20; Tutee (M1) about 10**	**Gender: One female (F1) & one male (M1)**
	(i).	F1: **你琴日個test做成點呀**? **老師有無問tenses呀**?[30]	F1: Your **test** yesterday, how was it? Did the teacher ask about **tenses**?	
	(ii).	M1: **老師出咗present tense同埋past tense之嘛**.[31]	M1: The teacher tested [us] **present tense** and **past tense** only.	
	(iii).	F1: **咁preposition呢**?[32]	F1: What about **preposition[s]**?	
	(iv).	M1: **好似無出喎**。[33]	M1: Didn't seem to occur [in the test].	

[30] F1: *Nei^{23} kam^{21}jat^{22} go^{33}* ***Test*** *zou^{22}sing^{21} dim^{35} aa^{33}*? *Lou^{23}si^{55} jau^{23}mou^{23} man^{22}* ***Tenses*** *aa^{33}*?

[31] M1: *Lou^{23}si^{55} ceot^{55}zo^{35}* ***present tense*** *tung^{21}maai^{21}* ***past tense*** *zi^{55}maa^{33}*.

[32] F1: *Gam^{35}* ***preposition*** *ne^{55}*?

[33] M1: *Hou^{35}ci^{23} mou^{23} ceot^{55} wo^{33}*.

Regardless of whether the tutor and tutee were aware of the Chinese equivalents such as the following:

測驗	*caak⁵⁵jim²²*	*cēyàn*	'test'
時態	*si²¹taai³³*	*shítài*	'tense'
現在式	*jin²²zoi²²sik⁵⁵*	*xiànzàishì*	'present tense'
過去式	*gwo³³heoi³³sik⁵⁵*	*guòqushì*	'past tense'
介詞	*gaai³³ci²¹*	*jiècí*	'preposition'

the medium-of-learning effect (MOLE, Li 2011a, b) helps explain why these English terms come to mind more readily compared with their Chinese equivalents, while as a consequence, the topical regulation of language choice (Fishman 1972) accounts for the naturalness of referring to English grammar terms in English. The key to both phenomena, however, is the language of instruction. For instance, mainland Chinese students who learn English through the medium of Putonghua (i.e., Putonghua as the medium of instruction, or PMI) would find it perfectly natural to use the corresponding Chinese terms to refer to various categories and aspects of English grammar. There is one very instructive example in my 'one day with no English' data (Li and Tse 2002). One female participant (HEF9) was a non-Cantonese-speaking exchange student from mainland China, who had been in Hong Kong for only 4 months. From her reflective diary written in simplified Chinese characters (see (10) below) and the subsequent focus group sharing, she indicated that before coming to Hong Kong, she had rarely found it necessary to insert any English words into her Putonghua. That changed after studying in Hong Kong for about four months. Probably influenced by the intensity of bilingual interaction involving Cantonese and English in the SAR, she gradually became aware of an increasing practice of inserting English expressions of various lengths into her Putonghua, which motivated her to take part in the 'one day' experiment. One interesting example she gave was the abbreviated course title 'CCIV', referring to 'Chinese civilization', which she said she could not help saying (pronounced in four syllables) every time she referred to it. More interesting still, in her reflective diary she used that example to justify what she called 'the first impression hypothesis':

(10).	**当一个人第一次接触一个新词汇是用英文时,则这个词留在他脑海中的印象就是英文,以后使用英文来表达这个词的机会比较大些。例如:我第一次接触到中国文化中心的课程时,就是CCIV,则在以后的表达中我一直使用CCIV来表达,本次实验是我第一次用中文来表达,非常不习惯,不自然.** (HEF9)[34]	'When a person first encounters a new term in English, the impression of this term in that person's mind will be in English, and so later the chance of using that English term will be higher. For example, the first time I came across the course offered by *Zhōngguó wénhuà zhōngxīn* [literally 'Chinese Civilization Centre'] is *CCIV*. After that, I have always used *CCIV* to refer to that course. [In] this experiment I used the Chinese term [of this course] for the first time, [which is] unnatural and [I am] not used to it at all.'

This mainland Chinese participant's (HEF9) reasoning or conjecture was shared by a few other participants (Li 2011a, pp. 231–232). In essence, it is not unlike an observation made by F4, a Hong Kong participant in Li and Tse's (2002, p. 174) 'one day with no English' study, namely 'the first one who entered is the master' (**先入為主**, *sin*[55]*jap*[22]*wai*[21]*zyu*[35]/*xiān rù wéi zhŭ*). Such a 'First-Impression Hypothesis' (FIH) may be formulated as follows:

> When a concept C is first encountered in language X, and provided X is the widely preferred language for expressing C in the community, then C tends to be cognitively mediated through the language X (Cx), even if a direct translation of C is subsequently encountered in language Y (Cy). (cf. Li 2011a, p. 230)

The first-impression hypothesis (FIH) predicts that Cx (new concept C introduced in language X) – if proved to be a popular (rather than idiosyncratic) choice of its users – would be cognitively more salient than Cy (concept C subsequently available in language Y), as shown in the strong tendency of concept C being more readily retrieved in language X than in language Y. Additional empirical evidence for FIH and MOLE includes the naturalness of using a specific language when being trained in a particular sport, for example, Japanese for judo (e.g., *te waza*, 'to throw'), Korean for taekwondo (e.g., *chi-gi*, 'punch'), French for fencing (e.g., *marche*!), English for modern dance (e.g., *freeze*!). Examples such as these were reported by Taiwanese student participants who were inconvenienced by being prevented from using their usual languages on various speech events, including at training sessions during the 'one day with only Mandarin' experiment (Li et al. 2010). More research is needed to ascertain the psycholinguistic validity of the First-Impression Hypothesis (FIH) and the medium-of-learning effect (MOLE).

[34] *Dāng yīgerén dìyīcì jiēchù yīge xīn cíhuì shì yòng yīngwén shí, zé zhège cí liú zài tā năohăi zhōng de yìnxiàng jiùshì yīngwén, yĭhòu shĭyòng yīngwén lái biăodá zhège cí de jīhuì bĭjiào dà xiē. Lìrú: wŏ dìyīcì jiēchù dào Zhōngguó wénhuà zhōngxīn de kèchéng shí, jiùshì* ***CCIV****, zé zài yĭhòu de biăodá zhōng wŏ yìzhí shĭyòng* ***CCIV*** *lái biăodá, běncì shíyàn shì wŏ dìyīcì yòng zhōngwén lái biăodá, fēicháng bùxíguàn, bùzìrán* (HEF9). Notice that this diary excerpt may also be read (aloud) in Cantonese.

2.3 Influence of English on Hong Kong Written Chinese (HKWC)

Traditionally, being a 'dialect', Cantonese is officially considered as inappropriate for writing. This is why, strictly speaking, 'written Cantonese' (Snow 2004, 2008, 2010, 2013) is a linguistic anomaly that must be ironed out through education and, if surfaced in students' class work or homework, be banned and corrected with SWC-based school literacy. This approach appears to have worked in Cantonese-speaking regions across the border in Guangdong province, China. Whereas Cantonese as a vernacular has continued to thrive (e.g., radio and TV programs and opera), Cantonese elements in print are seldom used in mainland Chinese public media, print or electronic (Snow 2004). This is not the case in Hong Kong, however. Owing to political insulation from the mainland from 1949 to the early 1980s, and the British colonial government's "benign indifference" toward Chinese language education and use in society (Bauer 1995), Cantonese has flourished in a large number of domains:

> In satisfying the social, cultural, and linguistic needs of Hong Kong's predominantly Chinese community of six million inhabitants [over 7.1 million as of April, 2016], Cantonese has become widely used as the language of radio news programs and plays, TV news broadcasts and soap operas, live theatre, popular songs and novels, newspaper cartoons and serialized stories, and mass advertising. (Bauer 1995, p. 246)

To Bauer's list of domains may be added debates in the Legislative Council (Legco), which have shifted from English to Cantonese after the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in July 1997, and court trials in Cantonese. The latter, though by no means commonplace today, are no longer seen as a novelty after the first court case was heard in colonial Hong Kong about two decades ago in December 1995 (Buddle 1995). The tremendous vitality of Cantonese in society, including its use as the medium of instruction in school from primary to secondary, helps explain why written Cantonese elements in Hong Kong have been given social space to grow, notably in informal sections or genres of Chinese newspapers, such as columns, infotainment, advertisements and cartoons, and electronic communication platforms such as MSN, SMS, and social media like Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp.

Unlike 'hard' news stories, editorials and feature articles, the 'soft' sections of Hong Kong Chinese newspapers and magazines are generally exempt from strict monolingual norms and tend to favor a vernacular-driven writing style, whereby linguistic resources from conventionally discrete language varieties – Cantonese, Standard Chinese, Classical Chinese, English, as well as genres and registers within any of these – are mobilized to attain rhetorical effects that are otherwise impossible in SWC alone. Before English came into the picture, until the 1960s a writing style known as 三及第 (*saam*^{55}*kap*^{22}*dai*^{35}) involving the mixing of SWC and classical Chinese elements into Cantonese, was made popular by the political satirist 三蘇 (Saam Sou) and a few columnists (Wong 2002). As Snow (1991) remarks, *saam*^{55}*kap*^{22}*dai*^{35} is:

> a written language which combines classical Chinese, Cantonese and SC [Standard Chinese] (...). The beauty of this style is that it allows a writer a very broad range of registers. Classical Chinese creates a distinct impression of formality, and Cantonese creates the impression of slang, thus allowing the writer to make radical shifts of tone and create linguistic incongruity that is both amusing and arresting. (Snow 1991, p. 147)

Since the 1960s, the *saam^{55}kap^{22}dai^{35}* writing style, which has progressively become even more hybrid with elements of English infused into the linguistic admixture, is arguably the unmarked writing style not only in those newspapers and magazines characterized by features typical of the popular press, but also the back pages of the 'quality' press as well. As Lin and Li (2015) observe:

> this [*saam^{55}kap^{22}dai^{35}*] style has won the hearts of many readers (or 'Like' in the facebook era) who appreciate the subtle nuances and humour conveyed successfully by such a fluid performance through the mobilization of multiple linguistic resources (Wong 2002) to juxtapose multiple social views and voices. This trend has continued since the 1970s; to make meaning creatively, skillful writers who are trilingual in Cantonese, SWC and English would draw on the semiotic potential of elements from their whole linguistic repertoire, which is treated as a composite pool of resources rather than as compartmentalized languages or registers. (Lin and Li 2015, pp. 86–87)

As a translingual, heteroglossic writing style (Bakhtin 1935/1981; Bailey 2012), English-infused *saam^{55}kap^{22}dai^{35}* may be seen as the Hong Kong press industry's collective response to survive cut-throat competition. Given the preference of their Cantonese-dominant yet plurilingual readers, and in the face of the onslaught of many e-rivals, locally and internationally, editors of print and electronic dailies alike have no choice but to shape their writing style in 'soft' sections to appeal to their readers' collective preference for vernacular-driven writing (Bell 1991).

Since literacy in colloquial Cantonese has never been officially standardized and is banned in formal writing through SWC-based literacy training in school, expressing colloquial Cantonese elements in print is sometimes a challenge. What happens if a particular Cantonese morpho-syllable has no known written representation? Research has shown that Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers would resort to all kinds of linguistic means in order to lend expression to their target morpho-syllables. The key is an age-old, highly productive strategy known as **假借** (*gaa^{35}ze^{33}/jiǎjiè*, 'phonetic borrowing' or 'phonetic loan'; literally 'false borrowing'), which happens when an element from any language is borrowed not for its semantic content but only for its phonetic value (sometimes just an approximation, Li 2000). Table 2.1 shows some examples of SWC morphemes being borrowed for their (approximate) sound value to represent Cantonese morphemes in print.

As shown in the examples in Table 2.1, phonetic borrowing from SWC (or classical Chinese to a lesser extent) sometimes entails a semantic shift, as shown in (i) – (iv), while the usual SWC meaning of the phonetic loan is totally irrelevant, as in all the examples (i) – (viii). In other cases, there may also be an additional shift in word class or function, for example: adjective → classifier in (i); noun → verb in (iv); a shift in tone level, as in (iii), (v), (vi) and (vii); or a shift in the segmental from [f] to [b] as in (ii). All this creates literacy problems for non-Cantonese readers; such problems are further aggravated when phonetic borrowing from English is used to

Table 2.1 Examples of phonetic borrowing from SWC into Cantonese, and literacy problems engendered for non-Cantonese readers

SWC morpheme (form, meaning)	**Used as phonetic loan in Cantonese (form, meaning)**	**Example and vernacular meaning**	**SWC equivalent (approximate)**
(i). 舊 (*gau*^{22}, 'old')	舊 (*gau*^{22}, classifier: 'a lump of')	一舊雞 (*jat*^{55} *gau*^{22} *gai*^{55}) 'a lump of chicken'	'old chicken'
(ii). 蓬 (*fung*^{21}, 'meet')	蓬 (***bung***^{21}, 'fluffy')	蓬拆拆 (*bung*^{21} *caak*^{55} *caak*^{55}) [onomatopoeic, in imitation of dancing music]	–
(iii). 拆 (*caak*^{33}, 'demolish')	拆 (*caak*^{55}, 'demolish')		
(iv). 隊 (*deoi*^{35}, 'team')	隊: (*deoi*^{35}, 'drink boisterously')	隊酒 (*deoi*^{35} *zau*^{35}, 'drink liqueur/wine boisterously')	酗酒 (*jyu*^{55} *zau*^{35})
(v). 牙 (*ngaa*^{21}, 'tooth')	牙乍: (*ngaa*^{22}*zaa*^{22}, 'domineering')	佢好「牙乍」: (*keoi*^{23} *hou*^{35} *ngaa*^{22}*zaa*^{22}, 'He is so domineering')	霸道 (*baa*^{33}*dou*^{22})
(vi). 乍 (*zaa*^{33}, 'suddenly')			
(vii). 也 (*jaa*^{23}, 'also')	也 (*jaa*^{21})	也也烏 (*jaa*^{21} *jaa*^{21} *wu*^{55}): 'mediocre', 'of low quality'	不清不楚 (*bat*^{55} *cing*^{55} *bat*^{55} *co*^{35})
(viii). 烏 (*wu*^{55}, 'black')	烏 (*wu*^{55})		

Based on Li (2000)

fill the orthographic gap, when no SWC morpho-syllable is deemed to be suitable. Based on written Cantonese data collected from the pocket-book literature in the late 1980s, Luke (1995) identified three common solutions, in descending order of significance: (a) phonetic loan from some existing Chinese character similar or identical in pronunciation to the target morpho-syllable, (b) coinage of a new character, or (c) phonetic loan based on some existing English word or letter (combination). The choice of these possible solutions, Luke (1995, pp. 107–108) argues, is guided by two underlying principles: 'phonetic proximity' and 'Chinese-character-based written representation', of which the former appears to override the latter in case they are in conflict. In other words, if the selection of a similar-sounding phonetic loan from Chinese is viewed as causing semantic interference or literacy problem, a similar-sounding English syllable – including individual English letters or non-words in Roman script – would be preferred (cf. Bauer 1982, 1988; Cheung and Bauer 2002). This helps explain the proliferation of script mixing, such as ***fing*** 開 (*fing*^{22} *hoi*^{55}, 'shake off'), ***lur*** 飯應 (*loe*^{55} *faan*^{22} *jing*^{33}, 'readily accept/agree'), and ***jit*** 我 (*zit*^{55} *ngo*^{23}, 'tickle me') so commonly found in popular Cantonese novels (cf. Luke 1995, pp. 105–107). These Roman-script-based coinages are clearly modeled on English pronunciation rules (compare: *wing*, *fur* and *sit*), and are therefore intelligible to Cantonese-speaking readers with basic literacy skills in English. These examples show that often a phonetically satisfactory solution cannot be found in the stock of Chinese characters to represent the Cantonese morpho-syllable, in which case a writer may turn to the Roman script for a written representation. In sum, the unavailability of a standardized orthography does little to stop Cantonese-

Table 2.2 Examples of phonetic borrowing from English into written Cantonese

English morpheme	Used as phonetic loan in written Cantonese	Example and vernacular meaning
(i). *where*	*where* (*we*^{35}, 'to grub')	***where*** **銀** (*we*^{35} *ngan*^{35}, 'to greedily grub for money')
(ii). *pair*	*pair* (orthographic variant: *pare*, pronounced as *pe*^{23}, 'show no interest')	**放**「***pair***」(variant: **放**「***pare***」, *fong*^{33} *pe*^{23}, 'be indifferent', 'be disinterested')
(iii). *wet*	*wet* (orthographic variant: *vet*, 'get wet')	**去** ***wet*** (*heoi*^{33} *wet*^{55}, 'to have a good time')
(iv). --	*pok* (romanized Cantonese morpho-syllable; orthographic variant: *pop*)	**吞** ***pok*** (*tan*^{55} *pok*^{55}, variant **吞** ***pop***, *tan*^{55} *pop*^{55}, 'to take a rest when one is supposed to be working')
(v). dub	Dub ('droop')	**頭** ***Dub Dub*** (*tau*^{21} *dap*^{55} *dap*^{55}, 'head-droop-droop', an adverb vividly referring to a person who keeps his or her head down, showing frustration)

Based on Li (2000)

dominant Hongkongers from expressing vernacular-based ideas in writing (Cheung and Bauer 2002; Li 2000; Luke 1995). Table 2.2 shows a few examples how monosyllabic English words are borrowed for their sound only, while their meaning is supposed to be backgrounded or ignored.

As shown in the examples in Table 2.2, the meanings of the recognizable English loanwords are totally irrelevant. And, like those examples cited by Luke (1995) in the late 1980s, when there is no suitable Chinese character to represent the target Cantonese morpho-syllable in print, Hongkongers biliterate in Chinese and English have no difficulty coining a romanized Cantonese word such as *pok* (iv), including homophones like the English letter *D* (Bauer 1982, cf. Bauer 1988). More recent examples of romanized Cantonese words include *hea* (*he*^{33}, 'laid-back' or 'tardy'), *chok* (*cok*^{33}, 'suffocating') and *chur* (*coe*^{35}, 'hard pressed for time'), whose written forms are similarly modeled on English (compare: *<u>hea</u>vy*, *<u>chok</u>ed* and *<u>chur</u>ch*). Such pseudo English words, like phonetic loans from English, are of little help when readers of English are searching for clues how they contribute to the textual meaning, for they are Cantonese morphemes expressed in Roman script (Li et al. 2016).

All this is reminiscent of the pidginization of English words and expressions, as evidenced in Chinese Pidgin English (CPE) attested during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Shi (1993) has pointed out, during that period, many Cantonese-speaking merchants in Canton (today's Guangzhou) were eager to learn some English in order to do business with English-speaking 'supercargoes' (i.e., trade representatives) and sailors at a time when trading activities with 'red-haired barbarians' were tightly regulated and highly restricted. Short of formal instruction, some authors with knowledge of English compiled phrasebooks to help Cantonese merchants articulate basic English words and practical business-related expressions needed to communicate with English speakers. Such English words and expressions were written in Chinese characters (e.g., **紅毛通用番語**, *Hung*^{21}*mou*^{21} *tung*^{55}*jung*^{22}

faan[55]*jyu*[23], 'Red-haired people's common foreign language'). This was done by substituting (approximate) Cantonese syllables for those required by English words. Thus, for example, 'sailorman' and 'wife' were transliterated as**些利文** (*se*[55]*lei*-[22]*man*[21]) and **威父** (*wai*[55]*fu*[22]), respectively (for more examples, see Ansaldo et al. 2010). As Shi (1993) explains:

> The CPE item is represented by one or several Chinese characters. The semantic content of the characters is irrelevant in so far as they were chosen for their phonetic and phonological value. When being read aloud in Cantonese, these characters gave rise to a string of sounds which purportedly represented the phonological form of a CPE word. (Shi 1993, p. 460)

Through repeated practice, that is, reading such CPE expressions out loud, eager Cantonese learners would give the impression of speaking (pidgin) English. What is interesting is that the earlier practice of using character-based Cantonese syllables to transliterate English words is like a mirror image of the current practice of using SWC characters to transliterate Cantonese syllables and, when the linguistic outcome is deemed unsatisfactory, they would have no hesitation turning to the Roman script for inspiration, the purpose being to lend written forms to the Cantonese morpho-syllables.

Written Cantonese is not at all limited to informal use; formal written Chinese in Hong Kong has also been influenced by Cantonese and English to a large extent. As Shi et al. (2014) have made clear using corpus data collected from formal sections of Chinese newspapers, by virtue of distinct Hong Kong characteristics in local (Han) written Chinese,[35] it is more appropriately called 'Hong Kong Written Chinese' (HKWC). This is because HKWC exhibits massive influence from Cantonese and English and, as such, deviates lexico-syntactically from SWC considerably. Shi et al. (2014, p. 6) further define HKWC as follows:

> 'Based on SWC, adorned with some classical Chinese elements, being deeply influenced by Cantonese and English, and used mainly in Hong Kong, HKWC is different from SWC with regard to its vocabulary subsystems, word meanings and interpretations, structural combinations, sentence structures and usages.' (my translation)[36]

The nature and extent of various sources of lexico-syntactic and lingua-cultural influence (**影響**) on HKWC are characterized as follows (Shi et al. 2014, p. 25):

Standard Chinese:	fundamental influence (**根本的影響**)
Cantonese:	comprehensive influence (**全面的影響**)
English:	deep influence (**深刻的影響**)
Classical Chinese:	heritage influence (**傳承的影響**)
Lexical innovations and other dialects:	limited influence (**有限的影響**)

[35] "**具有香港地區特色的漢語書面語**" (Shi et al. 2014, p. 6).

[36] **「以標準中文為主體,帶有部份文言色彩,並且深受粵語和英語的影響,在辭彙系統、詞義理解、結構組合、句式特點以及語言運用等方面跟標準中文有所不同,主要在香港地區普遍使用的漢語書面語。」**(Shi et al. 2014, p. 6)

Gradually taking shape since the 1970s and 'becoming mature' ("趨於成熟") and stabilized in the 1990s (Shi et al. 2014, p. 13), HKWC exhibits features that diverge from those in SWC. Often the same character (combination) may mean different things or vary in terms of collocational constraints. For instance, under the influence of English *frontline* and *grassroots*, HKWC has evolved calques 前線 (*cin²¹sin³³*) and 草根 (*cou³⁵gan⁵⁵*), which are used to modify other words (e.g., 前線工作人員 (*cin²¹sin³³ gung⁵⁵zok³³ jan²¹jyun²¹*, 'frontline worker'); 草根階層(*cou³⁵gan⁵⁵ gaai⁵⁵cang²¹*, 'grassroots level'), whereas the same meanings are expressed in SWC by 一線 (*yīxiàn*, *jat⁵⁵sin²²*) and 基層 (*jīcéng*, *gei⁵⁵cang²¹*) respectively (Shi et al. 2014, pp. 152–153).

Syntactically, there is also evidence of syntactic transference from English. For example, the Anglicized clause structure in HKWC: 是時候… (*si²² si²¹hau²²*…, 'it is time to…') is clearly a result of the high-frequency English structure 'it is time (for someone) to do something', especially in local Chinese media. This structure is sometimes fronted with a locative expression in the subject position, a syntactic feature which is not admissible in SWC. For instance:

(11)	香 港 是 時 候 重 新 輸 入 活 雞 了.						
	Hoeng⁵⁵gong³⁵	*si²²*	*si²¹hau²²*	*cung²¹san⁵⁵*	*syu⁵⁵jap²²*	*wut²²gai⁵⁵*	*liu²³*
	Hong Kong	is	time	again	import	live chicken	F.P.
	'It is time for Hong Kong to import live chickens again.'						
	(Slightly modified, adapted from Shi 2006, p. 310)						

A few other differences may be traced back to cultural differences. For instance, the meaning of一樓 (*jat⁵⁵lau³⁵*, 'first floor') follows British practice and refers to the floor above the ground floor (*dei²²haa³⁵*, 地下), whereas the same floors are referred to in SWC as 一樓 (*yīlóu*, *jat⁵⁵lau³⁵*) and 二樓 (*èrlóu, ji²²lau³⁵*), respectively (Shi et al. 2014, pp. 30–32).

HKWC is used in formal sections of printed media such as news stories, editorials and feature articles. What about informal sections of the same newspapers and magazines like columns, infotainment, adverts, and cartoons? Is it possible to write in Cantonese exactly like the way one speaks, keeping all the vernacular-style features such as lexical transference from English intact? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. Apart from Cantonese pocket-book literature exemplified and discussed by Luke (1995), such 'soft' content is often written entirely in colloquial Cantonese (cf. Snow 2004, 2008). Below we will illustrate 'colloquial written Cantonese' with promotional discourse data on half a printed page in *Headline Daily* (頭條日報, *Tau²¹tiu²¹jat²²bou³³*/*Tóutiáo rìbào*), a Hong Kong newspaper distributed free of charge except Sundays and public holidays.

Given Hong Kong Chinese readers' collective preference for the kinds of heteroglossic written Chinese which "are clearly more characteristic of those of heteroglossic orality, rather than those of 'proper' compartmentalized monolingual school literacy" (Lin and Li 2015, p. 86), practically all Chinese newspapers and most magazines contain sections of more or less 'soft' content, covering a wide range of topics from popular culture and infotainment to tips on good food and latest fashion, from chatty 'talk of the town' gossiping and photo stories to illustrated travelogues and adverts disguised as recommendations or personal preferences, among many others. For this reason, colloquial written Cantonese data, typically blended with some English, is rich and easily collectable. To illustrate, I will conduct a focused analysis of five texts covered within the space of half a printed page of a tabloid-like daily that prides itself on being the free newspaper with the highest print circulation in Hong Kong: *Headline Daily* (Fig. 2.1). Altogether there are six short texts (labeled schematically from Texts 1–5 (Fig. 2.2), each of about 100–250 characters in length, appearing in the same column with the following title:

(12)	**商 界 講 呢 啲**			
	soeng^{55}	*gaai*^{33}	*gong*^{35}	*ni*^{55}*di*^{55}
	business	sector	talk about	these
	'This is what the business world talks about'			

The bylined columnist is *Cally*, a pen name in English with no Chinese name mentioned. In terms of graphic adornment of the column, instead of a picture or portrait of the writer, right above the column title on the top left-hand corner is a cartoon figure featuring a smiling woman with a cup (presumably of coffee or tea)

Fig. 2.1 A half-page column from a local tabloid-like daily newspaper distributed free of charge (*Headline Daily*, 11-04-2015, p. 24)

Text 1a	Text 2	Text 3
Text 1b	Text 4	Text 5

Fig. 2.2 Schematic representation of the text layout (**商界講呢啲**, *Headline Daily* 11 Apr 2014, p. 24)

in hand, projecting an image of a smart, enlightened office worker at managerial rank. The presentation of this column is illustrated with appropriate pictures or images accompanying each of the short texts (Fig. 2.1).

To appreciate the variety and extent of transference from English into colloquial written Cantonese more fully, Table 2.3 provides a synopsis of all the five texts and lists all the clauses embedded with some English, with comments on various aspects of transference from English given under 'Remarks' on the right. This is followed by a detailed analysis of each of the 15 English-embedded clauses listed, from (13) to (27) below.

(13)	踴躍捐「書」	閱讀樂趣開心*share* (Text 1a & 1b, heading)			
	jung^{35}*joek*^{33} *gyun*^{55} *syu*^{55}	*jyut*^{22}*duk*^{22}	*lok*^{22}*ceoi*^{33}	*hoi*^{55}*sam*^{55}	*share*
	enthusiastically donate 'book'	read	joy	happy	share
	'Donate "books" enthusiastically [for] the joy of reading [let's] share [books] happily'				

(14)	呢個活動梗係要開心*share*同大力支持啦! (Text 1b)							
	nei^{55} *go*^{33}	*wut*^{22} *dung*^{22}	*gang*^{35} *hai*^{22}	*jiu*^{33} *hoi*^{55}*sam*^{55}	*share* *tung*^{21}	*daai*^{22} *lik*^{22}	*zi*^{55} *ci*^{21}	*laa*^{55}
	this CL	activity	certainly	must happily	share and	strongly	support	F.P.
	'This activity [we] certainly must share [books] happily and support [it] strongly!'							

(15)	詳情可瀏覽「新閱會」*Facebook* 專頁www.facebook.com/shkpreadingclub。(Text 1b)			
	coeng^{21}*cing*^{21}	*ho*^{35}	*lau*^{21}*laam*^{23}	*San*^{55}*jyut*^{22}*wui*^{35} *Facebook zyun*^{55}*jip*^{22} […]
	details	can	surf	Sung [Hung Kei Properties] Reading Club Facebook page […]
	'For details [you] can refer to the Facebook page www.facebook.com/shkpreadingclub.'			

(16)	手機 x PS4™	隨時隨地喪打勁*Game* (Text 2, heading)
	sau^{35}*gei*^{55} *x PS4™*	*ceoi*^{21}*si*^{21}*ceoi*^{21}*dei*^{22} *song*^{33} *daa*^{35} *ging*^{22} *Game*
	hand phone x PS4™	anytime anywhere mad play super game
	'hand phone x PS4™	play super [computer] games like mad anytime, anywhere'

(17)	仲可以睇埋*friend*嘅打機實況 (Text 2)		
	zung^{22}	*ho*^{35}*ji*^{23}	*tai*^{35} *maai*^{21} *friend ge*^{33} *daa*^{35} *gei*^{55} *sat*^{22}*fong*^{33}
	also	can	watch in addition friend NOM play computer live
	'[You] can also watch [how your] friends play computer [games] live.'		

Table 2.3 Synopsis of Texts 1–5, headings, English-embedded clauses, and comments on transference from English

Text 1a	
Main points/Examples of translanguaging	**Lexico-syntactic items in English/ Remarks**
Introduces the topic in Text 1: a book-sharing project organized by「新閱會」(*San*^{55}*jyut*^{22}*wui*^{35}, 'Sun [Hung Kei Properties] Reading Club') and sponsored by Sun Hung Kei Properties.	Pen name of columnist *Cally*
Encourages readers to donate books for sharing.	Chinese slogan consists of two conjoined words:
	「循環.閱讀」
	ceon^{21}*waan*^{21}.*jyut*^{22}*duk*^{22}
	'Recycling.Reading'
Text 1b	
踴躍捐「書」	'donate "books" enthusiastically'
閱讀樂趣 開心*share*	'[for] the joy of reading [let's] share [books] happily'
Main points/Examples of translanguaging	**Lexico-syntactic items in English/ Remarks**
Gives details about the duration of the project (until November): locations of collection points, types of books to be collected, and how donated books will be categorized and distributed to various NGO's and charity organizations and, through them, to target readers.	Pen name of columnist *Cally*
e.g.	Proper noun: *Facebook*
詳情可瀏覽「新閱會」*Facebook* **專頁**www.facebook.com/shkpreadingclub。	Chinese translations exist: **面書** (*min*^{22}*syu*^{55}) / **臉書** (*lim*^{22}*syu*^{55}), but they are dispreferred
呢個活動梗係要開心*share* **同大力支持啦**!	The web-based Facebook address of the project (in English) is provided.
	Verb:
	share
	Punning:
	the second character of**捐「書」**(*gyun*^{55} *syu*^{55}, 'donate book[s]') in the heading is placed within scare quotes; it puns on the second syllable of the homophonous bisyllabic verb **捐輸** (Putonghua: *juān shū*) 'donate'.
Text 2	
手機x *PS4*™	'hand phone x PS4™'
隨時隨地喪打勁*Game*	'anytime anywhere play super [computer] games madly'

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

Main points/Examples of translanguaging	Lexico-syntactic items in English/ Remarks
Promotes Xperia™ and PS4™: framed as experience sharing and personal recommendation, with some fine details of special features which make these video-game products so irresistible.	Proper nouns (names of products and functions):
e.g.	*PlayStation®*, *Sony*, *Xperia™ Z3*, *PS4™*
仲可以睇埋*friend* 嘅打機實況	Bilingual explanatory glosses:
手機變身做遙控*mon*連接同操控PS4™	*Remote Play*遙控遊玩功能 (*jiu*^{21}*hung*^{33} *jau*^{21}*wun*^{22}
上嘅*game*	*gung*^{55}*nang*^{21}, 'remote play function')
買埋PS4™ 嘅*game*同*download*落去PS4™度添	Nouns (N.B.: all monosyllabic):
	friend, *game*, *app*
	e.g. 好多*friend* (*hou*^{35} *do*^{55} *friend*, 'many friends'; N.B.: singular form)
	Written Cantonese noun in Roman script:
	mon ('monitor')
	Verb:
	download

Text 3	
型格牛仔褲新登場	'trendy jeans new arrival'
每日都Feel good	'every day [I] feel good'
Main points/Examples of translanguaging	**Lexico-syntactic items in English/ Remarks**
States what makes certain types of jeans so attractive, and introduces preferred brand and product series.	Pen name of columnist *Cally*
e.g.	Proper nouns (brand name and product series):
我衣櫃入面嘅*must have items*	*texwood*, *Apple Jeans*「*Fit In*」, *S-Jeans*
輕易着出個人*style*	Nouns:
咁多個*brand*入面,我就最鐘意*texwood*	*brand, style, must have items, texwood*
着起嚟有種高度嘅效果,成個長腿*oppa*咁!	Verb:
每日都*Feel good*	*Feel*
	Adjective:
	good
	Borrowing from Japanese kanji:
	新登場 (*san*^{55} *dang*^{55} *coeng*^{21}, 'new arrival')

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

Text 4	
排清毒素	'Excrete toxic elements completely'
*Keep*住輕盈又*Healthy*	'Keep poised and light-weight and healthy'
Main points/Examples of translanguaging	**Lexico-syntactic items in English/Remarks**
Promotes a detox product, giving details of its herbal ingredients, certification by a local university, quantity to be consumed before detox function takes effect.	Pen name of columnist *Cally*
e.g.	Abbreviations (pharmaceutical company name / jargon):
*GMP*藥廠 (*GMP joek*^{22}*cong*^{35}, 'GMP Pharmaceutical company')	*GMP*
*COS*精華配方 (*COS zing*^{55}*waa*^{21} *pui*^{33}*fong*^{55}, 'COS essence formula')	*COS*
幾時都*keep*住健康啦。	Verb:
	keep

Text 5	
按摩纖體油	'Massage slim body oil'
讓*Body fit*起來!	'Let the body get fit!'
Main points/Examples of translanguaging	**Lexico-syntactic items in English/Remarks**
Promotes slimming product, problem-solution frame (a female friend asked what to do to cope with fat resulting from over-eating during the Easter holiday).	Name of columnist *Cally*
e.g.	Product brand name:
'*PPC*神纖油' (*PPC san*^{21}*cim*^{55}*jau*^{21}, 'PPC magic slim oil')	*PPC*
	Noun:
	Body
	Adjective (used like a verb in '*fit*起來'):
	fit

(18)	手 機 變 身 做 遙 控*mon* (Text 2)				
	sau^{35}*gei*^{55}	*bin*^{33}*san*^{55}	*zou*^{22}	*jiu*^{21}*hung*^{33}	*mon*
	hand phone	transform	as	remote	monitor
	連 接 同 操 控*PS4*™ 上 嘅*game*				
	lin^{21}*zip*^{33}	*tung*^{21}	*cou*^{55}*hung*^{33}	*PS4*™ *soeng*^{22} *ge*^{33} *game*	
	connect	and	control	PS4™ above NOM game	
	'The hand phone gets transformed and becomes a remote control monitor connected to the games on PS4™.'				

(19)	買 埋*PS4™* 嘅*game*同*download*落 去*PS4™* 度 添 (Text 2)					
	maai^{23}	*maai*^{21}	*PS4™ ge*^{33} *game tung*^{21}	*download*	*lok*^{22}*heoi*^{33}	*PS4™ dou*^{22} *tim*^{55}
	buy	also	PS4™ NOM game and	download	onto	PS4™ as well
	'[And you may] also buy PS4™ games as well and download [them] onto PS4™.'					

(20)	牛 仔 褲 都 一 定 係 我 衣 櫃 入 面 嘅 *must have item* (Text 3)							
	ngau^{21} *zai*^{35}*fu*^{33}	*dou*^{55}	*jat*^{55}*ding*^{22}	*hai*^{22}	*ngo*^{23}	*ji*^{55}*gwai*^{22}	*jap*^{22}*min*^{22}	*ge*^{33} *must have item*
	jeans	also	must	be	1sg	wardrobe	inside	NOM must have item
	'Jeans are also must-have items inside my wardrobe.'							

(21)	輕 易 着 出 個 人 *style* (Text 3)			
	hing^{55}*ji*^{22} *zoek*^{33}	*ceot*^{55}	*go*^{33}*jan*^{21}	*style*
	easily	wear show	personal	style
	'[I] can easily wear [jeans and show my] personal style.'			

(22)	咁 多 個*brand* 入 面,我 就 最 鍾 意*texwood* (Text 3)						
	gam^{33}*do*^{55}	*go*^{33}	*brand jap*^{22}*min*^{22}	*ngo*^{23}	*zau*^{22} *zeoi*^{33}	*zung*^{55}*ji*^{33}	*texwood*
	so many	CL	brand among	1sg	as for most	like	texwood
	'As for me, among all the brands, I like texwood the most.'						

(23)	着 起 嚟 有 種 高 瘦 嘅 效 果, (Text 3)				
	zoek^{33} *hei*^{35}*lai*^{21}	*jau*^{23} *zung*^{35}	*gou*^{55}	*sau*^{33} *ge*^{33}	*haau*^{22}*gwo*^{35}
	put on	have kind	tall	slim NOM	effect
	成 個 長 腿*oppa* 咁!				
	sing^{21} *go*^{33}	*coeng*^{21} *teoi*^{35}	*oppa gam*^{35}		
	whole person	Long Leg	*oppa* seem like		
	'[When I] put [the jeans] on [I look] tall and slim, which [makes me] look virtually like Long Leg Oppa!' (N.B.: '長腿Oppa' refers to the Korean celebrity Lee Minho [李敏鎬].)				

(24)	型 格 牛 仔 褲 新 登 場 每 日 都 *Feel good* (Text 3, heading)				
	jing^{21}*gaak*^{33}	*ngau*^{21}*zai*^{35}*fu*^{33}	*san*^{55}*dang*^{55}*coeng*^{21}	*mui*^{23}*jat*^{22} *dou*^{55}	*Feel good*
	trendy	Jean	new arrival	every day also	feel good
	'new arrival trendy jeans, [I] feel so good every day.'				

(25)	排 清 毒 素 *Keep*住 輕 盈 又 *Healthy* (Text 4, heading)				
	paai^{21} *cing*^{55}	*duk*^{22}*sou*^{33}	*Keep zyu*^{22} *hing*^{55}*jing*^{21}	*jau*^{22}	*Healthy*
	excrete	toxic element	keep ASP poised/ light-weight	and	healthy
	'Excrete toxic elements completely Keep poised / light-weight and healthy'				

(26)	**幾時都** *keep* **住健康啦。**(Text 4)			
	gei³⁵si²¹ dou⁵⁵	*keep zyu²²*	*gin²²hong⁵⁵*	*laa⁵⁵*
	anytime also	keep ASP	healthy	F.P.
	'[that] keeps [me] healthy anytime.'			

(27)	**按摩纖體油讓** *Body fit* **起來!** (Text 5, heading)			
	on³³mo⁵⁵ cim⁵⁵tai³⁵ jau²¹	*joeng²²*	*Body fit*	*hei³⁵loi²¹*
	massage slim body oil	let	body fit	ASP
	'Massage slim body oil let the body get fit!'			

There are plenty of language contact features in these five texts (Fig. 2.1), of which Cantonese-English contact features are quintessentially illustrated by examples (12) to (27). First, there is no question that these five texts are written entirely in colloquial Cantonese, which is partly characterized by extensive lexical transference from English. The writer followed the principle of 'write as one speaks' very closely (e.g., the extensive use of the genitive marker or nominalizer **嘅**, *ge³³*, instead of its HKWC equivalent **的**, *dik⁵⁵*).[37] Consequently, while the written medium determines that the texts in Fig. 2.1 are intended for silent reading (i.e., a literacy activity), a Cantonese-literate reader who reads them out loud (i.e., rendered through orality) would give the unmistakable impression that he or she is talking mainly in colloquial Cantonese. As such, it is not difficult to explain the large amount of lexical transference from English and, to a limited extent, from Japanese kanji as well (e.g., **新登場**, pronounced in Cantonese as *san⁵⁵dang⁵⁵coeng²¹*, 'new arrival', see example 24).

Second, the amount of lexical transference from English varies considerably by topics, with Text 2 (computer games) and Text 3 (jeans) inserted with considerably more English compared with Text 1a and Text 1b (book donation), Text 4 (detox product) and Text 5 (massage oil). This is consonant with Li's (1996) observation that code-mixing tends to be domain- or topic-specific, with field-specific English jargon being more difficult to avoid in such domains as business, show business ('show biz'), fashion, non-local films and TV productions, non-local food items, and miscellaneous products reflecting or indexing a modern lifestyle. It can be seen that being a metropolis where 'East Meets West', Hong Kong has always been receptive to technological innovations, business practices, international entertainers and artists, cultural novelties from popular culture to fine arts, as well as novel ideas for a modern lifestyle. All this is clearly manifested in the consumption of trendy fashion, good food, fine wine, cutting-edge IT gadgets, tantalizing cosmetic and health care products, and sundry lingua-cultural, multi-media consumables of western origin. These are arguably intimately related to the everyday lives of those Hongkongers who are plurilingual and pluricultural (Coste et al. 2009) in their

[37] **我手寫我口** (*ngo²³ sau³⁵ se³⁵ ngo²³ hau³⁵*, literally 'my hand writes my mouth'). The SWC nominalization marker**的** (*dik⁵⁵*) is also used, but infrequently (see, e.g., middle of Text 3).

socio-psychological orientation. To illustrate, in late April 2015, Apple Watches were launched in Hong Kong, making front-page news due to speculation. Where this news story is covered in several local Chinese dailies, *Apple Watch* is mixed into the HKWC text, resulting in 'mixed code'. For example:

(28)	*Apple Watch 忽然炒起*
	Apple Watch fat^{55}jin^{21} caau^{35} hei^{35}
	Apple Watch suddenly speculate surge
	'[There is a] sudden surge in speculation of Apple Watches.' (headline, *Headline Daily* 25-4-2015, p. A1)

According to a photo featuring a handwritten notice board posted in a shopping mall, the most sought-after models are *Sport 38mm* and *Sport 42mm*, which are referred to in *Headline Daily* as:

Sport 版 Apple Watch
baan^{35}
'Sport version Apple Watch'

It would be difficult to imagine how people could talk about such new products initiated in the English-speaking world (English as a native or an additional language) that hit the market every once in a while, if they were not allowed to use English. Compared with its flashy, translocal trademark in English (i.e., *Apple Watch*), a calque of that trademark and product like **蘋果手錶** (*ping^{21}gwo^{35} sau-^{35}biu^{55}*) may be intelligible, but it would belong to a lower scale and 'order of indexicality', invoking images and associations that are blandly local (Blommaert 2010). As such, **蘋果手錶**would be communicatively far less effective and, if used, might risk being heard as a joke largely because the translocal indexicality to that prestigious new product would be lost in the translation.[38] Conversely, to the extent that no Cantonese/HKWC equivalent is useable, to be able to index the referent directly by using the original brand name in English is arguably the most efficient and effective way to enact one's plurilingual and pluricultural identity. This is preferred so long as no higher-order context-specific norms or regulations governing language use prevail (e.g., Chinese-medium class, Cantonese news broadcast), or when the speaker is (suddenly) aware that the English term in question may not be intelligible to the interlocutor(s). That much has been clearly attested in a number of 'one day with no English' or 'one day with only Cantonese/Mandarin' studies (Li 2011a, b; Li et al. 2010; cf. Li and Tse 2002): intended speaker meanings may be lost if Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers are prevented from using English in their language output, in speech or writing. The same may be said of Taiwanese student participants trying, in vain, to keep to 'pure' Mandarin by suppressing Minnan Hua (**閩南話**) or English in various contexts.

[38] Compare 'texwood jeans' and **蘋果牌牛仔褲** (*ping^{21}gwo^{35}paai^{21} ngau^{21}zai^{35}fu^{33}*) in (22).

Third, as shown in (29), it can be seen that, from the structural point of view, practically all of the English elements are inserted at syntactic positions where corresponding Cantonese elements are expected (cf. Muysken 2000).

(29)		**Cantonese with lexical transference from English (example cited above)**		**'Pure' Cantonese**
	(i).	開心*share*	(13), (14)	開心分享[39]
	(ii).	*Facebook* 專頁	(15)	臉書專頁[40]
	(iii).	喪打劲*Game*	(16)	喪打劲電子遊戲[41]
	(iv).	睇埋*friend* 嘅打機實況	(17)	睇埋朋友嘅打機實況[42]
	(v).	做遙控*mon*	(18)	做遙控顯示器[43]
	(vi).	買埋*PS4™* 嘅*game*同*download*落去*PS4™* 度添	(19)	買埋PS4™ 嘅電子遊戲同下載落去PS4™ 度添[44]
	(vii).	我衣櫃入面嘅*must have item*	(20)	我衣櫃入面嘅必有物品[45] (more colloquially: 我衣櫃入面一定要有嘅嘢)
	(viii).	個人*style*	(21)	個人風格[46]
	(ix).	咁多個*brand*入面,我就最鐘意*texwood*	(22)	咁多個牌子入面,我就最鐘意蘋果牌[47]
	(x).	成個長腿*oppa*咁!	(23)	成個長腿哥哥咁![48]
	(xi).	每日都*Feel good*	(24)	每日都感覺良好[49]
	(xii).	*Keep*住輕盈又*Healthy*	(25)	保持住輕盈又健康[50]
	(xiii).	幾時都*keep*住健康啦。	(26)	幾時都保持住健康啦。[51]
	(xiv).	讓*Body fit*起來!	(27)	讓身體 健康起來![52]

[39] *Hoi^{55}sam^{55} fan^{55}hoeng^{35}* ('happy [to] share').

[40] *Lim^{22}syu^{55} zyun^{55}jip^{22}* ('Facebook page').

[41] *Song^{33} daa^{35} ging^{22} din^{22}zi^{35}jau^{21}hei^{33}* ('play super [computer] games like mad'). This rendition, while conceivable, does not sound like an idiomatic collocation due to a clash of registers: whereas *ging^{22}* (劲) is highly colloquial, Mandarin-based *din^{22}zi^{35}jau^{21}hei^{33}* (電子遊戲) sounds very formal.

[42] *Tai^{35} maai^{21} pang^{21}jau^{23} ge^{33} daa^{35}gei^{55} sat^{22}fong^{33}* ('watch friends play computer games live').

[43] *Zou^{22} jiu^{21}hung^{33} hin^{35}si^{22}hei^{33}* ('become a remote control [TV] monitor').

[44] *Maai^{23} maai^{21} PS4™ ge^{33} din^{22}zi^{35}jau^{21}hei^{33} tung^{21} haa^{22}zoi^{33} lok^{22}heoi^{33} PS4™ dou^{22} tim^{55}* ('also buy PS4™ games as well and download [them] onto PS4™').

[45] *ngo^{23} ji^{55}gwai^{22} jap^{22}min^{22} ge^{33} bit^{55}jau^{23} mat^{22}ban^{35}* ('must-have items inside my wardrobe').

[46] *go^{33}jan^{21} fung^{55}gaak^{33}* ('personal style').

[47] *Gam^{33}do^{55} go^{33} paai^{21}zi^{35} jap^{22}min^{22}, ngo^{23} zau^{22} zeoi^{33} zung^{55}ji^{33} ping^{21}gwo^{35}paai^{21}* ('among all the brands, I like *texwood* the most').

[48] *Sing^{21} go^{33} coeng^{21} teoi^{35} go^{21}go^{55} gam^{35}* ('look virtually like Long Leg Oppa!').

[49] *Mui^{23}jat^{22} dou^{55} gam^{35}gok^{33} loeng^{21}hou^{35}* ('feel so good every day').

[50] *Bou^{35}ci^{21}zyu^{22} hing^{55}jing^{21} jau^{22} gin^{22}hong^{55}* ('keep poised / light-weight and healthy').

[51] *Gei^{35}si^{21} dou^{55} bou^{35}ci^{21} zyu^{22} gin^{22}hong^{55} laa^{55}* ('keeps [me] healthy anytime!').

[52] *Joeng^{22} san^{55}tai^{35} gin^{22}hong^{55} hei^{35}loi^{21}* ('let the body get fit!').

That is, in place of a Cantonese verb or adjective (e.g., **分享**, **健康**), an English verb or adjective (e.g., *share, fit*) is used; where a Cantonese object noun or noun phrase (e.g., **電子遊戲, 身體**) is expected, the object position is filled by an English noun or noun phrase instead (e.g., *Game*, *Body*). Previous analyses of similar 'code-mixing' in social interaction, especially among young bilinguals, pointed to the speaker/writer intentionally trying to impress others by projecting a Hong Kong bilingual identity (e.g., Pennington 1998), one who is no ignorant bumpkin from the countryside but someone who is informed and up-to-date about the latest trends, fashion, cultural novelties and social practices among peers. Indeed, such an analysis is consistent with a Hong Kong-wide perception bordering on a stereotype, that a person (especially a new acquaintance) who appears to invoke English words in the middle of Cantonese indiscriminately may be perceived as a show-off, deliberately drawing attention to one's western identity and, therefore, wants to be seen as modern, trendy, and fashionable – an identity enacted instrumentally through English so to speak.[53]

As shown in (23), some of the non-Chinese expressions have no Chinese equivalents (e.g., the model of the computer game: PS4™, which is pronounced in English, and *oppa* in '**長腿***oppa*' (*coeng*^{21}*teoi*^{35} *ou*^{22}*paa*^{55}), the latter being the romanized form of the Korean word**오빠**, an intimate term of address for a girl's male (usually older) lover. In Text 3, where '**長腿***oppa*' is mentioned, reference is made to the Korean star Lee Minho (**李敏鎬**), who is popularly known to his Chinese fans by that nick-name ('long-leg oppa'). Most of the other English expressions, if rendered into written Cantonese, would be either longer by up to three syllables (e.g., the Chinese equivalents of *share, Game, friend, mon, style, brand, feel good*, and *fit*), or sound too formal or semantically incongruent because they are Putonghua-based and thus belong to a different register (e.g., the Chinese equivalents of [computer] *game, mon*, and *download*). The preference for '*Keep***住**' (*keep zyu*^{22}, 'keep up', 'maintain'), which has the same number of syllables as the more formal-sounding**保持** (*bou*^{35}*ci*^{21}), is arguably similarly motivated by a concern for the alignment of register (i.e., colloquialism).

By contrast, where 'impression management' matters, in that trendiness (i.e., being 'in' and savvy) are primary concerns in plurilingual interaction, being able to refer to the brand names of western products in English subtly projects an impression of the speaker/writer as someone who is 'in the know' and has sophisticated tastes. This type of sociolinguistic positioning appears to be enacted by the use of *texwood* in Text 3, which sounds translocal and is much better known and preferred in common parlance among Cantonese speakers than**蘋果牌** (*ping*^{21}*gwo*^{35}*paai*^{21},

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[53] Such a perception was indeed widespread in colonial Hong Kong, when 'good' English was widely felt to be indexical of elitism or snobbery. With more and more young people gaining access to English following the implementation of the 9-year free and compulsory education policy in 1978 (extended to 12-year in 2012), the association of English with elitism gradually became less marked in the postcolonial era.

'Apple brand') and 牛仔褲 (*ngau*^{21}*zai*^{35}*fu*^{33}, 'jeans'). For a similar reason, *must have item* (also Text 3) conveys a sense of principle and level of personal taste that would be too banal if calqued in stilted, Putonghua-based 必有物品 (*bai*^{55}*jau*^{23} *mat*^{22}*ban*^{35}) or, worse, in unsophisticated, colloquial Cantonese (一定要有嘅嘢, *jat*^{55}*ding*^{22} *jiu*^{33} *jau*^{23} *ge*^{33} *je*^{23}). Likewise, for a speaker/writer to subtly reinforce an identity of being an expert, using keywords in English that are intelligible to the reader is one convenient method. This appears to be the motivation of using *Body* and *Healthy* by the writer of Text 4, where a health product is promoted, as there is hardly any semantic loss or gain compared with their equivalents, 身體 (*san*^{55}*tai*^{35}) and 健康 (*gin*^{22}*hong*^{55}), respectively.

The same may be said of the preference for *Facebook* rather than its Chinese equivalents among Hong Kong users. There are signs, however, that Chinese translations (e.g., 臉書 *lim*^{22}*syu*^{55}, 臉譜 lim^{22}pou^{35}, 面書 *min*^{22}*syu*^{55}) are becoming accepted in printed media. As of mid-2016, these equivalents of Mandarin or Putonghua origin still sound too formal when pronounced in Cantonese, but there is a good chance for one of these Chinese translations to gain community-wide currency eventually – much like it took years since the mid-1990s for *din*^{22}*jau*^{21} (電郵, 'email'), the abbreviated form of *din*^{22}*zi*^{35} *jau*^{21}*gin*^{35} (電子郵件), to become naturalized in colloquial Cantonese.[54]

2.4 Terms of Address: Lexical Transference in Colloquial Cantonese

Additional evidence of linguistic motivation behind lexical transference from English may be found in the use of code-mixed terms of address. This may be illustrated with one widely publicized news story. In March 2015, at a community award ceremony, the Chief Secretary Mrs. Carrie Lam was quoted as saying that she was a *fen*^{55}*si*^{35} (*fan* 屎, 'fans') of the Hong Kong Police Force. Of the many terms of address she was used to hearing, including those associated with her previous civil service positions, none pleased her more than 'Madam', the salutary address to a female officer in the Hong Kong disciplinary forces (e.g., police, immigration, and correctional services). The Chief Secretary was quoted as saying:

[54] Playful, innovative variants include hybrid forms like *e-maau* (i.e., 'e-cat'), which is inspired by 貓, *maau*^{55}, 'cat'.

(30)	**「最開心喺街上見到前線警務人員稱呼我為『Madam』,因為我會感覺到自己係呢一支引以為傲嘅警隊嘅一分子。多謝你!各位阿Sir、Madam![55]」**	'What pleases me most is to see front-line police personnel addressing me as 'Madam', because that makes me feel that I'm a member of the police force [that we are] so proud of! Thanks to you all, Sirs and Madams!'
	(**明報新聞網,** 28-3-2015)	(Ming Pao News Net, 28-3-2015)

There are two points of linguistic interest in this news story, both related to the plurality of countable English nouns transferred into Cantonese. First, despite the subject being singular (the Chief Secretary), *fans* appears in plural form (i.e., a *fen*^{55}*si*^{35}, usually rendered as '*fan* 屎' in writing). On the other hand, the last phrase in this quotation is clearly a collective term of address to all male and female police officers, present or *in absentia*: 各位阿*Sir*、*Madam*!('Fellow Sirs and Madams!'), and yet the singular forms were preferred. These patterns, all bisyllabic (*fen*^{55}*si*^{35}, 阿*Sir*, *Madam*), may be accounted for by the Cantonese-specific 'bisyllabic constraint', especially for nouns (see below).

Given that the training of new officers in various disciplinary forces is conducted in English, a legacy of British colonial practice and, under the 'one country, two systems' postcolonial arrangement, the widespread use of 'Sir' and 'Madam' as salutary terms of address in the SAR is understandable. To my knowledge, no corresponding Chinese address terms, spoken or written, have ever been used for that function in Hong Kong; they are therefore part and parcel of the socialization process of becoming members of the 'discourse system' (Scollon and Scollon 1995) of the SAR disciplinary forces in question. What is interesting is that a similar pair of terms of address is commonly used for teachers in the education domain, especially from secondary level onwards, a practice which is more typical of staff and students in English-medium schools, but also in Chinese-medium schools to some extent (Table 2.4).

Notice that in speech, these terms of address appear to be subjected to a 'bisyllabic constraint', which holds that monosyllabic units (morphemes or names) are preferably adorned with an appellation prefix or suffix (Li et al. 2015; cf. Luke and Lau 2008), while units longer than two syllables tend to be reduced to two. Accordingly, bisyllabic terms of address are commonly heard and found in the informal sections of the Chinese press (e.g., 阿*John*, 阿*Mark*, 阿*Bill*, 阿*Jack*, 阿*Jane*, 阿*Kate*, 阿*May*, but not *阿*Peter* or *阿*Janice* [*Peter, Janice* preferred]; *Benjamin* is either pronounced in three syllables, or similarly clipped to two as 阿*Ben*). Probably due to the bisyllabic constraint, 'Sir' is seldom used in isolation; rather, it is prefixed by *aa*^{33} (亞 or阿), hence *aa*^{33} *soe*^{21}. The same constraint explains

[55] *Zeoi*^{33} *hoi*^{55}*sam*^{55} *hai*^{35} *gaai*^{55} *soeng*^{22} *gin*^{33}*dou*^{35} *cin*^{21}*sin*^{33} *ging*^{35}*mou*^{33}*jan*^{21}*jyun*^{21} *cing*^{55}*fu*^{55} *ngo*^{23} *wai*^{21} '***Madam***', *jan*^{55}*wai*^{22} *ngo*^{23} *wui*^{23} *gam*^{35}*gok*^{22} *dou*^{35} *zi*^{22}*gei*^{35} *hai*^{22} *nei*^{55} *jat*^{55}*zi*^{55} *jan*^{23}*ji*^{23}*wai*^{21}*ngou*^{22} *ge*^{33} *ging*^{35}*deoi*^{35} *ge*^{33} *jat*^{55}*fan*^{22}*zi*^{35}. *Do*^{55}*ze*^{22} *nei*^{23}! *Gok*^{33}*wai*^{35} *aa*^{33} ***Sir, Madam***!

Table 2.4 Mixed terms of address for teachers in Hong Kong schools

		Spoken	Written
General terms of address	Male teacher	*aa*^{33} *soe*^{21} ('Sir')	亞 *Sir* (orthographic variant: 阿 *Sir*) ('Sir')
	Female teacher	*mi*^{55}*si*^{21} (variant: *mit*^{55}*si*^{21}) ('Miss')	Miss
Specific terms of address (e.g. surnamed *Lam*, *lam*^{21}, '林')	Male teacher	林 Sir (*Lam*^{35} *soe*^{21}; **Lam*^{21} *soe*^{21}) { formula: [Surname] + [*Sir*] }	
	Female teacher	*Ms. Lam* (**Ms.* 林) { formula: [*Miss*] + [Surname] }	

why the general term of address for female teachers is *mi*^{55}*si*^{21} or *mit*^{55}*si*^{21} (more commonly heard than monosyllabic 'Miss'), while the specific one for a teacher surnamed Lam is *Ms. Lam* (rather than **mi*^{55}*si*^{21} *Lam*). It is further noteworthy that the formulas of the specific code-mixed terms of address have different word orders depending on the gender: the formula for female teachers follows the word order '[*Miss*] + [Surname]', while the word order of the formula for male teachers is the reverse: '[Surname] + [*Sir*]'. This is probably because '[Sir] + [Surname]' is not an option, for in British English, *Sir*, like *Lord*, is conventionally used to signal knighthood when prefixed to a name (compare, e.g., *Sir Run Run Shaw*, also known as *Sir Run Run; Sir Ti-Liang Yang*, or *Sir Ti-Liang* in English).

The terms of address for teachers in Table 2.4 were already commonly used in the 1970s. While I am not aware of any study or discussion of their origin, the following hypothesis seems plausible: when first used, these mixed terms of address were probably intended for disambiguation purposes, for the corresponding specific Chinese terms of address are gender-neutral. For instance, *Lam*^{21} *lou*^{23}*si*^{55} (林老師, 'Teacher Lam') may be used to address (2nd person) or refer to (3rd person) a male or female teacher. When there are two or more teachers of opposite genders surnamed Lam in the same school, the mixed terms of address as shown in Table 2.4 may conceivably serve a quick and effective identification purpose. Certainly, the speaker/writer may choose to use the Chinese teacher's full name (typically consisting of three syllables in Hong Kong), but that would be considerably longer (e.g. *Lam*^{21}*gin*^{33}*man*^{21} *lou*^{23}*si*^{55}, 林建民老師, 'Teacher Lam Kin Man'), and so less preferred probably for that reason. The hypothesis outlined above suggests that the 'code-mixed' address formula probably began with specific terms of address, referring to Chinese teachers with specific surnames. This formula was subsequently extended to include an address formula for general purposes (i.e., without a surname) following the bisyllabic constraint pertaining to Hong Kong Cantonese. In other words, far from being arbitrary, these mixed address formulas were linguistically motivated for disambiguation when used by the first plurilingual teachers, before catching on Hong Kong wide, including in informal genres of public discourse (like the case of secretive triad language, Canto films featuring the school context must have helped popularize the mixed terms of address for teachers in this regard). Support for the above hypothesis is partly evidenced by the fact that other 'address-sensitive' English nouns such as *teacher* and *principal* are seldom, if ever, transferred into Cantonese (e.g., **Lam Teacher*, *林*Teacher*, **Teacher* 林, **Teacher Lam*; **Principal* 王, **Principal Wong*, *王*Principal*, **Wong Principal*). On the other hand, while *Panel* (short for 'Panel Chair', the teacher-in-charge of a school subject, e.g., English, Chinese, Liberal Studies) is transferred into Cantonese (*pen^{55}nou^{35}* or *pen^{55}lou^{35}*, 'panel'), it is seldom accompanied by an appellation affix.

2.5 Code-Switching, Code-Mixing, Translanguaging, Translingual Practice

Plurilingual interaction is among the most actively researched language contact phenomena to date (see, e.g., Chan 2008, 2009; W. Li 1994, 2002, 2005; Myers-Scotton 1993a, b, 2002; Muysken 2000), typically based on analysis of naturalistic speech data involving language pairs that belong to typologically unrelated language families (e.g., Chan 2009). Code-switching (CS), by far the most widely used term, may be defined as "the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by a bilingual speaker" (Bullock and Toribio 2009, p. xii). Some scholars prefer to adopt CS as an umbrella term and make a distinction between switches at clause boundaries: *inter*-sentential CS, and switches within a clause: *intra*-sentential CS (e.g., Kamwangamalu 1992; Myers-Scotton 2002). Others prefer to use CS as a generic term to cover both *intra*-sentential and *inter*-sentential switches (e.g., Chan 2008; Clyne 2003). Still others prefer to speak of 'code-alternation' (e.g., Auer 1995), while a few insist on using 'code-mixing' throughout (e.g., Muysken's 2000 monograph *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*).

As García and Lin (in press) have observed, echoing Grosjean (1989),[56] the term CS reflects earlier scholarly attempts to characterize and understand CS from a largely monolingual, monoglossic perspective (e.g., Auer 2005; Gumperz 1982; Myers-Scotton 2002; Weinreich 1953/2011). Following Bakhtin (1935/1981; cf. Bailey 2012), García and Lin (in press) argue that CS should give way to translanguaging, which is much better suited as a theoretical construct for capturing the dynamic nature of plurilingual interaction involving any language varieties, including bilingual interaction in the classroom context:

> Code-switching, even to those scholars who see it as linguistic mastery (…), is based on the monoglossic view that bilinguals have two separate linguistic systems. Translanguaging,

[56] That seminal study by Grosjean (1989) carries a rather provocative title: 'Neurolinguists, beware! The bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person'. Grosjean hoped to dispel a popular myth, which was also shared by many language scientists of the time, namely the language use patterns of a bilingual person could be accounted for and benchmarked with those of the corresponding monolinguals.

> however, posits the linguistic behavior of bilinguals as being always heteroglossic (…), always dynamic, responding not to two monolingualisms in one, but to one integrated linguistic system. It is precisely because translanguaging takes up this heteroglossic and dynamic perspective centered on the linguistic use of bilingual speakers themselves (…) that it is a much more useful theory for bilingual education than code-switching. (García and Lin, in press, p. 3)

The monolingual, monoglossic perspective mirrors a popular belief in multilingual societies that CS is linguistically anomalous, or even pathological, reflecting the plurilingual speaker/writer's inability to maintain watertight language boundaries, in speech or in print. Such a perception often gives rise to feelings of shame on the part of 'code-switchers', out of a concern for 'failing' to resist or suppress CS. As a correlate of strong social disapproval in many communities where switching between two or more languages is commonplace, CS tends to attract a bad name or pejorative label, for example, *Spanglish, Tex-Mex* (Spanish-English), *Franglais* (French-English), *Bahasa Rojak* (Malay-English), *Taglish* (Filipino-English), *Japlish* (Japanese-English), *Konglish* (Korean-English) and *Hongish* (Hong Kong English). For a long time, the Singaporean government has encouraged people to speak 'good English' and refrain from using *Singlish*, a 'low' sociolect (or 'basilect' in the lectal continuum) used by Singaporeans – educated and uneducated alike – for signaling shared ethnolinguistic or national identity. CS in Hong Kong is no different in this regard; it is commonly and apologetically referred to as *mixed code* or *Chinglish* (i.e., 'half Chinese, half English'), reflecting community-wide perceptions as well as disapproval of the seemingly 'random' and 'disorderly' mixing of languages. Until recently, most of the researchers engaged in analyzing plurilingual speech data in Hong Kong have preferred using the term CS (e.g., Li 1996; Li and Tse 2002; Lin 1996, 2006; Lin and Li 2012; Lin and Man 2009), largely to avoid aggravating the marked, society-wide perception of CS being a product of unprincipled 'mixing',[57] which in turn is strongly suggestive of the speaker's or writer's failure to keep to a 'pure' language.

In the past three decades since the mid-1980s, there has been a lack of consensus regarding the terminology used to describe or categorize specific plurilingual communication phenomena. Divergence of definitions and the absence of clear delineation of such terms as CS, CM, and borrowing often gave rise to different interpretations of the same plurilingual interaction data, making it difficult to reconcile theory-driven and context-sensitive analyses across diverse datasets involving different language pairs (or, increasingly, trios), which in turn makes overarching generalization difficult to reach. In addition, various approaches to analyzing plurilingual speech data and explanatory models have been advanced, with different theories premised on specific 'researcher categories' (as opposed to 'code-switcher categories') competing for ascendency. In general, researcher categories are those theory-driven constructs that are held to be relevant and valid in support of a preferred analytical framework or explanatory model (i.e., to offer a coherent account

[57] **中英夾雜** (*zung*^{55}*jing*^{55} *gaap*^{33}*zaap*^{22}/*zhōngyīng jiázá*, 'Chinese-English admixture').

of "what's going on?"). There are two main theoretical approaches to date: conversation analysis (e.g., Auer 1995; W. Li 1994, 2002, 2005; W. Li and Milroy 1995) and the Markedness Model (e.g., Myers-Scotton 1993b; Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001).

With the help of ample CS data in East Africa, notably multilingual Kenya, Myers-Scotton (1993b) demonstrates how, in transactional communication involving identity checking or negotiation, typically featuring a speaker vested with institutional power vis-à-vis a stranger (e.g., a university gate-keeper checking visitors' identities; a bus conductor verifying passengers' bus fares), switching from a local vernacular to Swahili or English is an effective way to index one's ethnolinguistic group membership or social attributes. Myers-Scotton (1993b) provides plenty of instructive illustrations showing how CS, being socially motivated in contexts where speaker identities are negotiated or contested, is a useful communicative resource that may be deployed – a 'rational choice' so to speak – to optimize a plurilingual speaker's communicative intent. Conversation analysts, on the other hand, insist that any attribution of specific speaker meaning to CS can only be established through meticulous sequential analysis of various conversational cues, including suprasegmental features (volume, pitch, pace of delivery, etc.) and the duration of pauses, if any. This is why, as a prerequisite, any speaker meaning attributed to a code-switcher must be based on carefully transcribed conversational segments following a rigorous transcription protocol (ten Have 2007). W. Li and Milroy (1995), for instance, show that in plurilingual interaction between a Cantonese-dominant mother in a Chinese community, UK and her British-born daughter over the dinner table, the latter (Ah Ying) signals dispreference (i.e., expressing reluctance) by responding to her mother's question in a different language:

(31)	(Dinner table talk between mother A and daughter B.)		
	A:	Oy-m-oy faan a? Ah Ying a?	
		(Want some rice?)	
	B:	(no response)	
	A:	Chaaufaan a. Oy-m-oy?	
		(Fried rice. Want or not?)	
	B:	(2.0) I'll have some shrimps.	
	A:	Mut-ye? (.) Chaaufaan a.	
		(What?) (Fried rice.)	
	B:	Hai a.	
		(OK.)	(W. Li and Milroy 1995, pp. 287–288)

From this excerpt, it can be seen that Ah Ying's (B's) dispreference or indirect refusal in her second turn is doubly marked:

> B's indirect refusal is marked in two steps – first a two-second delay before delivery, a commonly occurring signal of an imminent dispreferred response; then the choice of English which contrasts the code choice in the immediately preceding turn by the mother. The child's final acceptance of the mother's offer of rice is in Chinese [Cantonese], which cor-

> responds to the language choice of the mother, but differs from the one she has used to mark her indirect refusal. (W. Li and Milroy 1995, p. 288)

Linguistic and paralinguistic resources in bilingual conversation being seen as potentially indexical of speaker meanings, adherents of CA believe that all interpretive analysis must be grounded in the dynamic turn-by-turn sequence. This is why rigorous transcription protocols are followed and high standards are set for the coding of speech data.[58] In general, CA data processing:

> requires repeated examination of detailed transcripts of audio and, when available, video, recordings. The data collection and transcription process can be very time-consuming, depending on many factors, including the level of detail of the transcript (e.g. Are changes in gaze and body position noted? Are overlapping talk, latching, breathing, pauses, laughter, etc. noted?), the number of participants involved (…), and the linguistic repertoire of the researcher (...). (Cashman 2008, p. 290)

Both the Markedness Model and the CA analytical frameworks have enhanced our understanding of some of the typical motivations behind CS. Owing to divergent theoretical orientations and a lack of standardized terminologies, however, the role of CS in plurilingual interaction – how it impacts on the lexico-syntactic structures of the languages in question, the dynamic, socio-pragmatically sensitive meaning-making potential of moment-by-moment speaker concerns or motivations – is still being debated. There are other researchers who refuse to see these two approaches as being mutually exclusive; rather, it may be demonstrated that pre-existing social structures such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, professional or institutional identity are brought to bear in bilingual interaction whereby 'identity-in-interaction' is dynamically co-constructed (Gafaranga 2005; cf. Cashman 2008, p. 292). In general, the stronger the evidence of negotiation of identity being an interactional focus (social motivation, e.g., between shopper and salesperson at a department store selling luxury items; between doctor and patient during a consultation session; between police officer checking a person's identity cards), the more likely it is for language choice to be bound up with context-specific speaker meanings or functions.

2.5.1 Social Motivation: Negotiation of Identity

Blommaert (2010, cf. 2005, pp. 203–204) has argued convincingly that, to the extent that language communication in any context invariably indexes the speaker's or writer's social attributes vis-à-vis those of his or her interlocutor(s), social interaction necessarily amounts to an 'act of identity' (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). The enactment of speaker identity through language choice – social

[58] For an overview of the logistical requirements for transcribing bilingual speech data, see Turell and Moyer (2008).

motivation in short – is most relevant when there is evidence in bilingual interaction where the speaker's language choice, deliberately or involuntarily, indexes association with specific social attributes of particular target groups, and that such symbolic associations are contested verbally, suggesting that negotiation of identity is foregrounded. Negotiation of identity is especially commonplace in transactional communication between speakers whose social roles are marked by a clear power differential, for example, when a person's identity is challenged by a police officer or gate-keeper of an institution, or when a customer with a deep pocket feels the salesperson's service is just not good enough (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993b).

In extreme cases, language choice in multilingual environments can be a matter of life and death. For instance, Blommaert (2010) provides a detailed analysis of the life story of a plurilingual young boy called Joseph, who grew up in crisis-ridden Rwanda in Africa. Born to middle-class parents, a Tutsi mother and a Hutu father in Rwanda in 1986, Joseph was brought to Kenya by his mother and studied in an English-medium school there. As a child he also picked up some Swahili. When he was five years old, his mother took him back to Rwanda, where he learned some Kinyarwanda from a Hutu servant. Throughout his childhood, his English-speaking parents insisted that he speak only English and discouraged him from mixing with other children who spoke the local languages. This is why and how Joseph grew up to become English-dominant. Shortly after his return to Rwanda, his mother was murdered and, six months later, his father was also killed and the house was burned down. Joseph managed to flee and find his uncle who lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where he picked up some Runyankole ('Kinyankole'), which he would speak with his uncle, who, in addition to English, was also conversant in Kinyarnwanda and French, the "normative, standardized, and literate" languages in Rwanda (p. 167). Joseph's childhood ordeal predated the brutal ethnic warfare between the Tutsi and Hutu culminating in the widely reported Rwanda genocide in 1994.

Fate had it that Joseph landed in UK, where he sought asylum at the age of 14. His application was rejected on linguistic grounds, however. As Blommaert (2010) explains, Joseph's language choice in response to British immigration personnel's critical interrogation was interpreted based on their static view of the political geography of central and eastern Africa, a view which is conservative and completely out of place in an increasingly globalized world. When assessing Joseph's application for asylum, the British immigration officers showed no sensitivity to his actual life circumstances, in particular the virtual absence of opportunities for proper schooling and therefore his inability to display any knowledge of standardized, literate forms of Kinyarwanda or French. Blommaert comments on the relationship between Joseph's "thoroughly distorted conditions of life" (p. 156) and his 'truncated' linguistic repertoire as follows:

> Joseph also appears to be quite aware of the indexical values of some of these languages: English sets them [speakers of English] apart and suggests a superior level of 'civilisation' (…). Runyankole suggests an identity as a foreign Hutu rebel (…), and he himself has very negative attitudes towards that language (…). Runyankole, in the crisis-ridden Rwandan

> context in which his story is set, naturally signalled enemy identities to those [especially Kinyarwanda speakers] whom he encountered on his way. (Blommaert 2010, p. 169)

This critical linguistic awareness made Joseph very cautious of language choice when caught in chance encounters with strangers from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds, especially the national language Kinyarwanda because it “may in itself be an expression of political allegiance” and that “in circumstances of violent conflict [it may] require dissimulation or denial for one’s own safety” (Blommaert 2010, p. 167). Joseph’s ordeal, as described and discussed in Blommaert’s (2010) critique, epitomizes the intimate link and symbolic relationship between language and identity in crisis-ridden multilingual settings awash with human miseries due to “war refugeeism” (pp. xi–xii), where the local and possibly transnational languages are perceived as indexing one’s friends or enemies, and where language choice or verbal performance is strongly indexical of the kind of person one is interacting with. It also brings home an important insight brought about by eminent scholars like Bourdieu (1991), Bernstein (1971) and Dell Hymes (1980, 1996), as Blommaert points out:

> [T]he world of language is not just one of difference but one of inequality; that some of that inequality is temporal and contingent on situations while another part of it is structural and enduring; and that such patterns of inequality affect, and articulate around, actual, concrete, language forms such as accents, dialects, registers and particular stylistic (e.g. narrative) skills. (Blommaert 2010, p. 28)

In more mundane, urban multilingual environments, identity negotiation is also clearly evidenced when a plurilingual person is trying to make a complaint on the phone, where all the information pertaining to the complainant can only be deduced from the speaker’s voice and other language-related cues. In a context like multilingual Hong Kong, it is well-known that when a complaint is made by phone, those who speak fluent English with a native-like accent are more likely to be taken seriously (e.g., public utilities companies like telephone or electricity services or financial institutions like banks and credit card companies). In the absence of any evidence of speaker identities being negotiated (typically between peers), and when communication is content-focused, the reason for invoking English may lie elsewhere. If we compare the ‘pure’ Cantonese version of the text segments mixed with English in (29), some of the *linguistic* motivations for using English will become clear (cf. Li 1996).

2.5.2 Linguistic Motivation: From Code-Switching to Translanguaging and Translingual Practice

When a plurilingual speaker/writer is absorbed in meaning-making, and provided negotiation of identity is not foregrounded in plurilingual interaction, all the language varieties, accents, and registers within that speaker/writer’s repertoire are treated as a composite pool of semiotic resources to make meaning. This is the background against which the term CS is increasingly felt to be inappropriate as it unduly underscores and reinforces a monoglossic ideology or bias, as if bilinguals were "two monolinguals in one person" (Grosjean 1989; cf. 'monoglot ideology', Blommaert 2005; García and Lin in press). Further, it has been observed that there is hardly any limit to the speaker's or writer's creativity and criticality in the moment-by-moment decisions of language choice and plurilingual performance (W. Li and Zhu 2013), the only constraint being an awareness of whether the linguistic repertoire is matched by or shared with that of the interlocutor(s), which in turn informs the appropriacy of fleeting language choice decisions, especially in dynamic contexts where change in the configuration of participants is unexpected and difficult to predict (e.g., at a cocktail party involving plurilinguals on the move, hopping between loosely formed groups of plurilingual party-goers).

Another problem is related to the use of the word 'code' to refer to those highly salient linguistic practices. While CS and CM makes us think of 'switching' or 'mixing' as unusual or marked, and thus in need of explanation, the choice of 'code' in both terms is increasingly felt to be out of place by virtue of its meaning and use in other collocations. W. Li (2011) provides an instructive example in this regard. In his qualitative study of a small network of transnational Chinese university students in London, one of the informants (Chris) who characterized himself as a "heavy code-mixer" questioned why that everyday linguistic practice he engaged in came to be called "code-mixing":

> I mix Chinese and English openly; have to, really. No secret about it. . . . Why is it called code-mixing? Is it some secret message? (W. Li 2011, p. 1229)

Chris's objection to the term 'code-mixing' was probably guided by the common collocation 'secret code', as in Morse Code and Da Vinci Code, whence the query about the apparent link between 'code-mixing' and secrecy.

In addition, recent breakthroughs in neuroscience research have also called into question whether 'switching' and 'mixing' are the right metaphors. There is empirical evidence showing that the languages in a bilingual brain remain activated and cognitively accessible even though only one language is used (Hoshino and Thierry 2011; Thierry and Wu 2007; Wu and Thierry 2010; cf. Lewis et al. 2012, p. 643; Paradis 2004). This suggests that bilingual speech production is too dynamic to be characterized as 'switching' or 'mixing', and too simplistic to do justice to the "spur-of-the-moment" creativity of bilingual interactants (W. Li 2011). All this helps explain a gradual convergence of views about the need for more adequate and appropriate terminology.

Canagarajah (2013a, b) proposes the term 'translingual practice' to dispel the monolingual bias which is historically entrenched in Anglo-European modernity and colonialism of the past four centuries (cf. García and Lin in press; Lin and Li 2015), and draws attention to the translingual nature of writing performance as the unmarked state of what is elsewhere referred to as bilingual or multilingual literacies. Thus when the primary objective of the plurilingual writer is to *perform* pluriliteracies (e.g., Arabic, English and French when writing one's literacy autobiography, Canagarajah 2013a, pp. 1–2), such an objective would clearly be defeated if carried out monolingually and solely in English (narrative). To Canagarajah, however, the term 'translingual' is not limited to the flouting of boundaries between more or less discrete language varieties, for translingual practice is often embedded in what is traditionally conceived of as monolingual output in writing or speech. This happens, for example, when individual writers engaged in various literacy activities draw on a range of styles, genres and registers within the same language to achieve various communicative purposes, typically guided by and in response to an inward call for linguistic creativity that knows no boundaries (cf. 'code-meshing').[59] As for translingual speech performance, Canagarajah (2013a) observes that:

> In a specific speech event, one might see the mixing of diverse languages, literacies, and discourses. It might be difficult to categorize the interaction as belonging to a single language. Languages are treated as resources and used freely in combination with others for people's communication purposes. (Canagarajah 2013a, p. 40)

In short, with the term 'translingual practice', Canagarajah challenges the assumption embedded in traditional terms like bilingual or multilingual literacies that speakers or writers should adhere to, as if there were solid or stable boundaries between discrete languages within their linguistic repertoire. Rather, he demonstrates that since antiquity, translingual practice is intrinsic to all human communicative activities, beyond those contexts which are traditionally labeled as bilingual or multilingual. The conceptual thrust of translingual practice echoes Bakhtin's (1935/1981) critique of monolingual ideology using the term 'heteroglossia' decades earlier, as Lin and Li (2015) observe:

> Like translingual practice, the notion of heteroglossia focuses on breaking away from the ideology of discrete, unitary languages and breaking through the centralizing forces driven by ideologies of monolingualism and linguistic purism that are dominant in the literature of language education and government language education policies. (Lin and Li 2015, p. 82; cf. García and Lin in press; Lin 1996, 2006)

Key to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia (literally 'different voices') is that words invariably index signs of social worlds, past and present, while the use of words in any contexts unavoidably echoes multiple voices embedded in the myriad genres and contexts where they have been used (cf. Bailey 2012, p. 506). Similarly, Blommaert (2010) argues cogently that 'code-switching' is largely an artefact of 'the Saussurean synchrony of language', an influential construct since the dawn of modern linguistics about a century earlier albeit with no social reality, which should therefore be abandoned and replaced with the ethnographic concept of 'voice', referring to how people actually deploy their linguistic resources when making meaning in context (p. 180). Seen in this light, what is generally referred to as 'code-switching' is more fruitfully re-conceptualized as "moments of voice in which people draw resources from a repertoire that contains materials conventionally associated with 'languages'," reflecting thereby "heteroglossic practices in which different voices are being blended" (Blommaert 2010, p. 181). As a default

[59] For more details, see Canagarajah (2013a): Chapter 3, 'Recovering Translingual Practices', and Chapter 6, 'Pluralizing Academic Writing'.

mode of communication, heteroglossia is at work in the speech of monolinguals or plurilinguals alike. Put differently, to speak is to be engaged in 'heteroglossic speech' (p. 181). To get at the meanings of individual speakers/writers, therefore, rather than belaboring which languages individual words or signs belong to, it is more fruitful to understand the "social tensions and conflicts between these different signs and voices" (Lin and Li 2015, p. 82), and what additional meanings are carried and instantiated in these voices.

A similar conceptual reorientation has been the concern of other scholars, who prefer using the term 'translanguaging', albeit with different emphases. Originally used in the classroom context as a bilingual pedagogical practice in Wales where students are guided to attend to language input (i.e., reading and listening) in language A, and use that input to generate output (i.e., speaking and writing) in language B (Williams 1996; cf. Cummins 2008 with regard to the Canadian context), translanguaging has been used somewhat differently depending on the scholar. In her monograph *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century*, García (2009, p. 45) defines translanguaging as "*multiple discursive practices* in which bilinguals engage in order to *make sense of their bilingual worlds*" (emphasis in original), while Baker (2011, p. 288) refers to "the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages". For W. Li and Zhu (2013, pp. 519–520), the scope of meaning-making potential of translanguaging is organized around the prefix *trans*-, whose semantic spectrum is extended to cover "three dimensions of flexible and dynamic multilingual practices" (p. 519; cf. 'multi-competence', Cook 1991, 2012):

I. 'trans-system/structure/space', including across modalities such as speaking, writing and singing;
II. 'transformative', encompassing the dialectic relationships between attitudes, beliefs and identity formation; and
III. 'transdisciplinary', reflecting the holistic nature of plurilingual performance which is at the same time informed and produced by social practices. (W. Li and Zhu 2013, p. 519)

W. Li and Zhu (2013) have demonstrated that, to capture and fully account for the creativity and criticality so typical of plurilingual interaction, all three dimensions need to be addressed. Inspired by the scholars whose contributions were briefly reviewed above, I will use the term translanguaging to refer to speakers' or writers' use of linguistic resources that are traditionally categorized as belonging to different languages, varieties, more or less distinct genres, registers, and styles. Following W. Li and Zhu (2013), the emphasis on *trans*- is meant to capture the holistic multi-system, multi-modality, multi-identity and multi-disciplinary nature of the linguistic performance when plurilinguals are engaged in communicative meaning-making, in writing or in speech. As such, translanguaging is viewed as a natural extension of 'languaging', whether the speaker/writer in question is monolingual or plurilingual, regardless of the actual number of natural languages and competencies within his or her repertoires. When reference is made to individuals' translanguaging collectively as social practice, the term translingual practice will be used.

For our purpose in this book, therefore, the conventional meaning of bilingual is subsumed under plurilingual, in that it refers to speakers/writers who have two or more languages within their repertoires (cf. 'multi-competence', Cook 1991, 2012), which are typically 'truncated' rather than 'complete', including our 'mother tongue(s)':

> No one knows *all* of a language. That counts for our so-called mother tongues and, of course, also for the other 'languages' we acquire in our life time. Native speakers are not perfect speakers. (…) And there are always [linguistic, semiotic] resources that we do not possess. (Blommaert 2010, pp. 103, 105, emphasis in original)

Also included in our truncated repertoires is language-specific awareness of more or less distinctive styles (e.g., formal vs. informal), genres and registers pertaining to each of the conventionally defined languages, which evolved as a function of "our biographies and the wider histories of the communities" in which we have lived (Blommaert 2010, p. 105). Except when there is a need to actively monitor one's language output and to observe context-specific norms of appropriacy, typically where the 'crossing' (Rampton 1995) or 'mixing' of languages is socially disapproved (e.g., news broadcast, speech delivered at a formal ceremony), the following premises are taken to be axiomatic when a plurilingual is engaged in meaning-focused interaction with other plurilinguals with a similar language profile:

(a) Speakers/writers draw on all their linguistic resources in more or less discrete language varieties, styles, genres, and registers within their repertoire;
(b) Speakers/writers have a low awareness of boundaries between language varieties, styles, genres, and registers, and feel minimally constrained by them;
(c) Speakers/writers expect their translanguaging to be understood by their interlocutor(s), and that it will be reciprocated.

These premises are consistent with the Council of Europe's characterization of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which refers to:

> the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw. (Coste et al. 2009, p. v)

As such, plurilingualism "is focused on the fact that languages interrelate and interconnect particularly, but not exclusively, at the level of the individual. It stresses the dynamic process of language acquisition and use, in contrast with coexistence and balanced mastery of languages" (Piccardo 2013, p. 601; cf. Council of Europe 2014). When interacting with others, plurilinguals typically draw from whatever linguistic resources within their truncated repertoires, often resulting in translanguaging, with transference as a natural outcome at different linguistic levels, contributing thereby to their context-specific communicative purpose and goal (Clyne 2003).

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Chapter 3
Challenges in Acquiring Standard Written Chinese and Putonghua

3.1 Introduction

On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong ceased to be a British colony after over 150 years of British rule and was renationalized as the most international of metropolises in the People's Republic of China. The official language is Chinese, referring to spoken Cantonese and Standard Written Chinese (SWC), while English is recognized as a co-official language. As noted by Norman (1988), many of the terms sound very similar. For our purpose in this book, the term Modern Chinese[1] "has all Han Chinese varieties, spoken and written, within its denotatum, be they standard or non-standard. When reference is made specifically to the standard variety, spoken or written, the term Modern Standard Chinese [MSC] is used. (Li 2006, pp. 152–153). The spoken and written standards of MSC will be further specified as Putonghua and Standard Written Chinese (SWC), respectively. According to Chen (1999):

> the standard form of Modern Chinese with the Beijing phonological system as its norm of pronunciation, and Northern dialects as its base dialect, and looking to exemplary modern works in *báihuà* [白話] 'vernacular literary language' for its grammatical norms. (Chen 1999, p. 24)[2]

While Cantonese is a member of the family of Modern Chinese varieties, it is officially a 'dialect' (方言, *fong*[55]*jin*[21]/*fāngyán*). As for the written standard, Hongkongers are expected to master SWC, which is lexico-grammatically more

[1] 現代漢語 (*Xiàndài Hànyŭ*, literally 'modern language of the Han people').

[2] According to Y. Li (2004), the language standards in MSC reflect a "compound frame of reference" (Y. Li 2015, p. 168), which corresponds with western concepts of 'geographical dialect' and 'social dialect'. That is, its phonological norms (Putonghua) are derived from a geographical dialect spoken in and around Beijing, while its lexico-grammatical norms (SWC) are derived from various authoritative social dialects (or sociolects) depending on the 'dialect' backgrounds of individual authors of exemplary works in *baihua*. As such, lexico-grammatical norms in SWC are not static and may shift over time.

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closely aligned with Putonghua. Under ‘one country, two systems’, Hongkongers may continue using traditional Chinese characters – unlike in the rest of mainland China, where simplified Chinese characters have been introduced and implemented since the 1950s. In general, traditional Chinese characters contain more strokes and therefore literacy training takes more time compared with that required for learning simplified characters.[3] But a bigger challenge is that unlike Putonghua speakers who can write Chinese in the way they speak,[4] Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers, like other ‘dialect’ speakers, cannot, for SWC is largely based on the lexis and grammar of Putonghua. Such a functional split or division of labor between the vernacular Cantonese (for speaking) and SWC (for reading and writing) is known as diglossia (Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967), or ‘modern diglossia’ (as opposed to ‘traditional diglossia’, Snow 2008, 2010a, b, 2013a, b), which presents a problem in Chinese literacy development through education. Well before the handover, in anticipation of some form of official function to be assigned to Putonghua after 1997, some scholars envisioned a gradual redistribution of language functions which would trigger a shift from diglossia to triglossia, whereby some of the ‘high’ functions previously enjoyed exclusively by English would be assigned to or shared by the national language Putonghua, while Cantonese the vernacular would continue to serve ‘low’ functions such as being the language of the home and the market place (see, e.g., So 1989; cf. Pierson 1998). To some extent, such a prognosis has been borne out by the symbolic function of Putonghua at various official ceremonies and festive events of national significance after 1997.

One consequence of the linguistic mismatch between speaking (Cantonese) and writing (SWC) is that formal written Chinese in Hong Kong exhibits considerable lexico-syntactic influence from Cantonese and, to a large extent, English as well. Such a unique writing style came to be known as ‘Hong Kong Written Chinese’ (HKWC, Shi 2006; Shi et al. 2014). Given that deviations from SWC norms are often frowned at in formal and/or assessed activities (e.g., public examinations, job applications, formal speeches), Cantonese-L1 speakers must remain vigilant of the need to adhere to SWC norms, which entails monitoring and suppressing the impulse of using Cantoneisms when writing Chinese in formal situations, which may or may not be successful. In this chapter, we will look into some of the linguistic difficulties experienced by Cantonese-L1 learners of MSC (i.e., SWC and Putonghua).

In oral communication, the demand for Putonghua (Mandarin) is increasingly marked in school as well as in society. Apart from being a compulsory school subject from primary school – a unique curricular arrangement in the Chinese-speaking world (Cheung 2005, pp. 30–32) – more and more schools, primary and secondary, have opted to teach the Chinese Language subject using Putonghua as the medium

[3] According to the results of a few psychological experiments, there is some empirical evidence showing that this may not be entirely true (Wan, 2012).

[4] **我手寫我口** (*wǒ shoǔ xiě wǒ koǔ/ngo*^{23}*sau*^{35}*se*^{35}*ngo*^{23}*hau*^{35}), literally ‘my hand writes my mouth’, or more idiomatically ‘write as one speaks’ (Coulmas 2013, p. 43).

of instruction (PMI), a practice generally referred to as 'teaching Chinese in Putonghua' (TCP).[5] Beyond the education domain, since the handover, cross-border activities and exchanges with the mainland are getting more and more frequent. Today, Putonghua speakers from the mainland account for the biggest group of tourists or visitors. This is why for work-related reasons, many Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers find it necessary to learn at least some Putonghua to enhance or maintain their competitiveness on the job, for example, by attending evening Putonghua classes at tutorial or adult learning centers. This is especially true of workers in the fields of commerce (wholesale and retail), hospitality and service industries.

The learning of Putonghua, however, is not at all straightforward; while Cantonese shares the bulk of vocabulary with Putonghua (Luke 2005), there are enough lexical and, to a lesser extent, fine grammatical differences to make the learning of Putonghua comparable to learning a second language (Ho 1999). Knowledge of the tone system in Cantonese – with six distinctive tonemes – appears to be of little help when coping with the Putonghua tone system (four distinctive tones, a neutral tone, plus tone sandhi for the first syllable of bisyllabic words pronounced with the third, i.e., falling-rising tone, see footnote 21). In this chapter, we will outline some of the major pronunciation problems and learning difficulties faced by Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers, with a view to better understanding why it is such a big challenge for them to master Putonghua.

3.2 Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers' SWC Literacy Development: A Linguistic Challenge

> Literacy in traditional China was (...) perceived as a way of training one's moral character and, in addition to that – perhaps as a result of that – as a stepping stone for joining the class of scholar-officials [also known as the literati or Mandarins]. In the twentieth century, however, literacy, and for that matter education, has acquired rather different associations. The concepts of education and literacy have been virtually synonymous with mass education and mass literacy. Learning the Chinese characters is no longer directed towards reading Confucius and Mencius. Reading and writing have become something of an end in themselves; and education, a citizen's right. (Kwan-Terry and Luke 1997, p. 274)

With the above excerpt, Kwan-Terry and Luke (1997) summarize their discussion of a fundamental shift in the culturally conditioned societal function of standard literacy in Chinese, which began roughly during the first decade of the twentieth century. Traditionally, being literate in Chinese, as reflected in one's abilities to recognize, read and write Chinese characters, was widely looked upon as a hallmark of being among the educated elite. This is because, for over 1300 years from the Sui Dynasty (581–618) to the early Republican period (1905), access to officialdom was selected through the imperial examination system known as *kējŭ* (**科舉**), which tested one's knowledge of as much as intellectual acumen to extrapolate from

[5] **普教中** (*pŭ jiào zhōng*/ *pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}).

Chinese literary classics, how centuries-old wisdom could inspire and inform best state policies and practices when grappling with contemporary sociopolitical issues.[6]

3.2.1 Standard Written Chinese Is Infused with Classical Chinese (Wenyan) Elements

Even though the intimate link between standard literacy and the elitist classical tradition was "permanently severed" (Kwan-Terry and Luke 1997, p. 276) in the wake of the Vernacular Language Movement (also known as the 'Plain Language Campaign') following the May Fourth Movement in 1919, a number of problems or challenges remain towards the goal of bringing literacy to the masses swiftly nationwide. First, despite its name, the vernacularization of written Chinese did little to stop authors from invoking elements of *wenyan*, or classical Chinese, in their writing. One might be tempted to think that blind allegiance to literary classics or simply illogical adherence to old ways of saying things was to blame. Much more is at stake than that, however. To this day, the resilience of *wenyan* elements may be explained by their function as a de facto repository or roots of moral, philosophical and cultural heritage spanning over 2000 years. Being more terse in form and frozen in four-syllable (**四字詞**, or 'four character idioms', Taylor and Taylor 2014, pp. 64–66) and longer idiomatic expressions (e.g., antitheses embedded in polysyllabic couplets), such *wenyan* elements are rich in cultural content, typically imbued with some historical allusion or wisdom derived from some folk allegory with pan-Han-Chinese cultural import. For instance, a person plotting to eliminate a nemesis at an invitational banquet or feast is quintessentially captured by the noun phrase **鴻門宴** (*Hung*^{21}*mun*^{21}*jin*^{33}, *Hóngmén yàn*, 'Feast at Hongmen'). Steep in history, this trisyllabic expression refers to a famous event at the dawn of the Han dynasty (206 BC) after the downfall of the last Qin emperor, amidst the struggle between two archrivals for the throne, **劉邦** (*Lau*^{21}*Bong*^{5}/*Liú Bāng*) and **項羽** (*Hong*^{22}*Jyu*^{23}/*Xiàng Yǔ*). One day, the latter enticed the former to a banquet at **鴻門**, planning to have him slaughtered by a swordsman while performing a dance, but in vain. The same dramatic event has also given rise to another quadrisyllabic couplet:

項莊舞劍,意在沛公 (traditional script)
Hong^{22} Zong^{55} mou^{23} gim^{33} ji^{33} zoi^{22} Bui^{33} Gung^{55}
项庄舞剑,意在沛公 (simplified script)
Xiàng Zhuāng wǔ jiàn yì zài Pèi Gōng

[6] See 'The civil-service examination system', Taylor and Taylor (2014, pp. 89–92); on the role of *wenyan*, the classical written language in the *kējǔ* examination, in particular, the prescribed literary genre *bāgǔwén/baat*^{33}*gu*^{35}*man*^{21} (**八股文**), see Chen (1999, pp. 67–68), and Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012, pp. 76–86); on the implications of adopting *wenyan* for literacy education in imperial China, see Tao and Qian (2012a, pp. 10–11).

Hong^{22} Zong^{55}/Xiàng Zhuāng rattle sword, target at Bui^{33} Duke/Pèi Duke
'Hong Zong / Xiang Zhuang performed a sword dance as camouflage for killing Lau Bong / Liu Bang (also known as 沛公, Duke Bui/ Duke Pei)'. (Metaphorically: 'to act with a hidden objective', 'to harbor an ulterior motive')

To Chinese students who have studied this historical episode which took place during the transition between the Qin (221–206 BC) and Han dynasties (206 BC–220 AD), that trisyllabic word (鴻門宴) or the associated quadrisyllabic couplet represents a convenient historical allusion and rich linguistic resource that lends quick expression to that widely recognized meaning. This is why they are occasionally invoked in Chinese literary works, creative writing, TV dramas, and even new stories in Greater China. For instance, in mid-February 2016, in his widely reported objection to the US Secretary of State John Kerry's suggestion to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi invoked two historical allusions worded in classical Chinese, one being the quadrisyllabic couplet cited above.[7] In the Foreign Minister's mind, he had no doubt that the deploying of the THAAD missile system was like the 'wielding of the sword' and that, whereas the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was the alleged target, the actual intended target was China.

In western linguistic terminology, one could say that thanks to intertextuality across time and space in the Chinese-speaking world, such *wenyan* elements reflect time-honored traditional Han Chinese cultures and values, with a subset being taught and learned in school as truisms or adages for guiding good, appropriate behaviors vis-à-vis the enacted social role(s) of one's interlocutor(s), in keeping with the fine teaching of Confucius and Mencius. It should be noted, however, that all these advantages come at the cost of considerable time and – from the language acquisition point of view – investment to learn, if being well versed in classical texts is part of the goal of Chinese literacy development (Tao and Qian 2012a). Traditional literacy training and education in China emphasize memorization from infancy; indeed, it is widely believed that there is neither short-cut nor substitute for a better method (Tao and Qian 2012b). For generations of Han Chinese, not until one has mastered the high-context cultural content (Hall 1976/1989) encapsulated in logographic characters will one be able to benefit from their communicative and meaning-making potential, receptively or productively.

7「中國有兩句古話:一句是項莊舞劍,意在沛公;還有一句是,司馬昭之心,路人皆知。」("There are two old Chinese sayings in China: one is 'Xiang Zhuang performed a sword dance as camouflage for killing Duke Pei'; the other one is 'what Sima Zhao actually wants is known to people from all walks of life'." *Wen Wei Po*, Hong Kong, 中國亮出處理半島問題的三條底線, 13 Feb 2016. Retrieved 13 Feb 2016, from http://news.wenweipo.com/2016/02/13/IN1602130019.htm.).

3.2.2 *Written Chinese: A Non-alphabetic, Logographic Writing System*

A second problem towards the goal of mass literacy in the Chinese context is related to the writing system. Unlike a western classical language like Latin, which lost its vitality as a spoken or written language since the demise of the Roman Empire (fall of Rome in 476 AD), Chinese characters have been in use uninterruptedly for over 2500 years. While the most inclusive dictionary of Chinese characters published to date, the *Ocean of Chinese Characters* (辭海 1992), contains 85,568 characters (S. Zhao 2008, p. 80), the actual number of characters needed for everyday communication by literate Chinese readers, for example, to thoroughly understand a newspaper and respond to issues arising in writing, is within 3500 frequently-used characters.[8] Whereas Latin texts are generally undecipherable to untrained readers of its modern 'daughter languages' such as French and Spanish, there is a fair chance for educated Chinese readers to make sense of by and large the same characters in classical Chinese texts composed by writers up to two and a half millennia before our time. The basic units of writing, generally known as Chinese characters, are logographic. Their complexity, visual as well as compositional, may be gauged by Wang et al.'s (2003, p. 133) comparison between logographic Chinese characters and Korean Hangul, an alphabetic-syllabary (cf. Taylor and Taylor 2014):

> the Chinese character has a much more complex visual–orthographic structure compared to Hangul syllables, although the Hangul syllable blocks are roughly the same size as Chinese characters. Each Hangul syllable is built of two to four symbols that in various combinations represent each of 24 phonemes. Chinese characters, by contrast, are composed from 24 basic strokes, combined according to certain positional constraints to form more than 500 component radicals (*Chinese Radical Position Frequency Dictionary* 1984). Radical components are combined according to certain positional constraints to form characters. (...) the correlation between visual form and pronunciation is weak, even at the whole character level. Two characters that share a pronunciation often share no visual resemblance. (Wang et al. 2003, p. 133)

Although Korean words are written in syllable blocks like Chinese characters (e.g., 학생, /hagsaeŋ/, 'student', a Sino-Korean word; compare Cantonese 學生 *hok*[22]*sang*[55]/*hok*[22]*saang*[55]), as a writing system, Hangul is entirely alphabetical. This is probably why for Korean-L1 kindergarteners (n = 100, mean age 5.78) and second graders (n = 100, mean age 7.95), both syllable awareness and phoneme awareness (especially the onset of a syllable) have been shown to correlate strongly with and contribute to Hangul word identification (Cho and McBride-Chang 2005; McBride 2016).

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[8] 常用字 (*soeng*[21]*jung*[22]*zi*[22]/*chángyòng zì*, 'frequently-used characters'). Since 2005, the Ministry of Education in Mainland China has been conducting a large-scale language use survey annually, and the statistics show that the most commonly used 2,300–2,400 characters have a coverage of 99% of daily usage, which is sufficient for the purpose of newspaper reading (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

By contrast, logographic Chinese characters are orthographically opaque or deep, which is apparently why in the eighteenth century, western missionaries operating in China found it difficult to render Chinese literary and philosophy classics into English directly. According to Yan Chongnian, an authority on Manchu (滿洲話), the native language of the ruling class (滿州人) during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), access to such Chinese classics was made possible by consulting their translations into Manchu, which is alphabetical (X. Zhao 2015). Yan's words are worth quoting at length:

> it was through the [Manchu] language that China's ancient literary and philosophy classics were first introduced to the Western world, in the early 18th century. (...) The works, mostly on Confucianism and traditional Chinese ethics, were first translated from Mandarin to Manchu by leading Manchu scholars, before they were retranslated from Manchu to English by missionaries in China. (...) It's much easier for foreigners to learn Manchu than Mandarin, as Manchu is alphabet-based. (...) Moreover, the classics were written in around 500 BC, with its language long becoming obsolete. Without paraphrasing it was virtually impossible for the missionaries to fully understand the allusive, metaphor-infused writing. This crucial paraphrasing was done by Manchu scholars trained in China's ancient literary traditions. (X. Zhao 2015)

Of further interest here is the fact that instead of imposing their native language, successive Manchu emperors found it necessary to learn from the numerically superior and culturally more sophisticated Han Chinese.

The complexity of Chinese characters, especially the traditional script which continues to thrive in Hong Kong and Taiwan, helps explain why literacy in Chinese generally takes longer to develop. This point is echoed by Kaplan and Baldauf's (2008, p. 27) introductory remark to S. Zhao's (2008) study of 'Chinese character modernization in the digital era: A historical perspective' as follows:

> After a century of effort directed at modernizing Chinese script, it is still the case that Chinese characters (...) remain a deficient communication system both for human use and for mechanical [i.e., computer-mediated] application.

S. Zhao (2008, p. 69) also states that "A primary justification given for [the] script reform, be it Romanization or simplification, is the cumbersome and time-consuming procedure needed to gain access to reading". Given the vibrancy of e-communication in Chinese online, be it traditional or simplified script, Kaplan and Baldauf's (2008) view ("a deficient communication system") is clearly overstated. But one thing is certain: compared with alphabetic languages, the logographic, non-alphabetic nature of Chinese characters makes them more difficult to learn and retain. Research shows that reading difficulty is a function of the degree of orthographic transparency:

> Orthographies may be defined as either 'shallow' or 'deep', depending on the ease of predicting the pronunciation of a word from the surface structure of its written form. (Tzeng 2002, p. 3)

Accordingly, the shallower an orthography is, the more consistent is its sound-spelling relationship and thus the easier it is to learn. This is the case of alphabetical languages like Finnish, Italian and German. Conversely, a deep orthography like

English makes its texts more difficult to process, for "the deeper the orthography, the more arbitrary is the spelling correspondence" (Tseng 2002, p. 4), which makes its writers more prone to spelling errors:

> Reading difficulty varies across countries and cultures, and English has probably the most difficult of all alphabetic writing systems. Its spelling system is by far the most opaque – each individual letter can be pronounced in umpteen different ways, and exceptions abound. Comparisons carried out internationally prove that such irregularities have a major impact on learning. Italian children, after a few months of schooling, can read practically any word. (...) British children only attain the reading proficiency of their French counterparts after close to two full years of additional teaching. (Dehaene 2009, p. 230)[9]

Similarly, in McBride's (2016, p. 15) estimate, "English takes about two years longer to learn to read accurately at the word level among children than does German". What about learning to read logographic Chinese characters? It is several times more challenging than reading in English. For instance, an experimental study that investigated the English reading skills of three groups of Singaporean children from different language backgrounds – Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin Chinese – yielded very instructive findings. These three languages differ in terms of their relative degree of orthographic transparency, the shallowest being Bahasa Indonesian, followed by English and Mandarin Chinese. The children's performance in phonological awareness tasks mirrored the degree of orthographic transparency in their respective L1: Bahasa Indonesian children excelled, followed by English-speaking children, then the Mandarin-speaking peers (Liow and Poon 1998; cf. Wang et al. 2005, p. 71). This finding is consistent with DeFrancis's (1984, p. 153) observation attributed to Chinese language educators of the time that, whereas it would take up to 8 years for Putonghua-speaking children to master 3000+ Chinese characters needed for everyday reading and writing tasks, an additional one to 2 years is needed for speakers of 'dialects' (e.g., Cantonese) to attain that same level of functional literacy.

On the other hand, Dehaene's (2009, p. 231) claim, that "Chinese children's plight" of learning Chinese characters could be avoided as pinyin may be mastered by young children within several months, is debatable. That is the theme of a book-length treatise by Hannas (1997). Like DeFrancis (1984), Hannas (1997) is a strong advocate of alphabetization who believes that written communication in Chinese could be made less cumbersome, and learners and writers of written Chinese alike would have a much easier time acquiring and applying Chinese literacy, if an alphabetically based writing system like pinyin were allowed to substitute for logographic characters in everyday communication. Both DeFrancis (1984) and Hannas (1997) lamented that the alphabetization debate among Chinese intellectuals since the 1920s had failed to reach its logical sequel, namely the alphabetization of the national language, Mandarin or Putonghua. Even before the founding of New China in 1949, alphabetization had reportedly received strong support of the nation's top leaders, including Chairman Mao Zedong. Well into the 1970s, there was a group of

[9] See also Figure 5.3, 'Errors in word reading at the end of first grade' based on data obtained from 15 European countries (Dehaene 2009, p. 231).

Romanization/Latinization advocates who were keen on "accelerating the progress towards the desired goal of phonetization" (S. Zhao 2008, p. 61). If pinyin has never gone beyond its auxiliary role as a learning aid for facilitating the acquisition of literacy in logographic characters, it is mainly out of concerns for the tremendous lingua-cultural consequences of scrapping characters, of which continuity of linguistic heritage and orthographic links with the nation's literary past is the most often cited factor (see Chen 1999 for an overview of the alphabetization debate; cf. Tong and Zhang 1992, 1999). As Kwan-Terry and Luke (1997, p. 276) put it:

> Across the country numerous dialects and sub-dialects are spoken, not all mutually intelligible. From the point of view of helping to unite a vast country, there is a certain logic in the use of a logographic script. A non-phonetic script is in fact better suited than a phonetic one in facilitating inter-provincial communication. Precisely because it is non-phonetic, it can have an existence independent of the phonetic systems of the individual dialects. If the written vernacular is to serve its function of inter-provincial communication well, then like Wenyan it too must rely on the logographic script and remain to some extent pan-dialectal.

Another problem is related to "[t]he plethora of homophones in Chinese" (McBride-Chang et al. 2003, p. 744). Of the 1,300+ tone syllables in Putonghua, many are homophonous – five homophones per syllable on average. In short, the 'opportunity cost' for scrapping characters was lingua-culturally too colossal to contemplate, which is why to be literate in Chinese, readers have to rely on logographic characters for a long time to come.

For a non-alphabetic writing system like Chinese, does the pronunciation of logographic characters or phonological processing play any role in silent reading? Do characters on a printed page convey ideas directly to the human mind without the mediation of speech sounds? These questions have preoccupied psycholinguists and specialists of written languages for decades. Unlike alphabetic languages such as English, Finnish, German, Italian and Russian, where graphic units (letters) are mapped onto discrete speech sounds more or less consistently, the written forms of Chinese characters give very little clue about their pronunciation. For centuries, such a feature in written Chinese has led some western linguists to speculate that Chinese readers were able to derive meanings from logographic signs directly without the mediation of speech. Such a putative perceptual mechanism, generally characterized as 'ideographic', has been shown to be empirically unfounded ('ideographic myth', DeFrancis 1984, 1989). A substantial body of L1 and L2 reading research in psycholinguistics, methodologically adopting an experimental design, has found that regardless of the writing system, reading is necessarily mediated by speech (DeFrancis 1984, 1989; Erbaugh 2002). Reading of Chinese texts, whatever the reader's 'dialect' background, is no different in this regard. For instance, in their study of cross-language and writing system transfer among Chinese-English bilingual children living in Washington DC, Wang et al. (2005, p. 68) begin the *Introduction* with the statement: "Learning to read is essentially learning to map between the spoken form and print form of the language". Similarly, in their study of the possible role of morphological awareness in predicting young Cantonese-L1 children's ability to recognize Chinese characters, McBride-Chang et al. (2003,

p. 744) speak of "the centrality of phonological processing abilities in the reading-development literature", both with regard to English and Chinese.

While it is true that up to 90 percent of the entire inventory of Chinese characters is composed following the most productive character formation principle known as 'phonetic compound' ('semantic-phonetic composite', Taylor and Taylor 2014; cf. Hao 2001), the phonetic cue is reliable in less than 20% of all phonetic compounds[10] (Taylor and Taylor 2014, p. 78; cf. Lee 1989). In other cases, the putative phonetic element can be misleading sometimes. For instance, given the pronunciation of 廣 (*gwong*^{33}/*guǎng*) and on the analogy of phonetic compounds like 礦 (*kwong*^{33}/*kuàng*, 'mineral', semantic radical 石, *sek*^{22}/*shí*, 'stone'), one is tempted to pronounce the bisyllabic word 擴大 ('expand') with a nasal final (Cantonese: ?*kwong*^{33}*daai*^{22}; Putonghua **kuàngdà*). According to the dictionary, however, the normative pronunciations are *kwok33daai*^{22} and *kuòdà*, respectively. Similarly, given the high-frequency morpho-syllable 西 (*sai*^{55}/*xī*, 'west'), it is only natural for Cantonese-L1 speakers to treat it as the phonetic component in the character茜, which is adorned with a semantic radical 'grass' on top, and pronounce it as *sai*^{55} (e.g., in the name of a street 茜發道, which is commonly mispronounced as **sai*^{55}*faat*^{33}*dou*^{22}). Its normative pronunciation, however, is *sin*^{22}, which gets mentioned from time to time in news broadcast.[11] All this is consonant with Cho and McBride-Chang's (2005, p. 6) observation that, compared with alphabetic orthographies like Finnish, Italian and German, the Chinese orthography is very deep, "with unreliable phonological cues" (cf. Hu and Catts 1998; McBride-Chang and Kail 2002).

In those cases where no discernible phonetic element is present in a character, the best chance for deducing its pronunciation and meaning is to turn to the linguistic context at large, where its collocations offer some clue what it is likely to be about. As noted by Michael Stubbs (1980, p. 9), an authority on the sociolinguistics of reading and writing:

> It is clear that readers use knowledge of syntax and context in order to guess words; it is equally clear that reading involves the ability to identify individual words isolated from context.

Stubbs was referring to English, but very much the same is true of reading in any other language. This is the case of a Cantonese-specific character like 罌: when I first caught sight of this character in the headline of a news story while skimming and scanning for gist, I could not make out how it was pronounced or what it was about, not until I read the other characters in that headline:

> **茶餐廳遭爆竊**
> **錢罌利是盡掏空** (*Headline Daily*, 21 Mar 2015, p. 17)

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[10] Depending on the researcher and study, the percentage may vary: from 39% to as high as 60%, depending on how 'phonetic cue' is defined (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

[11] According to Lee (1989, p. 1), mispronunciation of characters perceived as phonetic compounds is due to a pan-Han-Chinese tendency, whereby that part of a character which is pronounceable as a syllable is often treated as a phonetic component (**「中國人, 無論南北, 都有一個共同的習慣: 凡是遇着不會讀的漢字, 便讀它的偏旁。這個習慣不是沒有根據的。」**).

Except for 爨, I had no literacy problem with the rest of the headline (a total of 13 characters, 7 words altogether); knowledge of their meanings in which the bisyllabic word 錢罌 is embedded thus helped fill my momentary phonetico-semantic gap:

caa²¹	*caan⁵⁵*	*teng⁵⁵*	*zou⁵⁵*	*baau³³ sit³³*
Cha	Charn	Teng	suffer	burglary
'The Cha Charn Teng (Cantonese-style café) was burgled'				

cin²¹aang⁵⁵	*lei²²si²²*		*zeon²²*	*tou²¹ hung⁵⁵*
piggy bank	red packet money		totally	burgle empty
'all the red packet money in the piggy bank was stolen'				

In still other cases where a given character contains no obvious phonetic element and that the context at large is of little help, one could do no better than making a wild guess what it probably would sound like, without the slightest clue how that guess could be ascertained – unless there is a knowledgeable person around that one could ask.[12]

3.2.3 Choice of a Mandarin-/Putonghua-based Dialect as the National Language: Vernacular Literacy Excluded from School Literacy in Dialect Areas

A third complication is related to the choice of 'dialect' as the national language. China is a vast, multilingual and multiethnic country with tremendous lingua-cultural diversity. In addition to Han Chinese, who make up about 92% of the national population estimated at about 1.4 billion, 55 other minority nationalities are officially recognized by the PRC government. There is general consensus among Chinese linguists that, broadly speaking, Han Chinese varieties fall into seven main dialect groups, each with its own subdialects: Mandarin, Wu, Min, Yue, Xiang, Gan and Kejia [Hakka] (Chen 1999; Li 2006, 2015; Y. Li 2015). Being the largest dialect group, Mandarin (北方方言, *běifāng fāngyán*/*bak⁵⁵fong⁵⁵ fong⁵⁵jin²¹*) is spoken by about two-thirds of the Han Chinese speakers in northern, northeastern, northwestern and southwestern parts of China (see, e.g., 'Digital Language Atlas of China', Crissman 2012). The dialect of Beijing may be regarded as a subdialect of Northern Mandarin. The six other main 'dialect' groups are collectively referred to as 'southern dialects' because their speakers, who make up about one-third of the Han population, inhabit the stretch of land roughly south of the Yangtze River (except the southwest).

[12] For more details about the 'Sound representation by characters', see Chapter 5, Taylor and Taylor (2014, pp. 75–84).

Table 3.1 Sample SWC (Standard Written Chinese) words taught and learned as part of Hong Kong school literacy, and their non-school literacy equivalents in written Cantonese

	Hong Kong school literacy: Standard Written Chinese		Hong Kong non-school literacy: written Cantonese	
eat	吃	*hek*^{33}	食	*sik*^{22}
drink	喝	*hot*^{33}	飲	*jam*^{35}
see/watch	看	*hon*^{33}	睇	*tai*^{35}
sleep	睡	*seoi*^{22}	瞓	*fan*^{33}
quarrel	吵架	*caau*^{35}*gaa*^{33}	嘈/嗌交	*cou*^{21} / *aai*^{33}*gaau*^{55}
table/desk	桌子	*coek*^{33}*zi*^{35}	枱	*toi*^{35}
chair	椅子	*ji*^{35}*zi*^{35}	凳	*dang*^{33}
drawer	抽屜	*cau*^{55}*tai*^{33}	櫃桶	*gwai*^{22}*tung*^{35}

N.B.: In Hong Kong SAR, Putonghua-based SWC characters are pronounced in Cantonese; those characters that belong to non-school literacy are typically colloquial elements of 'written Cantonese' which are banned and purged through schooling but which are commonly found in 'soft' genres of public and social media, print or electronic.

Cantonese, the best-known of Yue 'dialects' spoken in the Pearl River Delta, is probably the most prestigious since the 1980s (Snow 2004, 2008).

Before the Vernacular Language Movement during the Republican period (1911–1945), no 'dialect' group had any advantage reading and writing Classical Chinese, as it is not modeled on any 'dialect' lexico-syntactically. Linguistic equity obtained in terms of relative equidistance between the vernaculars and *wenyan*. This was upset, however, as soon as vernacularization was upheld nationwide to be a higher priority for crafting the written language. The key question was: whose 'dialect' should serve as the model for SWC, to be learned and emulated by all other 'dialect' speakers? As Chen (1999) and Kwan-Terry and Luke (1997) among others have shown, such a question was a major point of contention between intellectuals and linguists from the north and south during the early Republican period, who were logged in a hot debate and bitter struggle, at conferences as well as in the media. As one would expect, much more was at stake than lingua-cultural merits of one or the other 'dialect'. In the end, those from the Mandarin-speaking areas prevailed; thenceforth Mandarin is looked upon as the model or primary inspiration for writing modern Chinese, although in principle 'dialect' elements appearing in exemplary literary works produced by 'dialect' writers are also accepted (Duanmu 2007, p. 5). For 'dialect' speakers, what this means is that literacy training is essentially mediated by a 'dialect' that they are not familiar with. Since SWC is lexico-grammatically more closely aligned with Putonghua, even though many of the basic vocabulary words in SWC are seldom used or heard in speech, they must be learned as a writing-specific register. Table 3.1 gives some examples of Cantonese-specific words and their SWC equivalents.

Accordingly, high-frequency vernacular-based vocabulary like 食 (*sik*^{22}, 'eat') and 瞓 (*fan*^{33}, 'sleep') are not used in writing; instead, separate Putonghua-based SWC characters such as 吃 (*hek*^{33}) and 睡 (*seoi*^{22}) must be learned and used in writing instead. Such a diglossic literacy challenge is succinctly captured by

Kwan-Terry and Luke (1997) as follows: "Paradoxically, vernacular literacy can only come *after* standard literacy; and standard literacy is learned *through* the vernaculars. Once again, the key to this [literacy development] is the logographic, non-phonetic, nature of the script" (pp. 284–285, emphasis in original). On the other hand, given that many Chinese varieties are mutually unintelligible, for 'dialect' speakers, a phonetically-based writing system would bring about literacy problems of other kinds.

3.2.4 New Communication Technologies as a Challenge to Maintaining Chinese Literacy

A fourth debilitating factor which makes retaining Chinese characters such a big challenge is related to changes in communication technologies. In an increasingly globalized world where pen-and-paper-based writing is fast giving way to phonetically based character-inputting methods on the computer keyboard or mobile devices (S. Zhao 2008, p. 75; cf. Yu et al. 2015), maintaining functional literacy in Chinese is not at all obvious.[13] There is some evidence that in China, even educated Putonghua speakers are unable to recall the written forms of many Chinese characters, high-frequency ones included. This is due largely to the affordability and convenience of mobile communication devices. In May 2015 *China Daily* ran a three-page cover story entitled 'Is the era of handwritten letters ending in China?' where, according to "interviews with dozens of postal officials, countryside dwellers, analysts and scholars", it was concluded that "the era of handwritten letters is likely on its last legs in China" (Xing and Bhattacharjya 2015). This is so largely because, with the Internet (over half of the mainland Chinese population estimated at 1.4 billion being Internet users) and mobile phones (cellular phone users exceeded 88% as of 2013) getting more and more popular, letter writing gradually became a disincentive, resulting in "the fast disappearance of handwritten letters" (Xing and Bhattacharjya 2015). This was reportedly the view of a division head of the State Post Bureau, who cited the popularization and spread of the Internet and mobile phones as the main reason for the decline in handwritten letters. Such a trend was especially marked during the 2 years before this report (2013–2014). The two bylined journalists further noted that while such a trend was global, the impact on Chinese internet and phone users was probably greater for reasons related to literacy: "historically, letters exchanged per capita have been lower here [in China] as compared with developed countries in the West, [a tendency which is] linked to literacy rates".

[13] According to UNESCO-UIS (2012), the adult literacy rate in Mainland China in 2010 stood at 94.3%, and the adult literacy rate in 2015 was projected to reach 95.5% (see Table 1, Annex I, p. 13).

In a separate study, an expert on Chinese characters was quoted as saying that "if we select a text from the school language textbook, few people can correctly read every character" (cited in S. Zhao 2008, p. 75). Literacy problems have also been reported in mainland Chinese media in the last few years, and there is general consensus that advances in information technology (IT) applications and communication practices are to blame. During the e-communication era, with younger generations of mainland Chinese digital natives using pinyin as the preferred character-inputting method, the traditional pen-and-paper mode of writing is rapidly being replaced by various electronic means of realization or display, which are typically built into the computer, mobile devices and other e-gadgets. Chang Jiang, an Assistant Professor of the School of Journalism and Communication at Renmin University, was quoted as saying that "by 2010, even older Chinese – born in the 1950s or 1960s – were making efforts to blend in with new technology, while traditional reading and writing were getting marginalized in the public sphere" (Xing and Bhattacharjya 2015). According to one report, new media and communication technologies constitute the main reason why many mainlanders face "growing difficulty in reading and writing their language in the keyboard era" and their grasp of the written language is weakening (Zuo 2013). Recently, one popular TV game show in China tested participants' knowledge of common Chinese characters, resulting in many being embarrassed. No wonder wrongly composed characters, due to a slip of the pen or finger, are not rare, sometimes making news headlines when such errors are seen as glaring. For instance, in the former residence of the renowned General during the Qing dynasty, Li Hongzhang (李鴻章, 1823–1901) who was conferred the posthumous title of Marquis (*hóu*/*hau*^{21}), the display of that character (侯) was wrongly written as its homophone (候, *hòu*/*hau*^{22}, 'to wait'), among others.[14]

Under one country, two systems, Hongkongers write Chinese in the traditional script, with more strokes being required to compose Chinese characters, and so the situation in a 'dialect' area like Hong Kong is probably even more worrying. There is anecdotal evidence for this. For instance, on 1 November 2013, decline in Hong Kong Chinese students' Chinese language competence made headlines in several newspapers after an analysis of their HKDSE Chinese Language results in 2012 was widely reported in the media, with errors in written Chinese (and English, such as spelling *chalk* as *chok*) being the main problem. This suggests that, for Cantonese-L1 learners, written Chinese is difficult to master and, once acquired, not easy to retain:

> Not only are they [Chinese characters] harder to learn [compared with words in alphabetic languages], they are also harder to retain and recall from memory. Even well-educated people would from time to time make mistakes in writing the characters. And it is not uncommon for people who are out of practice temporarily to forget the correct combination of strokes necessary to render particular characters. (Kwan-Terry and Luke 1997, p. 280)

[14]『李鴻章故居錯字，「一等候」令人噴飯』('Wrong character at former residence of Li Hongzhang, ['Marquis' 侯miswritten as 'to wait' 候] – so hilarious, making one laugh so hard as to spew food out from the mouth'), *Singtao Daily*, 6 Apr 2016, p. A24 (several other writing errors were reported).

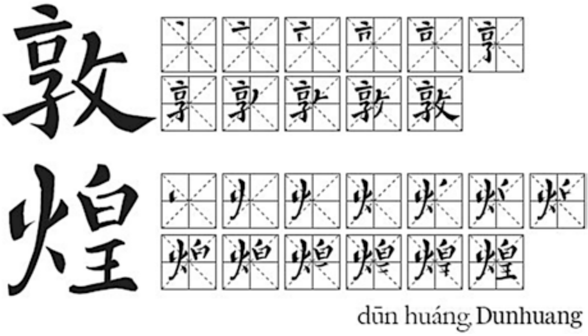

Fig. 3.1 The sequence of strokes for writing the two characters 'Dunhuang' and their pinyin representation (Cantonese: *Deon*^{55}*wong*^{22}), as illustrated in the feature article 'Ancient words a treasure for the centuries', Nargiz Koshoibekova, 27 Mar 2015, *China Daily* (see also *The World of Chinese* at www.theworldofchinese.com)

How daunting this literacy challenge is faced by readers and writers of Chinese may be gauged by the title of a monograph devoted to the inter-disciplinary study of Chinese and Japanese writing (*kanji*): *Difficult characters* (Erbaugh 2002). In Hong Kong, the goal of basic Chinese literacy education in SWC is essentially mapped onto the curriculum at primary level. With few exceptions, children are expected to recognize and produce around 3000+ most commonly encountered Chinese characters pronounced in Cantonese, a target level that would enable them to read Chinese newspapers as they progress to secondary school (Education Bureau 2008). I still remember, as a young pupil, a lot of time was spent, in class and at home, copying newly learned characters using brush and ink, by following the normative sequence of strokes laid out in a copybook. Even today, how a character is composed is still routinely included as basic literacy information for unfamiliar readers, as shown in an article in *China Daily* featuring cultural relics discovered in Dunhuang, an ancient city in Gansu province along the Silk Road (Koshoibekova 2015). Included in that news story are the two characters for writing the bisyllabic word *Dunhuang*, plus the sequence of strokes laid out schematically in 11–13 square blocks (Fig. 3.1). As a rule of thumb, regardless of the internal complexity of the character in question (from one stroke to over 25), the sequence invariably begins from top to bottom, left to right, or outside to inside. During my secondary education (Grades 7–11), after studying a classical Chinese text, be it poetry or prose, a routine homework task was to memorize the text, entirely or an excerpt of it, in preparation for dictation the following day. As far as Chinese literacy education is concerned, similar pedagogies and practices of character recognition and production are by and large still used in Hong Kong classrooms today, except that brush and ink have largely given way to ball pens or computer-mediated inputting software.

On 31 March 2015, the day after the first HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education) Examination on the compulsory Chinese Language subject[15] was held, it was widely reported, in several newspapers and on TV, that many students felt relieved mainly because the content of that ‘lethal (exam) paper’[16] turned out to be easier than expected. Such a perception was also confirmed by a few teachers interviewed. The part which is widely held to be difficult is the one requiring students to demonstrate their mastery of literacy skills in *wenyan*, showing correct comprehension and proper interpretation of selected age-old poems or prose written in classical Chinese. But what makes this subject so ‘lethal’ is not so much due to *wenyan*, which accounts for only 6% of the total mark, as the removal of a clearly defined syllabus (‘model essays’[17]) that poses a huge challenge for both teachers and students. At the same time, getting a decent score and grade in that exam requires candidates to compose texts using elements of school literacy, that is, Standard Written Chinese, which is more closely aligned with Putonghua. According to news reports (e.g., *Headline Daily*, 1 Apr 2015, p. 25), any use of Cantoneisms or other elements of Chinese non-school literacy (e.g., insertion of isolated English words) would be marked down. The difficulty thus appears to be twofold in essence: mastering Chinese characters on one hand, and mastering SWC content on the other. An additional challenge, not reported anywhere but nevertheless crucial, is that the examination is written using pen and paper, which means that candidates are expected to compose every single Chinese character by hand – a social practice which is done infrequently in the electronic communication era where computer-mediated or hand-held devices prevail, point-to-point (P2P) or via social media, and probably increasingly rarely in school work as well. Short of hand-writing practice, it is not obvious that late-teenage students would be able to compose high-frequency characters like 輸 (*syu*^{55}/*shū*, ‘to lose’) and 贏 (*jeng*^{21}/*yíng*, ‘to win’), which require 17 and 21 strokes, respectively (compare two homophones: *jing*^{55}/*yīng*: 25-stroke 鷹 ‘eagle’ and 20-stroke 櫻 ‘cherry’), among many others. A year later, in early April 2016, the same exam subject was again reportedly easier than expected.[18] All these Chinese literacy challenges in that high-stake public examination are like footnotes to the relevant points in our discussion above, which I hope will help shed some light on the question, “What is it that makes the Chinese Language subject so worrying and intimidating among Hong Kong Cantonese-L1 teenage students?”

15 中文科 (*zung*^{55}*man*^{21}*fo*^{55}/*zhōngwénkē*).

16 「死亡之卷」(*sei*^{35}*mong*^{21} *zi*^{55} *gyun*^{21}/*sǐwáng zhī juàn*).

17 範文 (*faan*^{22}*man*^{21}/*fànwén*).

18 『「死亡之卷」不再致命』(“‘Lethal exam paper’ no longer fatal”, *Singtao Daily*, 6 Apr 2016, p. 1). However, in a separate news bite on the same day (p. A14, also reported in other newspapers), a private HKDSE candidate reportedly jumped to his death in the night before the Chinese examination was held, fueling speculation whether anxiety for taking that high-stake examination was to blame.

3.3 Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers' Acquisition of Putonghua: A Linguistic Challenge

> 'The greatest challenge for learners of Putonghua, whether they are foreigners or [Chinese] dialect speakers, is its tone system. The same is true of speakers of dialect A learning dialect B, whose tones are not easy to master. Cantonese has 7 to 8, or even 9 or 10 tones, which exceeds the number of tones in Putonghua. Apart from level, rising and 'going' tones, Cantonese also has 'entering' tones. Compared with Cantonese speakers who can distinguish between and speak a language with so many tones, it is much easier for them to learn Putonghua, which has only four tones, than for Putonghua speakers to learn Cantonese.' (Zhigong Zhang, cited in Foreword, Tian 1997, p. 7, my translation)[19]

This excerpt, which appears in Tian's (1997) collection of essays on Chinese language teaching and the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong – a timely monograph published just before Hong Kong's sovereignty returned to China – contains two popular beliefs which are of interest and relevance to our discussion in this chapter. First, the tone system in Cantonese is considerably more complex than that in Putonghua; second, it is easier for Cantonese speakers to learn Putonghua than for Putonghua speakers to learn Cantonese (cf. Ho 1999; p. 6, cf. Duanmu 2007, p. 2). Likewise, in their comparative study of the learning of Putonghua from scratch by Cantonese-L1 Primary 1 pupils under school-based immersion conditions (n = 13) versus as a separate subject taught for several hours a week (n = 33), Huang and Yang (2000, p. 217) similarly believe that the learning of Putonghua by Cantonese-L1 learners as an L2 should be less strenuous compared with a completely different language like English. This belief is grounded in their observation that most of the linguistic subsystems – notably vocabulary, grammar and orthography – in Cantonese and Putonghua are almost identical. While these two Chinese varieties are mutually unintelligible, for Cantonese-L1 learners of Putonghua, overcoming pronunciation difficulties due to systemic phonological differences would seem to be the only major challenge. While I am not aware of any empirical studies in support of this view, the fact that it is shared by a renowned Chinese linguist and grammarian, ZHANG Zhigong, and expert Putonghua researchers like Huang and Yang (2000), suggests that such a view is widely held among experts and laypeople alike.

Zhang's justification of the relative ease of Putonghua as a target language is essentially based on a few linguistic facts: It has 400+ syllables and four tonemes, yielding a total of just over 1300 tone syllables (Duanmu 2007; Ho 1999; Taylor and Taylor 2014). In addition, Putonghua does not have difficult phonemes like the

[19]「外国人学汉语、方言地区人学普通话，声调是最难的。就是说甲方言的人要学乙方言，也以声调为难点，粤语有七八个、九个、十个声调，比普通话的四个要多，粤语有平上去声，还有入声。说粤语的人能辨、能说这么复杂的声调，学那么简单的只有四个声调的普通话，比说普通话的人学粤语容易多了。」(張志公, 見田小琳 1997, 序,頁7)

French guttural R sound (more commonly known as the 'French R') or dental fricatives in English as in the *th* words such as *that* and *thief*. Cross-linguistically, being typologically an isolated language, Chinese has one of the most learner-friendly morphological systems of all natural languages. Syntactically its basic word order, SVO, is similar to that of many other languages, including English. The greatest challenge for learners of Putonghua regardless of their first-language background, as Zhang puts it, is its tone system, which is complex and difficult even for other Han 'dialect' speakers. As Yiu (2013, p. 132) has pointed out, one of the most frequently encountered problems among Cantonese-L1 learners is confusion between the first tone and the fourth tone (compare, e.g., 衣, *yī* and 意, *yì*), probably because in Hong Kong Cantonese, the high level tone and high falling tone (compare, e.g., 詩, *si*^{55} or *si*^{53}) are non-tonemic.[20]

To my knowledge, Ho (1999) is the most systematic empirical study of Cantonese-L1 speakers' Putonghua pronunciation errors and learning problems (see also Chan and Zhu 2010, 2015; Ho 2002, 2005b; Lee-Wong 2013; C.-S. Leung 1997; Ng 2001; Wong 1997). Based on a thorough contrastive study of the phonological components of the inventories of syllables and tones in Cantonese and Putonghua, Ho (1999) found that, compared with similarities in their phonological systems (22 syllabic components being the same and 31 being similar), the differences are more marked:

> An overall comparison of initials, finals and tones between Putonghua and Cantonese shows that it seems easier for Cantonese speakers to learn Putonghua than the Putonghua speakers to learn Cantonese (…). 40 Cantonese syllabic components do not appear in the phonetic structure of Putonghua. However, only 16 Putonghua syllabic components do not appear in the sound system of Cantonese. (Ho 1999, p. 6)

Ho (1999) makes a few predictions of possible positive and negative transfer in Cantonese-L1 students' learning of Putonghua. For instance, a comparison of their consonant systems shows that Cantonese and Putonghua have 19 and 21 consonants respectively, and that 11 Putonghua consonants are not found in Cantonese. These include: alveolar /z-, c-, s-/ (舌尖前音), palatal-alveolar /zh-, ch-, sh-, r-/ (舌尖後音), and palatal /j-, q-, x-/ (舌面音) (cf. Ching 1997a, b; Kwok 2005, pp. 59–61; Lee-Wong 2013; Ng 2001, p. 188; Wu 1997; on correction strategies, see Ho 2005b). Also peculiar to Putonghua is the retroflex or *erhua* (兒化) final (see Duanmu 2007, pp. 212–224), and a fairly complex phonological rule governing sound modification called 'tone sandhi'.[21] In his prognosis, Ho (1999) predicts that Cantonese-L1 learn-

[20] The high level tone (55) and high falling tone (53) in Hong Kong Cantonese are free variants for those who have them in their pronunciation, a distinction still reportedly retained by some speakers of Cantonese in Guangzhou but less so among speakers in Hong Kong. In this regard, the Chief Executive, Mr. C. Y. Leung, is possibly a prominent exception in the SAR.

[21] **連續變調** (*liánxù biàn diào/lin*^{21}*zuk*^{22} *bin*^{33} *diu*^{22}) or **連接變調** (*liánjiē biàn diào/lin*^{21}*zip*^{33} *bin*^{33} *diu*^{22}). For instance, fairly complex tone sandhi patterns are embedded in four high-frequency morpho-syllables depending on the tone values of neighboring morpho-syllables: *yī* (一, 'one'), *qī* (七, 'seven'), *bā* (八, 'eight'), and *bù* (不, 'no', 'not') (Chao 1968, p. 45; Duanmu 2007, pp. 245–246; Hao 2001, pp. 32–34).

ers will find these consonants difficult to produce accurately. His predictions are largely borne out in the analysis of errors collected from a total of 474 in-service Chinese language teachers in two separate studies (101 assessed for oral and transcription competence; 373 assessed for reading aloud and speaking; see Chap. 5, pp. 279–368). For instance, given that the syllable-initial glottal fricative /h/ is available in both Putonghua and Cantonese (compare, e.g., 紅河, *hónghé*/*hung²¹ho²¹*, 'Red River'), Ho (1999) correctly predicts that Cantonese-L1 learners of Putonghua have relatively little difficulty recognizing and producing the [h] sound (i.e., positive transfer is attested). On the other hand, Ho (1999) found that many pronunciation problems could be traced back to the Chinese language teachers' first language Cantonese (cf. Ho 2002). For instance:

[b] ➔ [p]: 編 (*pin⁵⁵*/*biān*) mispronounced as **piān*
[x] ➔ [h]: 項 (*hong²²*/*xiàng*) mispronounced as **hàng* (Ho 1999, p. 304)

More generally, it can be seen that many of the pronunciation problems are due at least in part to homophony of the corresponding characters in Cantonese, with or without sharing the same toneme, hence 'interlingual errors'. Either the initial or final of the Putonghua syllable, or both, may be affected. Table 3.2 gives an overview of Cantonese-L1 learners' frequent confusion with the Putonghua initial consonants.

Some teachers of Chinese were apparently aware of the normative pronunciation of certain characters, but that awareness was not reflected in their speaking. For instance, the medial -*i*- sound in diphthongs like 片 (*pin³³*/*piàn*) and 笑 (*siu³³*/*xiào*) was correctly marked in their pinyin transcriptions, but was dropped in the oral exam (i.e., mispronounced as *[pɛn] and *[xau] respectively, see pp. 295–296; 318). Similar confusion concerning the finals of Putonghua syllables may be found in Table 3.3.

Another common pronunciation problem is related to the articulation of the retroflex final (儿化韵, increasingly referred to in English as '*erhua* final'), which is exemplified in characters like 花儿 (*huār*/*faa⁵⁵ji²¹*) and 事儿 (*shìr*/*si²²ji²¹*) (Yiu 2013, p. 134). Even though the number of syllables marked with the *erhua* final is getting smaller (ZHANG Zhigong, cited in the foreword to Tian 1997, p. 6), when it occurs or is required (e.g., in oral assessment), most Cantonese-L1 learners may not be able to recognize or produce it accurately.

Ho (1999) argues that one source of pronunciation problems in Cantonese is related to (especially student) teachers' non-standard pronunciation in their first language Cantonese. For example, a syllable like 廣, *gwong³⁵* [kwɔŋ], which is embedded in high-frequency polysyllabic words like 廣州 (*Guǎngzhōu*) and 廣東話 'Cantonese' (*Guǎngdōnghuà*), is often mispronounced as *gong³⁵* [kɔŋ] (suggesting a tendency to substitute *g*- for *gw*-), or *gwon³⁵* [kwɔn] (i.e., -*ng* is replaced with -*n*, p. 410). Another source of confusion concerns the two Cantonese initial consonants *n*- and *l*-, which are traditionally differentiated but increasingly treated in the Hong Kong community as free variants. In Ho's (1999, p. 387) Cantonese reading-aloud data collected from Cantonese-L1 student teachers, "*n*-/*l*- is the most common

Table 3.2 Confusion with initials in Putonghua (source: Ho 1999, pp. 286–374)

Cantonese homophones	Cantonese pronunciation	Putonghua pronunciation			Interlingual error	Putonghua mispronunciation
臣 辰 晨 神	*san*[21]	臣 辰 晨 *chén*	神 *shén*		ch → sh	臣 辰 晨 **shén*
征 徵 精	*zing*[55]	征 徵 *zhēng*	精 *jīng*		zh → j	征 徵 **jīng*
王 黃	*wong*[21]	王 *wáng*	黃*huáng*		hu → w	黃 **wáng*
小 少	*siu*[35]	小 *xiăo*	少*shăo*		x → sh	小 **shăo*
					sh → x	少 **xiăo*
羨 善	*sin*[22]	羨 *xiàn*	善 *shàn*		sh → x	善 **xiàn*
心 深	*sam*[55]	心 *xīn*	深 *shēn*		x → sh	心 **shēn*
空 胸	*hung*[55]	空 *kōng*	胸 *xiōng*		k → x	空 **xiōng*
					x → k	胸 **kōng*
言 然	*jin*[21]	言 *yán*	然 *rán*		r → y	然 **yán*
剪 展	*zin*[35]	剪 *jiăn*	展 *zhăn*		j → z	剪 **zhăn*
					z → j	展 **jiăn*
全 傳	*cyun*[21]	全 quán	傳 chuán		q → ch	全 **chuán*
					ch → q	傳 **quán*
須 雖	*seoi*[55]	須 *xū*	雖 *suī*		x → s	須 **suī*
					s → x	雖 **xu*
氣 戲	*hei*[33]	氣 *qì*	戲*xì*		q → x	氣 **xì*
					x → q	戲 **qì*
萬 慢	*maan*[22]	萬 *wàn*	慢 *màn*		w → m	萬 **màn*
文	*man*[21]	文 *wén*	民 *mín*	敏*mĭn*		文 **mén*
民	*man*[21]					
敏	*man*[23]					
畫(v)	*waak*[22]	畫 *huà*	劃 *huà*	或 *huò*	hu → w	或 **wa*
劃(n) 或						

Table 3.3 Problems with finals in Putonghua

Cantonese homophones	Cantonese pronunciation	PTH pronunciation		Interlingual error	PTH Mispronunciation
下樓 下流	*haa*[22] *lau*[21]	下樓 *xià lóu*	下流*xiàliú*	iú ←→ óu	下樓 **xià liú*
道 度	*dou*[22]	道 *dào*	度 *dù*	ù ←→ ào	道 **dù*
					度 **dào*
信 迅	*seon*[33]	信 *xìn*	迅 *xùn*	ìn ←→ ùn	迅 **xìn*
					信 **xùn*
樂 落	*lok*[22]	樂 *lè*	落 *luò*	uò ←→ è	樂 **luò*
					落 **lè*
六 綠	*luk*[22]	六 *liù*	綠 *lüe*	iù → ù	六綠 **lù*
				üe → ù	

(Source: Ho 1999, pp. 286–374)

problem among the three types of confused pronunciation" (the other two types being confusion between *gw-*/*g-*, and *-n*/*-ng*). This is not surprising, given that Cantonese is not taught as a separate school subject, and that *n-*/*l-* are commonly used as free variants. For example, depending on the speaker, 你 'you' and 李 (a popular surname) may be pronounced as *nei*[23] or *lei*[23], with no risk of misunderstanding provided the context is unambiguous. Intra-speaker variation is also quite common depending on the interlocutor(s). Such community-wide free variation between *n-* and *l-* helps explain why, of 33 Cantonese-L1 teachers of Putonghua, 13 (nearly 40 percent) mispronounced 南 *nán* ('south') as **lán* (Ho 1999, p. 304). Cross-linguistic influence is thus one plausible reason for Cantonese-L1 learners' under-differentiation between Putonghua *n-* and *l-*. Below are a few other typical examples:

年 (*nin*[21]/*lin*[21]) *nían*	→	**lían*	
難 (*naan*[21]/*laan*[21]) *nán*	→	**lán*	
弄 (*nung*[22]/*lung*[22]) *nòng*	→	**lòng*	(Ho 1999, p. 294)

Another group of initial consonants which presents considerable learning difficulties for Cantonese-L1 learners includes the four retroflex consonants /ch-, zh-, sh-, r-/. Common mispronunciations include the following (pp. 300–301; cf. Lee-Wong 2013; Ng 2001; Yiu 2013, pp. 133–134):

ch-	→ q- / c- (e.g., 吃*chī* → **qī* ; 窗*chuāng* → **cāng*)
zh-	→ j- / z- (e.g., 知 *zhī* → **jī*; 正 *zhèng* → **zèng*)
sh-	→ x- / s- (e.g., 是*shì* → **xì*; 聲 *shēng* → **sēng*)
r-	→ l-/y- (e.g., 熱 *rì* → **lì*/**yì*; 然 *rán* → **lán*/*yán*; 人*rén* → **yén*; 認 *rèn* → **yèn*)

Two other sets of difficult initial consonants are alveolar /z-, c-, s-/ (平舌音), and palatal /j-, q-, x-/ (舌面音) (Yiu 2013, pp. 133–134; for an overview of Hong Kong Cantonese-L1 students' general pronunciation problems discussed above and major difficulties in Putonghua listening comprehension, see Lau 2012, p. 328).

At the suprasegmental level, Cantonese learners must also grapple with Putonghua morpho-syllables pronounced with neutral tones or tone sandhi, the latter being a phonological rule triggered by the juxtaposition of morpho-syllables of the third tone. For instance, the two morpho-syllables in the expression 很好, 'well' or 'very well', are pronounced in isolation as *hěn* (*han*[35]) and *hǎo* (*ho*[35]), but together they should be articulated as *hén hǎo*. A longer stretch of third-tone morpho-syllables like *wǒ shoǔ xiě wǒ koǔ*[22] that we saw earlier, should be pronounced as *wó shoǔ xié wó koǔ* (see Duanmu 2007, pp. 245–246). A few common interlingual errors involving inaccurate tones may be found in Table 3.4.

[22] 我手寫我口, literally 'my hand writes my mouth', or 'write as one speaks', Coulmas (2013, p. 43).

Table 3.4 Confusion with tones in Putonghua

Cantonese homophones	Cantonese pronunciation	Putonghua pronunciation		Interlingual error	Putonghua mispronunciation
發 法	*faat*[33]	發 *fā*	法 *fǎ*	1st tone <-> 3rd tone	發 **fǎ*
					法 **fā*
附 付 駙 負 腐	*fu*[22]	附 付 駙 負 *fù*	腐 *fǔ*	4th tone <-> 3rd tone	腐 **fù*
					附 付 駙 負 **fǔ*

(Source: Ho 1999, pp. 286–374)

After analyzing the common Putonghua pronunciation errors among Cantonese-L1 learners and drawing implications for Putonghua teaching and learning in Hong Kong, Ho (1999, p. 203) invokes a common saying among Mandarin-speaking Mainlanders as follows (compare Kwok 2005, p. 52):

天不怕,地不怕,最怕廣東人說普通話[23]
tiān bù pà dì bù pà zuì pà guǎngdōngrén shuō pǔtōnghuà
tin[55] *bat*[55] *paa*[33] *dei*[21] *bat*[55] *paa*[33] *zeoi*[33] *paa*[33] *gwong*[35]*dung*[55]*jan*[21] *syut*[33] *pou*[35]*tung*[55]*waa*[35]
'[We] fear neither Heaven nor Earth, but [we fear] Cantonese people speaking Putonghua [the most].'

It may well be true, as Ho (1999), Huang and Yang (2000, p. 217), and ZHANG Zhigong (in Tian 1997, p. 6; cited at the beginning of this section) have conjectured, that Putonghua speakers have a more difficult time learning Cantonese compared with Cantonese speakers learning Putonghua. But based on our discussion of Putonghua learning difficulties above, it does not seem obvious at all how Cantonese-L1 speakers could master Putonghua rapidly, let alone passing as a near-native-speaker.[24]

The status of Putonghua in Hong Kong has been characterized as a "half first, half second" language (i.e., L1.5,[25] Lai-Au Yeung 1997, pp. 6–7; cf. H.-K. Lo 2000a, pp. 10–11; Ho 2005a, pp. 19–20; Cheung 2005, p. 31). The 'half first, half second' argument is probably based on the fact that, despite a sizable amount of vocabulary specific to 'low' Cantonese, the bulk of 'high' Cantonese vocabulary is derived from or may be traced back to SWC, which has always been looked upon as the source of inspiration for naming lexical innovations and new scientific concepts such as 克隆 (*kèlóng*/*hak*[55]*lung*[21], 'cloning' or 'clone') and 納米 (*nàmǐ*/*naap*[22]*mai*[23], 'nanometer' or 'nano') (Luke 2005). From the perspective of how Putonghua is learned in school and used in the SAR, however, I find it difficult to share that view.

[23] As it has been pointed out by the famous Chinese linguist WANG Li (王力), similar sayings are commonly found among speakers of other dialects (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

[24] Notwithstanding these pronunciation difficulties, the situation appears to be changing gradually, with younger generations of Hong Kong students learning Putonghua at a younger age (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

[25] 「第一個半語言」(*dai*[22] *jat*[55] *go*[33] *bun*[33] *jyu*[23]*jin*[21]/*dì yī ge bàn yǔyán*), literally 'the first one and a half language', that is, between L1 and L2.

Rather, in Hong Kong society, as of 2015, Putonghua exhibits many characteristics which are more typical of a foreign than a second language:

(a) in speech, the Chinese variety that is recognized and used as the co-official language is Cantonese rather than Putonghua, the latter being used mainly for transactional and ceremonial purposes (e.g., Putonghua was the only language used at the official 'handover' ceremony broadcast worldwide on 1 July 1997, Cheung 2005, p. 27; see also below);
(b) except for about 72% of primary schools and 26% of secondary schools which have adopted Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Chinese-language classes (Chik Wiseman 2014), Putonghua is not used as the medium of instruction (MoI) for teaching other subjects;
(c) Putonghua is not widely used in such key domains as government, law and business, which are still dominated by the vernacular Cantonese and written English, the preferred language of various stakeholders; and
(d) Putonghua is rarely used by local people for intra-ethnic communication among themselves.

All this adds up to a relatively low visibility – or audibility – for Putonghua in the SAR. Relative to the spread of Putonghua in society, perhaps the greatest obstacle is Hongkongers' collective loyalty to Cantonese, which in turn is intimately related to their ethnolinguistic identity (So 1998): Cantonese-speaking Hongkonger first, with or without any emotional attachment to China as a nation or Han Chinese as an ethnic label. Unlike in other Cantonese-speaking regions in Guangdong and Guangxi, where Putonghua is used as the MoI in school and the lingua franca with and among non-Cantonese speakers, in Hong Kong SAR, nearly two decades after its renationalization as China's most international metropolis and 'Asia's World City', Putonghua continues to be assigned largely symbolic or ceremonial functions. Apart from being taught as a core subject in primary school and elective subject in secondary, plus the use of Putonghua to teach the Chinese-language subject in some schools, Putonghua is mainly heard and used in transactional communication, typically between local salespersons and Putonghua-dominant tourists or cross-border visitors. Beyond school premises, Putonghua TV or radio programs are infrequent; every day, one hears Putonghua in announcements of various means of public transportation such as buses, the MTR (Mass Transit Railway) and ferries. At festive occasions such as the annual Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Establishment Day (**香港七一回歸典禮**, July 1st) or the National Day (October 1st), the Master of Ceremony would invariably use Putonghua literally as the second language – after Cantonese, before English – in what is essentially a trilingual ceremony. All this suggests that Putonghua, the use of the national language of the People's Republic in the SAR, in public as well as private domains, is still fairly limited, even though according to census data in 2011, Hongkongers who reported using Putonghua as 'another language' (46.5%) outnumbered those that reported using English as 'another language' (42.6%) (see Table 1.1, Chap. 1). A lack of a natural language environment where learners could put their newly acquired knowledge of Putonghua to meaningful use, is another reason why Putonghua is not easy to grasp. There are signs that, after implementing the policy of introducing Putonghua from Primary 1 for over 12 years since 2000, most secondary school-leavers at the age of 17–18 have attained level 3B, the lowest level of the national *Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi* ('Putonghua Level Test'). There are thus encouraging signs that more and more Hongkongers are better able to communicate and interact with Putonghua-dominant speakers from across the border (Zhu et al. 2012).

3.4 Developing Chinese Literacy and Putonghua Fluency: A Big Challenge

We have now set the scene for an informed response to the question: Why is it that developing Chinese literacy and Putonghua fluency among Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers is such a big challenge? The concept of diglossia holds the key here. Diglossia is defined by Ferguson (1959, p. 435) as:

> a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation.

Snow (2010a, 2013a) extends Ferguson's (1959) above definition by proposing to make a finer distinction between 'traditional diglossia' and 'modern diglossia', whereby 'Standard Chinese':

> is promoted as the standard national language in both mainland China and Taiwan [where] this variety functions as the national spoken as well as written language; however, in Hong Kong it functions primarily as a written language, and until recently only its written form was taught in Hong Kong schools. It is the language most often found in written texts in Hong Kong and is generally viewed as being the proper language to use in any serious writing. (Snow 2010a, pp. 157–158)

According to Snow (2010a, 2013a), unlike the diglossic patterns that prevailed in ancient civilizations, such as Latin in pre-modern Europe, Classical Arabic in the Middle East, and Classical Chinese in Imperial China, the diglossic pattern in Hong Kong is more appropriately analyzed as a case of 'modern diglossia', where the H (High) language of the local community also serves as the national language of one or more sovereign states. This, he argues, is clearly the case of the German-speaking part of contemporary Switzerland, where Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*), the national language of two German-speaking countries Germany and Austria, functions as the H language alongside the L (Low) vernacular, Swiss German. Further, according to Snow (2010b), Hong Kong SAR is "the major diglossic holdout in East Asia" (p. 146), where British colonial rule until 1997 shielded the former colony from sociopolitical forces gravitating toward the adoption and promotion of a vernacular-based H national language – unlike diglossic patterns that prevailed in pre-modern China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam for well over a 1000 years until the 1900s (Snow 2010b).

Snow's analysis of written Chinese in Hong Kong is premised on a strict demarcation between Putonghua-based versus Cantonese-based morpho-syllables, such that morpho-syllables originating from Putonghua or the Mandarin-speaking areas – be they content words or function words – are analyzed as Putonghua, while all other vernacular-based elements are categorized as written Cantonese (Snow 2004). For instance, in his analysis of an excerpt from *The Traveler's Autumn Regrets* (客途秋恨, *Haak*^{33} *tou*^{21} *cau*^{55} *han*^{22}), a literary work composed principally for oral performance in the southern song genre (南音, *naam*^{21}*jam*^{55}) dated around the 1800s, out of 107 morpho-syllables or characters, only four are analyzed as pertaining to Cantonese, viz., 呢 (*ni*^{55}, 'this'), 話 (*waa*^{22}, 'say'), 係 (*hai*^{22}, 'be') and 點 (*dim*^{35}, 'how'):

> 孤舟岑寂晚涼天。斜倚蓬窗思悄然。耳畔聽得秋聲桐葉落。又只見平橋衰柳鎖寒煙。呢種情緒悲秋同宋玉。況且客途抱恨,你話對誰言。舊約難如潮有信。新愁深似海無邊。觸景更添情懊惱。懷人愁對月華圓。記得青樓邂逅中秋夜。共你並肩攜手拜嬋娟。我亦記不盡許多情與義。總係纏綿相愛復相憐。共你肝膽情投將兩月, 點想同羣催趲整歸鞭。(Cited in Snow 2004, p. 83)

This leads Snow (2004) to conclude that in this work "only 3 percent of the total characters represent distinctly Cantonese usages" (p. 84). Following this analytical framework, he provides many more Cantonese-specific morpho-syllables (mostly function words) and their functional equivalents in SWC (Table 3.5).

In Table 3.5, all of the morpho-syllables listed under 'Mandarin' are used in Putonghua, as reflected in their pronunciation. It should be noted, however, that

Table 3.5 Examples of vocabulary differences between colloquial Cantonese and Putonghua (Source: adapted from Snow 2004, Table 3.1, p. 49)

English	Colloquial (L) Cantonese	Mandarin (Putonghua)	Mandarin-based SWC words pronounced in (H) Cantonese
possessive marker	*ge*^{33} 嘅	*de* 的	*dik*^{55} 的
perfective aspect marker	*zo*^{35} 咗	*le* 了	*liu*^{23} 了
pluralizer for pronouns	*dei*^{22} 哋	*mén* 們	*mun*^{21} 們
no, not (negator)	*m*^{21} 唔	*bù* 不	*bat*^{55} 不
is (copula)	*hai*^{22} 係	*shì* 是	*si*^{22} 是
in, on, at (locative)	*hai*^{35} 喺	*zài* 在	*zoi*^{22} 在
this	*ni*^{55} 呢	*zhe/zhè* 這	*ze*^{35} 這
that	*go*^{35} 嗰	*nǎ* 哪	*naa*^{23} 哪
he/she	*keoi*^{23} 佢	*tā* 他/她	*ta*^{55} 他/她
now	*Ji*^{55}*gaa*^{55}/ *ji*^{21}*gaa*^{55}而家	*xiànzài* 現在	*jin*^{22}*zoi*^{22} 現在
to look	*tai*^{35} 睇	*kàn* 看	*hon*^{33} 看
to give	*bei*^{35} 俾	*gěi* 給	*kap*^{55} 給
to like	*zung*^{55}*ji*^{33} 鍾意	*xǐhuān* 喜歡	*hei*^{35}*fun*^{55} 喜歡
to seek	*wan*^{35} 搵	*zhǎo* 找	*zaau*^{35} 找

until recently these Putonghua pronunciations had little reality in Hong Kong classrooms. This is because, in Hong Kong SAR, as in Macao SAR, Chinese texts were, and still are, with few exceptions widely taught in Cantonese. Even though more and more schools are experimenting with 'teaching Chinese in Putonghua' (**普教中**, *pou³⁵gaau³³zung⁵⁵*), content subjects in most primary schools are still taught in Cantonese thanks to the 'mother tongue education' (or 'vernacular instruction') policy (see Chap. 5). Where this policy prevails, *all* of the Putonghua morpho-syllables in school texts are taught and learned in (H) Cantonese, including in silent reading, as So (1998) remarks:[26]

> With the passage of the Official Languages Ordinance in 1974 and the implementation of the policy of localization in most parts of the public service especially since the early 1980s, the sociolinguistic range of Cantonese in Hong Kong is complete: from swearing to reciting poetry, from gossiping to giving lectures in the halls of learning, from disputes between spouses to debates in the Legislative Council, Cantonese can readily be used. Apart from Putonghua, Cantonese is a Han-Chinese language which has a fully developed, spoken High variety, a feature shared by few, if any, of the other Han-Chinese languages today. (So 1998, p. 159)

To appreciate the acquisitional challenge presented by the diglossic lexico-grammatical choices in colloquial (L) Cantonese and Mandarin-based SWC words pronounced in (H) Cantonese, consider the Cantonese expressions in Table 3.6. Items under column A are colloquial Cantonese expressions that Cantonese-speaking students are familiar with. In the school context, these would be (L) expressions that they bring to the classroom. Column B shows the (L) written forms of these colloquial expressions which, although 'dialect' words are generally deemed to be unsuitable for writing, are well-known and widely used in all kinds of informal print and electronic genres (e.g., tabloid news headlines, columns in newspapers and magazines, infotainment stories, adverts, comic strips; Facebook, MSN, Twitter, Whatsapp, etc.), where colloquial Cantonese speech norms are followed to different extents depending on the writer. In these social spaces, such non-school literacy elements are indeed vibrant, despite being banned and corrected when they crop up in students' school work. In their stead, the formal, functionally equivalent Putonghua-based SWC (H) written forms under column C are taught and learned in school and, as such, form part of school literacy for formal written Chinese. What is interesting is that, despite their Mandarin/Putonghua origin, the SWC expressions under column C are generally pronounced in formal (H) Cantonese in Hong Kong classrooms, as shown under column D, which are very different from their Putonghua pronunciation shown under column E.

Given that SWC elements are taught and learned in Cantonese, it would seem to be more appropriate to analyze such elements as (H) Cantonese rather than Putonghua or Mandarin. Notice that such a trend has had a long history. For instance, *The Traveler's Autumn Regrets* (**客途秋恨**, *Haak³³ tou²¹ cau⁵⁵ han²²*), a literary work belonging to the 'southern song' genre dated around the 1800s discussed above, was

[26] See also 'Mandarin-based SWC words pronounced in (H) Cantonese', Table 3.5.

Table 3.6 Sample L expressions in informal, colloquial Cantonese (spoken and written), and their H equivalents in formal H Cantonese and Mandarin/Putonghua

	A	B	C	D	E
Meaning (English)	Colloquial (L) Cantonese (informal)	Written (L) Cantonese (informal)	Putonghua-based (H) SWC (formal)	SWC words pronounced in (H) Cantonese (formal)	SWC words pronounced in Putonghua
'eaten a meal'	*sik*^{22} *zo*^{35} *faan*^{22}	食咗飯	吃了飯	*hek*^{33} *liu*^{23} *faan*^{22}	*chī le fàn*
'taking a shower/bath'	*cung*^{55} *gan*^{35} *loeng*^{21}	沖緊涼	在洗澡	*zoi*^{22} *sai*^{35}*cou*^{33}	*zài xǐzǎo*
'watch movie first'	*tai*^{35} *hei*^{33} *sin*^{55}	睇戲先	先看電影	*sin*^{55} *hon*^{33} *din*^{22}*jing*^{35}	*xiān kàn diànyǐng*
'buy what'	*maai*^{23} *mat*^{55}*je*^{23}	買乜嘢	買甚麼	*maai*^{23} *sam*^{22}*mo*^{55}	*mǎi shénme*
'choose good-looking refrigerator'	*gaan*^{35} *leng*^{33} *syut*^{33}*gwai*^{22}	揀靚雪櫃	選好看的冰箱	*syun*^{35} *hou*^{35}*hon*^{33} *dik*^{55} *bing*^{55}*soeng*^{55}	*xuǎn hǎokàn de bīngxiāng*

intended primarily for oral performance in *Cantonese*. The same is true of works in other historical genres of performing arts analyzed by Snow (2004), such as 'wooden fish songs' (*muk*^{22}*jyu*^{21}*go*^{55}*,* **木魚歌**), 'dragon boat songs' (*lung*^{21}*zau*^{55}*,* **龍舟**), 'Cantonese love songs' (*jyut*^{22}*au*^{55}*,* **粵謳**) and, more recently, Cantonese opera (*jyut*^{22}*kek*^{22}, **粵劇**). Being produced to be performed orally in a popular vernacular in the Pearl River Delta region, the content of such works is arguably Cantonese in their entirety, even though the bulk of the literary elements in the texts may have been created by writers or artists from a non-Cantonese background, some of which a long time ago. That literary works produced by non-Cantonese writers are pronounceable in Cantonese may be explained by the non-alphabetic, logographic nature of written Chinese (see Sect. 3.2 above). In principle, such works may be passed on to school-age children in their home 'dialect' or vernacular depending on the region (e.g., Cantonese, Shanghainese, Hakka), socio-political and econo-cultural conditions permitting. For instance, in his study of language and society in early Hong Kong (1841–1884), Zhang (2009, p. 110) notes that the Hakka [Kejia] community, one of the three main ethnolinguistic groups during that early colonial period, steadfastly adhered to the motto 'if there is no other choice, we would rather sell the land inherited from our ancestors than lose the dialect inherited from them'.[27] Further, members of the Hakka community believed that schooling was the best way to pass on their mother tongue and cultural values to the next generation. This is why, in early colonial Hong Kong, Classical Chinese texts in schools organized by the Hakka community were taught and learned in Hakka.[28] Before universal vernacular primary education was introduced in 1971:

> [F]or those few children in the New Territories who were lucky enough to receive an education, the majority of them attended village schools and often received their instruction in either *Weitou-hua* or *Kejia-hua* [*Hakka*]. In the urban area, Cantonese was used in most schools. However, for some of the children from non-Cantonese speaking homes, it was not uncommon for them to attend schools run by their ethnic fraternity associations and were instructed in their respective native tongues. In those days, the exposure of young people from non-Cantonese speaking homes to Cantonese was not as extensive and intensive as it is today. (So 1998, p. 158)

Unlike other 'dialects', vernacular instruction in Cantonese for teaching Chinese subjects in Hong Kong has by and large remained uninterrupted since the late nine-

[27] **寧賣祖宗田，不丟祖宗言** (variant: **不忘祖宗言**): *nen2 mai4 zu3zung1 tian2, bud5 diu1 zu3zung1 ngian2 / bud5 mong2 zu3zung1 ngian2* (Hakka transliteration follows Lau 1997); compare Cantonese: *ning*^{21} *maai*^{22} *zou*^{35}*zung*^{55} *tin*^{21}*, bat*^{55} *diu*^{55}*/mong*^{21} *zou*^{35}*zung*^{55} *jin*^{21} (cited in Z. Zhang 2009, p. 110).

[28] According to Z. Zhang (2009), in the 1860s, each of the three ethnolinguistic groups in early colonial Hong Kong – Cantonese, Hakka and Hoklo – was free to choose their preferred teaching medium. The use of Hakka as the medium of instruction in schools lasted until 1971, when Cantonese was selected as the language for introducing universal 'vernacular primary education' by the colonial government, whereupon Cantonese became in effect the only Chinese 'dialect' used formally in the teaching and learning in Hong Kong primary school (So 1998, pp. 157–159).

teenth century (except perhaps during the Japanese occupation period, 1941–1945). That notwithstanding, the bulk of school literacy constituted by Mandarin-based SWC words – estimated in the thousands – is huge. There is thus a 'diglossic gap' for Cantonese-dominant school children to overcome when learning to read and write Chinese. As we saw in Sect. 3.2, such a diglossic gap is exacerbated by the non-alphabetic, logographic nature of written Chinese. This is the background against which the question is often raised, whether learning SWC words through the medium of Putonghua would minimize if not remove some of the learning difficulties due to diglossia. As is well-known, this is exactly the rationale and argument adopted by advocates of 'Teaching Chinese in Putonghua' (TCP). SWC lexico-grammar may be more closely aligned with that in Putonghua, but it is not true that SWC lexico-grammar is entirely based on Putonghua, as H.-M. Lee (2001, 2004) opines:

> The written [Chinese] language we use today actually embodies both refined and popular styles, comprising ancient as well as contemporary elements, representing a genre that combines Chinese as well as western features. To be sure, such a genre clearly diverges from regional dialects or vernaculars, and it is certainly different from norm-setting Putonghua. Strictly speaking, 'my hand' cannot 'write my mouth'. The influence of Putonghua on one's language competence is overstated. The [orality-literacy] issue is very complex; to ignore other factors is to unduly oversimplify that complex issue. (H.-M. Lee 2001, p. 30; 2004, p. 122, my translation; cf. Tang 2001)[29]

H.-M. Lee (2001, 2004) further argues that, just as there are Cantonese-dominant speakers who find it a big challenge to learn and use SWC properly, so Putonghua-L1 speakers may have problems learning and using SWC. Hence the relationship between Putonghua and SWC is oblique. On the research question, to what extent Putonghua medium of instruction (PMI) facilitates Cantonese-dominant students' learning of and reading development in SWC, there is a dearth of rigorous research assessing that putative advantage. While there is no shortage of government-commissioned research projects, typically small-scale, probing into the learning outcomes of Putonghua-medium teaching (some are still ongoing), there is relatively little published empirical research in this area. To my knowledge, Tse et al. (2007) is perhaps the only large-scale study of the correlation between the choice of home language – Cantonese and/or Putonghua – and reading attainment among Primary 4 students in Hong Kong.

Tse et al. (2007) investigated the influence of Hong Kong primary school children's habitual home language on their Chinese reading ability in school. Based on the international 2001 PIRLS ('Progress in Reading Literacy Study') data obtained from 4,335 randomly selected Hong Kong Primary 4 students around age 10 (one

[29]『現在我們所用的書面語，其實是雅俗兼收、古今並包、中西合璧的一種文體。這種文體固然與各地方言 — 口頭語有差距,與經過規範的普通話比較起來, 也總有些分別。嚴格來說,「我手」並不能「寫我口」, 過分強調普通話對語文能力的影響, 而不考慮其他影響因素, 只是故意把複雜問題作簡單的處理。』(H.-M. Lee 2004, p. 122)

Primary 4 class each from 148 schools), the performance of two subgroups – 3,689 students born in Hong Kong and 646 in mainland China – were analyzed and compared. The latter group was chosen based on the criterion of living in Hong Kong for over a year (average length of time 2.05 years). This was to assure that the 'new arrival children' should have time to adjust to learning through the medium of Cantonese. Both the students and their parents were invited to complete a questionnaire. The students were asked to report how often they spoke Cantonese, Putonghua, or both at home by ticking from the choices: 'always', 'sometimes' or 'seldom/never'. Their parents were asked to indicate the kinds and amount of support provided to facilitate their children's literacy development in the home, their early childhood literacy experiences, plus demographic information, including monthly income and job type. According to Tse et al. (2007), two important findings came to light. First, the mainland-born students, who were presumably Putonghua-dominant, clearly outperformed their locally-born Cantonese-dominant peers. This appears to lend support to the hypothesis, that closer lexico-grammatical alignment between SWC texts and children's home language, Putonghua, has a positive influence on their reading attainment. Second, those school children who reported speaking Cantonese at home and Putonghua 'sometimes' had the highest reading scores, regardless of their birthplace or socioeconomic status. This second major finding led Tse et al. (2007) to question the popular belief whereby closer lexico-grammatical and structural alignment between SWC and Putonghua/Mandarin (compared with that between SWC and a 'dialect' like Cantonese) necessarily gives Putonghua speakers an advantage in their reading development. As no mention is made regarding what the school children and their parents talked about in Cantonese and/or Putonghua topic-wise, the extent to which the choice of home language correlates with the school children's reading development remains a moot point. Given the imperative demand for parents to help their children to do homework and revision, however, there is a good chance for Putonghua-speaking parents to (try to) use (H) Cantonese when helping their children to study and revise SWC-based texts, because (H) Cantonese is used for teaching, learning and assessing their grasp in SWC. This factor, which may be termed 'vernacular instruction', may help explain why children with a sound knowledge of Putonghua, including those who apply that knowledge in their revision and consolidation of SWC-based texts in Cantonese, tended to have higher attainment in their reading scores.

Vernacular instruction in Cantonese, also known as mother-tongue education according to the official language-in-education policy (Chap. 5), has direct implications on the status of SWC in Hong Kong. Just as French borrowings into English (e.g., *ballet, cinema, garage, genre, montage*, among many others) are seen and used as English, it makes no sense to analyze or regard SWC elements that are taught and learned in Cantonese as Putonghua or Mandarin, all the more because they are written in traditional rather than simplified script. By the same token, lexical borrowings from (Hong Kong) Cantonese into Putonghua – numbering in the hundreds since the 1980s – have been firmly incorporated into the national language as part of the Putonghua lexicon, witness their inclusion in *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Cídiǎn*

(2012;[30] cf. Snow 2008, p. 195). Rather than a surrogate of Putonghua, therefore, SWC in Hong Kong – including what Shi et al. (2014) refer to as HKWC – is more appropriately seen and analyzed as Hong Kong (H) Cantonese.

3.5 Is Putonghua Easier to Learn Than English?

According to Poon (2010, p. 52), "Compared with English, Putonghua is much easier to learn because Putonghua is the spoken form of the sole recognised written Chinese – Modern Standard Chinese, which students learn at school". This viewpoint is rather representative of local people's perception of the relative ease of learning Standard Written Chinese (SWC) and Putonghua vis-à-vis the learning of English. Since the late 1990s, facilitated by classroom instruction in school, Cantonese-L1 learners tend to find Putonghua easier to learn and therefore speak better Putonghua compared with their non-Putonghua-speaking parents (Zhu et al. 2012). However, given the many writing (SWC) and speaking (Putonghua) difficulties in Sects. 3.2 and 3.3, respectively, it is unclear how much easier it is for Cantonese-L1 learners to master logographic written Chinese and Putonghua. What is clear is that considerable efforts are needed for Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers to become reasonably literate in SWC and to make themselves understood in Putonghua. One proposed strategy that has been trialed and tested for over 15 years is to teach Chinese in Putonghua (**普教中**, *pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}). There is a certain logic to this. To the extent that SWC lexico-grammar is essentially Putonghua-based, if the MoI is Putonghua, literacy training will be aligned with speech, and students will presumably be better able to write the way they speak. Notwithstanding this putative advantage, which appears to be sound on paper, existing evidence to date – more anecdotal than empirical – indicates that many obstacles have yet to be overcome before Putonghua medium of instruction (PMI) could be implemented for teaching the Chinese Language subject at primary level on a larger scale, not to mention replacing Cantonese with Putonghua as the MoI for teaching other school subjects as a long-term goal, an MoI policy that has been followed in the mainland since the 1950s. By far the greatest challenge is the availability of professionally trained teachers of Chinese with sound linguistic knowledge of Putonghua and SWC (Gao et al. 2010; Lai 2010). We will examine the policies and practices involved in teaching Chinese in Putonghua (**普教中**, *pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}) in Chap. 6, and make a few recommendations in the last chapter. In the next chapter, we will turn to the main difficulties experienced by Cantonese-L1 students when learning Standard English or English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

[30] 'Contemporary Chinese Dictionary' (**现代汉语词典**, 2012, 6th edn.). Consider, e.g., **乌龙球** (*wū lóng qiú*), a trisyllabic, phono-semantic matching of English 'own (goal)'. It originated from Cantonese 'soccer discourse' in Hong Kong: **烏龍球** (*wu*^{55}*lung*^{35} *kau*^{21}). In this case, as in many others, the sharing of the same writing system helps facilitate lexical transference in both directions (Clyne 2003).

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Chapter 4
Challenges in Acquiring English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine some of the most salient non-standard English features (errors) among Cantonese-L1 learners of English in Hong Kong from elementary to intermediate levels. This will help us appreciate the kinds of linguistic challenge faced by these learners, and to better understand why English language teaching and learning seems so ineffective, despite huge amounts of government funding support annually to foster the quality of English language teaching and learning.

According to the Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive's projection of the budget for 2015–2016 (Policy address 2015), a standing expenditure of $71.4 billion (22%) would be allocated to education in the government's recurrent expenditure, or 3.4% of the GDP. Compared with the previous year, this represents a mild increase in GDP (by 0.1%) and total spending on Education (from 21.8%) even though per GDP the percentage is still lower than that in other OECD countries averaging between 5% and 6%.[1] Compared with support for (written) Chinese and (spoken) Putonghua, support for English accounts for the lion's share. Table 4.1 outlines various government initiatives by 2008 to help Hongkongers enhance their English proficiency from primary to tertiary levels.

It can be seen that beyond the school sector, various schemes are in place to encourage working adults to improve their English through the Workplace English Campaign (WEC) and the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) (Miller and Li 2008; see also Li 2011). A large number of language courses are supported by CEF. Those who have successfully completed recognized language courses can get their tuition fees reimbursed up to 80%. English and Putonghua courses are among the most popular courses for which reimbursement claims were made. In early 2007, for instance, some 350,000 reimbursement claims were processed, and the net

[1] Ta Kung Pao, 26 Feb 2015, p. A7.

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Table 4.1 Hong Kong (SAR) Government initiatives to enhance English

Provisions to enhance English in Schools
Reform of the curriculum guidelines for primary and secondary schools
Redevelopment of the public examinations
Introduction of the 'dual medium-of-instruction streaming policy' from Secondary 1–3 (Grades 7–9)
Employment of Native English-speaking Teachers (NETs)
Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT)
English Enhancement Scheme
Provisions to enhance English in tertiary institutions
Additional funding to universities for language enhancement programs
Reimbursement of fees to undergraduate students who take the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test[2]
Provisions to enhance English in the workplace
Launching of the Workplace English Campaign (WEC)
Launching of Continuing Education Fund (CEF)

Adapted from Miller and Li (2008, p. 80)

disbursement value was over one billion Hong Kong dollars (ca. US$128.2 million, Miller and Li 2008, p. 89).

Twenty-two percent of annual government expenditure is by no means insignificant; on the contrary, it reflects the SAR government's concern for and commitment to ensuring quality education. Relative to the goal of graduating students with good biliteracy skills and trilingual abilities, however, the language learning outcomes leave much to be desired, and are rather disproportionate to the resources invested in the education sector. After analyzing many instances of "public criticism of the linguistic performance of Hong Kong students" (Bolton 2003, p. 222) in media discourse and academic publications generated by journalists, businesspeople, politicians, academics and educators, including in local editions of influential international magazines such as *Time* and *Far East Economic Review*, Bolton (2003, p. xv) concludes that the sheer frequency and intensity of critical discourse amounts to a "complaint tradition". An employer from the banking sector who was also a Council member of the English-medium Hong Kong University was quoted as saying:

> [We are] dissatisfied with the educational level of the people [we] are forced by necessity to employ – whether products of our secondary schools, colleges or universities. The main grievance is the poor level of English. (Yee 1989, pp. 228–229; cited in Bolton 2003, p. 223)

Similar concerns may be heard from time to time, sometimes amplified by the public media. For instance, in its *Action plan to raise language standards in Hong Kong* (SCOLAR 2003), the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research cited the findings of two widely publicized surveys on the SAR's business

[2] This policy was withdrawn with effect from 2013.

outlook or prospects as evidence of worrying standards in our secondary school-leavers' and graduates' spoken English and Putonghua:[3]

> The results of public examinations such as the Hong Kong Certificate of Education (HKCE) Examination indicate that students have performed fairly consistently in language subjects over the past three decades. Yet employers have expressed increasing concern in recent years about the inadequate language proficiency of their employees, particularly in spoken English and Putonghua. This concern was confirmed by the overwhelming public support towards our call to raise language standards in Hong Kong. (SCOLAR 2003, §1.5, p. 4)

Well into the second decade of the new millennium, there are signs that Hong Kong Chinese students' performance in English continues to be a societal concern. In a news story entitled 'English lessons failing pupils in many schools' reporting on the results of a study conducted by Ernesto Macaro and Yuen-Yi Lo, who examined three schools' strategies to cope with the government's fine-tuning of the medium-of-instruction policy in secondary schools, pupils' language ability and teachers' skills were identified as the main problems (Wan 2011). All this suggests that the teaching and learning of English has not been very effective, to say the least.

A wealth gap is characteristic of developed economies like Singapore and the US, but Hong Kong has the widest wealth gap in Asia. Dodwell (2016) speaks of "the extremity of inequality in Hong Kong": whereas 23% of Hong Kong families have an annual household income of about US$71,000 (ca. HK$46,000 a month), 30% of Hong Kong households subsist on a monthly income of HK$15,000 (US$1,900) or less. Arguably the root of a growing social divide, such an income inequality is also evidenced in the SAR's Gini coefficient. In a feature article, Regina Ip (2014), a former Secretary for Security and currently a member of the Legislative Council, observed that:

> Hong Kong's Gini coefficient is not only high but has also been rising over the years – from 0.43 in 1971 to 0.518 in 1996 and 0.537 in 2011. The steady increase is partly the effect of globalisation and partly the progressive narrowing of our economy with the migration of our manufacturing activities across the border. Hong Kong's economy is now 93 per cent service-oriented. This relocation has meant the loss of a wide range of jobs in the manufacturing sector and the skills that go with it. (Regina Ip 2014)

The Hong Kong Chinese students who have a very hard time struggling to meet the societal expectation of 'good English' are mainly those growing up in modest families who have little home support for English, and whose exposure tends to be limited to classroom input as they move up the education hierarchy from primary to (post-)secondary. They are particularly prone to making 'common errors' which are discussed and exemplified in this chapter. There are social and linguistic factors for this. Commenting on Hong Kong's colonial legacy and British heritage, C. K. Lau (1997) speaks of the "social cause of Hong Kong people's poor English":

[3] The two surveys were conducted in 2001 by the American Chamber of Commerce and Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, respectively. Also cited in SCOLAR's *Action Plan* (2003, p. 4) are similar findings reached by the Establishment Survey on Manpower Training and Job Skills Requirement conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2000.

> the root cause of their poor English skills is social (…). For the majority of the Chinese population, a genuine English-speaking environment has never existed to encourage them to learn and use the language. (Lau 1997, p. 109)

The absence of a conducive English-speaking environment is arguably rooted in an identity-driven concern which is widely shared among Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers, who make up about 90% of the local population (see Chap. 6). This demographic pattern helps explain their preferred or unmarked language choice – the local and regional lingua franca Cantonese, and, by the same token, their strong resistance to using English entirely for intra-ethnic communication, which tends to be perceived as highly marked in the absence of some reasonable explanation or justification in context (e.g., responding to a need to include non-Cantonese speaking interlocutors as a result of a change in the configuration of speech partners). Such a sociolinguistic hurdle has a linguistic or, more specifically, acquisitional parallel, which is less well-known and talked about, namely the tremendous typological distance between Chinese and English. Both types of challenge were clearly acknowledged by the education authorities, as shown, for instance, in the 1989 report of the Education Commission's Working Group on language proficiency (see ECR4 1990, p. 93):

> 6.3.2. (i) most people use Chinese (Cantonese) for every day [sic.] purposes. English is largely restricted to education, Government and business uses;

> 6.3.2. (iii) there is pressure for children to learn English and to learn in English, since this is seen by parents as offering the best prospect for their children's future. Many children, however, have difficulty with learning in English.

As I hope to demonstrate below, many of the learning difficulties, perceived or real, may be accounted for by the radically divergent grammatical subsystems in these two languages. The term 'grammar' (文法, *man²¹faat³³/wénfǎ*), referring to natural languages, may be used and understood rather differently depending on the linguist or grammarian. In this book, we will follow the neurolinguist Michel Paradis's (2004) characterization of grammar and language as follows:

> [Language] refers to the language system (phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics), often referred to as 'the grammar' or 'implicit linguistic competence' by contemporary linguists within the generative-grammar framework. Language is a necessary but not sufficient component of verbal communication. (Paradis 2004, p. 240)

For our purpose, therefore, 'grammar' is used in a broad sense to include not only the function words or word parts and sentence structures (broadly referred to as the 'morphosyntax') of a language, but also its sound system (phonetics and phonology), vocabulary (lexis), and the preferred or normative interactional patterns of its native speakers in accordance with their context-specific social roles vis-à-vis their interlocutors ('rules of speaking'). In this chapter, as we will be primarily concerned with the contrastive differences between the phonological and morphosyntactic patterns in Chinese and English, the last-mentioned grammatical component – pragmatic competence – will receive very little attention here (see, e.g., 'pragmatic dissonance', Li 2002). Non-standard lexico-grammatical features will be elucidated by contrasting the relevant linguistic subsystems in Chinese (spoken Cantonese and Putonghua-based Standard Written Chinese) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the latter being more commonly known as Standard English. It will be shown that most of the learning difficulties may be explained by enormous typological and linguistic differences between these two languages of wider communication. As for pronunciation features, given the pervasive influence of Received Pronunciation (RP) as the pedagogic model and preferred accent in Hong Kong schools, RP will be used for comparison when reference is made to Cantonese-dominant speakers' English pronunciation. As Trudgill has demonstrated in his famous (1999) article, 'Standard English: what it isn't,' Standard English is compatible with any variety, native or nonnative, and so there is no such thing as 'Standard English accent'.

4.2 Some Salient Typological Differences Between English (Indo-European) and Chinese (Sino-Tibetan)

Typologically speaking, English and Chinese belong to two completely unrelated language families (see, e.g., *Ethnologue*, Lewis et al. 2016; Thurgood and LaPolla 2003), which is why linguistically the two languages have very little in common. English is a Germanic language within the Indo-European family, alongside other 'family members' such as Dutch, German, and Scandinavian languages like Norwegian, Danish and Swedish. Learners of English from a language in the Romance family – notably French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian – may also benefit from a large number of cognates in their respective first languages.

In principle, the more linguistic features shared by the two languages in question, the easier it would be for native speakers of either language to learn the other language. Thus French learners of English will quickly realize that most of the English words ending in -*tion* are also recognizable French words (e.g., *civilisation, emotion, formation, function, nation, position, tradition,* etc.). Despite a minor concern called 'false cognates' (also 'false friends'; Fre. *faux amis*; Ger. *falsche Freunde*), the presence of a large number of similar-sounding words in English is a great help in the process of acquiring vocabulary in English. At the level of grammar, the two branches of Indo-European, Germanic and Romance, share many linguistic features in common. For example, they all have an alphabet, a tense system, definite and indefinite articles, and they all distinguish between singular nouns and plural nouns – the grammatical category called 'number'. For instance, French learners of English will find in the tense system of French a convenient frame of conceptual reference when they try to make sense of various tenses in English, though not always successfully. Very much the same advantage is also enjoyed by English-speaking learners of French.

None of the above-mentioned linguistic features are shared by Chinese, which is typologically one of two subgroups within the Sino-Tibetan language family (the other subgroup being Tibeto-Burman, Thurgood 2003). Being internally diverse, Chinese consists of six to eight more or less distinct 'dialect families', including Cantonese (*gwong^{35}dung^{55}waa^{35}*, **廣東話**) within the 'Yue dialect' family (*jyut^{22}jyu^{23}*, **粵語**, Thurgood 2003, p. 6; cf. Norman 2003, p. 72), which exhibit very similar grammatical structures despite minor structural differences (compare: *The grammar of spoken Chinese*, Chao 1968). For instance, zero attributive marker is used in pre-modifying clause structures of southern dialects, as opposed to the use of an explicit attributive marker in northern, Mandarin-based dialects (Yue 2003, pp. 113–114):

> The majority of the Southern and Central dialects (...) share exactly the same [modifying clause] structure as the Northern dialects except that classifiers function as the attributive marker, in particular the general classifier **個** or its equivalents often override others. (Yue 2003, p. 114)

Likewise, the Chinese patterns of the passive are also comparable cross-dialectally, but clearly distinct from those of Indo-European languages:

> There is no equivalent to what is generally described as the passive construction in the Indo-European languages, which is distinctively marked with a certain grammatical structure with the patient as the subject. There are several types of construction in Chinese that feature the patient as subject, apart from those with the patient topicalized. (Yue 2003, p. 107)

As a result of marked typological, in particular lexico-grammatical differences between Cantonese and English such as these, little of what the Chinese EFL learners know about their mother tongue has any reference value in the process of learning Standard English or EAP. Except for the basic word order SVO, the languages of wider communication English and Chinese – the latter comprising Putonghua/Mandarin and other 'dialects' such as Cantonese in the Pearl River Delta and different varieties of Min in Fujian and Taiwan – have few other linguistic features in common.

In what follows, we will first give an overview of Hong Kong Chinese learners' EFL pronunciation problems and difficulties, most of which may be explained by comparing the phonological systems in Cantonese and English. This will be followed by 12 non-standard EFL lexico-grammatical features which are commonly found in the free writing of secondary and tertiary students, from shorter school work (some elicited) to longer assignments (assessed or non-assessed). Some of these non-standard features are more characteristic of learners at a particular proficiency level. As it may not be necessary to make a sharp, watertight distinction between discrete levels of proficiency, for the sake of convenience, we will classify the non-standard features and EFL errors according to how typical they are found among learners at broadly three proficiency levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

4.3 English Pronunciation (RP): Common Problems and Difficulties Encountered by Cantonese-L1 EFL Learners

Cantonese-dominant learners tend to find it difficult to grasp English pronunciation (Chan and Li 2000; cf. Deterding et al. 2008; Hung 2000). Based on a contrastive overview of the phonological systems in Hong Kong Cantonese and RP English, Chan and Li (2000) analyze and exemplify common pronunciation problems and difficulties encountered by Cantonese EFL learners. The problems and difficulties identified cover a wide range, involving the articulation of consonants, vowels and semivowels, words in connected speech, and rhythm. Most of these pronunciation problems may be explained by cross-linguistic influence from Cantonese at least to some extent. For instance, probably because there are no consonant clusters in Cantonese, EFL learners tend to find consonant clusters difficult to pronounce, even though the level of complexity may vary (compare: *play*, / pleɪ/ and *strengths*, /streŋθs/ or /streŋkθs/). Table 4.2 shows all the possible configurations of the Cantonese syllable structure (C)V(C) with illustrations. A brief summary of the major EFL pronunciation problems is listed in Table 4.3 (for details, see Chan and Li 2000).

Depending on their proficiency level, Cantonese-L1 learners may exhibit a larger or smaller combination of the EFL pronunciation features in Table 4.3. Relative to RP, such pronunciation features are often regarded as characteristic of a ‘Hong Kong accent’, which is widely perceived as symptomatic of the speaker’s poor mastery of the English language (Deterding et al. 2008). Such a view is especially pervasive in gate-keeping situations where the user’s speaking performance is assessed, for example, job interviews and oral examinations. On the other hand, some scholars working in the paradigm of World Englishes argue that the phonological features of the ‘Hong Kong accent’ are indicative of the speakers’ collective concern for their ‘Hong Kong (Chinese) identity’ (e.g., Bolton 2003; Bolton and Kwok 1990). Evidence in support of this argument is mainly based on census figures (Census and Statistics Department 2012), where a significant percentage (42.6%) of Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers reported using English as ‘another language’ (compare: 89.5% reported using Cantonese as their ‘usual language’). An extension of this argument is that those phonological features which are characteristic of the Hong

Table 4.2 Examples showing all possible configurations of consonants (C) and vowels (V) in Cantonese

Syllable structure	Examples		
V	/ɔ/	哦	‘exclamation showing surprise’
CV	/fu/	夫	‘husband’
VC	/aːn/	晏	‘late’
CVC	/faːt/	發	‘prosper’

Adapted from Table 15, Chan and Li (2000, p. 75)

Table 4.3 Summary of Hong Kong Cantonese-L1 speakers' major English pronunciation problems and difficulties, and their possible source of influence

Consonants		**Probable source of L1 influence (among others)**
(i)	Tendency to replace voiced consonants with their voiceless counterparts regardless of position in the word or syllable: word-initial, word-medial, or word-final (e.g., the voiced consonants in the words *because* /bɪˈkəz/ or /bɪˈkɒːz/, *divide* /dɪˈvaɪd/, and *goal* /ɡəʊl/ are often devoiced; no contrast is made between *rope* and *robe*, *maid* and *mate*, etc.)	No voiced plosives in Cantonese
(ii)	Tendency to substitute /f/ for /v/ (e.g., *van* and *fan* are pronounced identically as /fæn/), and to substitute /s/ for /z/ (e.g., *zip* and *sip* are both pronounced as /sɪp/)	/v/ does not exist in Cantonese
(iii)	Tendency to substitute /f/ for /θ/ (e.g., *thin* /θɪn/ ➔ /fɪn/), and /d/ for / ð/ (e.g., *they* /ðeɪ/ ➔ /deɪ/)	No dental fricatives in Cantonese
(iv)	Tendency to substitute /s/ for /ʃ/, often resulting in under-differentiation in minimal pairs like *save* /seɪv/ and *shave* /ʃeɪv/, *sip* /sɪp / and *ship* /ʃɪp /	/ʃ/ does not exist in Cantonese
(v)	Difficulty articulating /ʒ/ clearly and tendency to replace /ʒ/ by either /s/ or /ʃ/ in words like *measure* /ˈmeʒəʳ/ and *pleasure* /ˈpleʒəʳ/	/ʒ/ does not exist in Cantonese
(vi)	Tendency to pronounce /tʃ/ as the Cantonese affricate /ts/, and /dʒ/ as /dz/ (e.g., *cheap* /tʃiːp/ ➔ /tsiːp/; *jump* /dʒʌmp/ ➔ /dzʌmp/; *China* /ˈtʃainə/ with lip-rounding ➔ /ˈtsainə/ with lip-spreading)	Cantonese /ts/ and /dz/ being the closest to /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, respectively
(vii)	Tendency to substitute /l/ for word-initial and word-medial /n/, thereby under-differentiating minimal pairs like *nine* /naɪn/ and *line* /laɪn/, *knife* /naɪf/ and *life* /laɪf/; many advanced EFL users pronounce the [n] in a word like *university* with [l]; hypercorrection is not uncommon, with e.g. *like* /laɪk/ being pronounced as /naɪk/	Syllable-initial /l/ and /n/ in Cantonese are free variants
(viii)	Tendency to drop the word-final 'dark L' [ɫ], which is non-existent in Cantonese, or replace it by a sound with an [w] quality (e.g. *will* /wɪl/ ➔ [wɪw]; *fill* /fɪl/ ➔ [fɪw], both with unnecessary lip-rounding)	'Dark L' [ɫ] does not exist in Cantonese
(ix)	Tendency not to release word-final plosives (e.g., *kick, cup, put*)	Syllable-final plosives in Cantonese are not released
(x)	Tendency to omit the word-final unstressed syllable formed by [d] or [t] followed by the *-ed* morpheme [ɪd] (e.g., crow<u>ded</u> /ˈkraʊdɪd/ ➔ [kraʊ]; *complica<u>ted</u>* /ˈkɒmplɪkeɪtɪd/ ➔ [ˈkʌmplɪkeɪ])	No distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables in Cantonese
Consonant clusters		**Probable source of L1 influence (among others)**
(xi)	Tendency to simplify consonant clusters, which is non-existent in Cantonese, through deletion (e.g., *bold* /bəʊld/ ➔ [bəʊl] or even [bəʊ]) or epenthesis, that is, inserting a vowel after a consonant to create as many extra syllables as there are in the consonant cluster, especially in the word-initial position or across word boundaries (e.g., *clutch* /klʌtʃ/ ➔ [kəlʌtʃy]; *film* /fɪlm/ ➔ [fəlɪm])	No consonant clusters in Cantonese

(continued)

Table 4.3 (continued)

Vowels and semivowels		**Probable source of L1 influence (among others)**
(xii)	Tendency to under-differentiate the contrast between /æ/ and /e/ in minimal pairs such as *man* [mæn] and *men* [men], *sat* [sæt] and *set* [set]	/æ/ and /e/ are free variants in Cantonese
(xiii)	Tendency to pronounce the central vowel /ɜ/ as in *bird* /bɜːd/ and *fur* /fɜː/ with lip-rounding	/æ/, the closest vowel in Cantonese, is articulated with lip-rounding
(xiv)	Tendency to under-differentiate the contrast between the long and short vowel pairs /iː/ and /ɪ/ (e.g. *cheap* vs. *chip*), /uː/ and /ʊ/ (e.g., *food* vs. *foot*), and /ɔː/ and /ɒ/ (e.g., *caught* vs. *cot*)	No distinction is made between such pairs of long and short vowels in Cantonese
(xv)	Tendency to insert a short consonantal glide /j/ before words beginning with /iː/ or /ɪ/ (e.g., *easy* /ˈiːzi/ ➔ [ˈjiːzi]; *industry* /ˈɪndəstri/ ➔ [ˈjɪndʌstri]; a minimal pair like *ear* /iːə/ and *year* /jiːə/ would sound very much the same)	The insertion of /j/ before syllables beginning with /i/ being the norm in Cantonese
(xvi)	Tendency to replace certain diphthongs with similar-sounding pure short vowels (e.g., *point* /pɔɪnt/ ➔ [pɔnt]; *pair* /peə/ ➔ [pæ] or [pe]); /eɪ/ is often mispronounced as /e/, typically when /eɪ/ is followed by a nasal or a lateral (e.g. *main* /meɪn/ ➔ [men]; *claim* /kleɪm/ ➔ [klem]; *fail* /feɪl/ ➔ [fel]	In Cantonese, these English diphthongs are either non-existent or are not followed by a nasal consonant
(xvii)	Tendency to pronounce some diphthongs as a combination of two discrete vowels separated by a glottal stop (e.g., *pair* /peə/ ➔ [ˈpe.a]; *ear* /ɪə/ ➔ [ˈɪ.a]; *poor* /pɔː/ ➔ [ˈpuː.a])	The glide in these English diphthongs is unknown to Cantonese
Words in Connected Speech		**Probable source of L1 influence (among others)**
(xviii)	Tendency to pronounce English function words in their strong forms, a pattern usually found in isolated word reading but not in connected speech, where weak forms are expected (e.g., 'I can make it' [ˈaɪkənˈmeɪkɪt] ➔ [aɪkænmeɪkit])	No distinction is made between stressed and unstressed syllables in Cantonese
(xix)	Tendency to use pauses or glottal stop to separate a string of words at word boundaries rather than linking the sounds together with liaison (e.g., *pick it up* [pɪkɪtʌp] ➔ [pɪkˀɪtɬˀʌp]; *far away* [ˈfɑːrəˈweɪ] ➔ [ˈfɑːaˈweɪ])	In Cantonese, adjacent syllables are pronounced separately, with no liaison across syllable boundaries
Rhythm		
(xx)	Tendency to use syllable-timed rhythm, which is characteristic of Cantonese to pronounce phrases or long stretches of words, e.g., instead of using stress-timed rhythm more characteristic of native varieties of English, a noun phrase like *international airport* is given the same amount of stress, viz. *in-ter-na-tion-al air-port*, with each syllable being treated as if it were a separate unit	Syllable-timed rhythm in connected speech may be regarded as a correlate of the non-distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables in Cantonese

Based on Chan and Li (2000)

Kong accent should be seen as markers of Hong Kong identity (cf. 'acts of identity', Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), in a manner not unlike what Singapore English means to Singaporeans, who are enormously proud and assertive of English being their language (Low 2015).

4.4 Non-standard Lexico-grammatical Features

Table 4.4 shows some of the most salient examples of mismatch in the grammatical subsystems of Chinese and English, and the learning difficulties and typical non-standard lexico-grammatical features associated with them. As a result of such systemic differences, L1 users of either language who want to learn the other language tend to experience enormous cognitive difficulties. This helps explain why, for example, the English tense system is among the thorniest problems for Chinese learners of English (consider, e.g., inserting the third-person singular *–s* and its allomorphs where necessary; using the simple past tense and present perfect tense correctly; choosing the requisite verb forms depending on the use of type I, type II or type III conditional in the clause, and so forth). Learning difficulties obviously work both ways as a result of such systemic grammatical differences. For instance, many Westerners have difficulties mastering the tone system in Mandarin (Putonghua) or, worse still, Cantonese, mainly because tonal distinctions or tonemes (four in Mandarin, six in Cantonese) as an integral part of lexis for differentiating word meanings are alien to speakers of most of the Indo-European languages (Tinker Sachs and Li 2007; Li et al. 2016).

Poon (2010) is right that "verb tenses and articles are the most problematic areas because they do not have direct equivalents in Chinese; consequently, errors in the uses of tenses and omission/redundancy in the use of articles are not uncommon" (p. 9). At the phrase or structure level, vocabulary words exhibit specific grammatical patterns such as word order or preferred collocations. For instance, no preposition is admissible in the normative usage of transitive verbs such as *discuss*, *emphasize*, and *blame* (1a, 2a, and 3a). In their corresponding nominalizations (1b, 2b, and 3b), however, failure to use the required preposition (e.g., *have a discussion <u>about</u>*, *place the emphasis <u>on</u>*, *put the blame <u>on</u>*) would result in non-standard usage. Such a fine structural difference is often overlooked or confused by Cantonese-L1 learners, leading to a conflated structure (e.g., 1c, 2c, and 3c) that deviates from the normative pattern required for (1a) to (3a) (i.e., **to discuss about*, **to emphasize on*, **to blame on*):

(1)	(a) They discussed the project for two hours.
	(b) They had a long discussion about the project.
	(c) ?? They discussed about the project for two hours.

(2)	(a) We should emphasize this more.
	(b) We should place more emphasis on this.
	(c) ?? We should emphasize on this more.

(3)	(a) Don't blame her so much.
	(b) Don't put so much blame on her.
	(c) ?? Don't blame on her so much.

Table 4.4 Salient examples of mismatch in English and Chinese grammatical subsystems

Grammatical subsystem	Standard English (EAP): forms and functions	Chinese (Putonghua/ Mandarin): forms and functions	EFL learning difficulties / non-standard EFL features
Word class: Nouns	Grammatical category 'Number': singular/ plural distinction	No such distinction	Omitting the plural marker *–s*
Word class: Verbs	Grammatical category 'Tense'	No such distinction	
	past tenses/present tenses		Omitting the '3rd person singular' *–s*
	S-V agreement		Neglecting S-V agreement
Word class: Adjectives	*-ing* vs. *-ed* adjectives	No such distinction	Confusion between meanings of *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives
Articles	*a, an, the*: expressing generic / definite / indefinite reference	No such grammatical category	Difficulty acquiring the functions of articles
Relative clause	Post-modifying, appearing <u>after</u> an NP; giving additional info about the Head	Pre-modifying, appearing <u>before</u> an NP; giving additional info about the Head	Underuse of relative clauses and other post-modifying elements of the Head noun
Typical sentence structure	Subject-prominent (see below)	Topic-prominent (topic-comment structure, or T–C in short; see below)	Using the T–C structure to package info, e.g. *This field, grow rice is best*.
Conditional statements	Three conditionals:	No such grammatical distinction (disambiguation through contextual cues):	Difficulty acquiring Type III conditional ('counterfactual')
	If I have time, I'll come.		
	If I had time, I'd come		
	If I'd had time, I'd have come.	*(Rúguǒ) yǒu shíjiān wǒ (jiù) huì lái* [(如果)有時間我(就)會來]	Difficulty distinguishing Type 1 and Type 2 conditional
Usage of the adverb / intensifier *too*	The structure 'too Adj to V', e.g.	The corresponding adverb / intensifier *tài* / *taai*[33] (太) has no implicit negative meaning as in *too* in the 'too Adj to V' structure	?*Your shoes are too good for me.* (meaning '…so good…')
	This is too good to be true. (= so good that it can<u>not</u> be true)		?*I'm too excited to meet your parents.* (meaning '…so excited…')
	You are too young to get married. (= so young that you should <u>not</u> get married)		

Adapted from Li (2009, p. 38)

Table 4.5 List of non-standard lexico-grammatical features in Hong Kong Chinese 'learner English'

Non-standard lexico-grammatical feature		Example
Elementary level		
1	*Very* + VP	I like playing basketball. So I *very enjoy* it.
2	*There has/have*	*There* will not *have* any paper in the printer.
3	Somewhere has something	*Hong Kong has* a lot of rubbish.
4	Topic-prominent (T–C) structure	*This field*, grow rice is best.
Intermediate level		
5	Pseudo-tough movement	*I am difficult* to learn English.
6	Independent clause as Subject	*Snoopy is leaving* makes us all very happy.
7	Missing relative pronoun	I met two parents *attended* the interview yesterday.
8	Dangling modifier	*Entering the stadium, the size of the crowd* surprised John.
9	*too* Adj. *to* VP	He is *too* happy *to see you*. (meaning '…so happy to see you.')
10	Periphrastic topic-construction	*According to Tung Chee Hwa, he* said that...
11	*On the contrary*	John is a very diligent student. *On the contrary,* Mary is very lazy.
12	*Concern/Be concerned about*	The only thing *I concern* is the style of clothes.

Adapted from Li 2011, p. 101; Source: Li et al. 2001: http://personal.cityu.edu.hk/~encrproj/error_types.htm

The non-standard features (1c), (2c) and (3c) appear to be attributable to faulty or incomplete learning of the collocational patterns in the target language rather than the learners' L1 playing any particular role leading to cross-linguistic influence (cf. Li 2011, p. 100). This is not the case of many other non-standard features or deviations from Standard English grammar, however, which may be shown to be due to cross-linguistic influence as a result of systemic lexico-grammatical differences between Chinese and English. A subset of such non-standard 'learner English' features is listed in Table 4.5.

Most of the non-standard lexico-grammatical features in Table 4.5 have been shown to be due at least in part to cross-linguistic influence from the learner's mother tongue, which in the case of Hong Kong and the adjacent Guangdong province refers to spoken Cantonese (the vernacular) and (standard) written Chinese. (Chan et al. 2002a, b, 2003a, b; Kwan et al. 2003; Li and Chan 1999, 2000, 2001; Li et al. 2001). In the rest of this chapter, we will discuss and illustrate these 12 salient non-standard lexico-grammatical features collected from Chinese learners' EAP outputs (more written than spoken), and one commonly encountered non-standard EFL usage: 'response to negative questions'.

4.4.1 *Deviation from EAP 1: Misplacement of the Intensifying Adverb* Very *(Elementary)*

The placement of the intensifying adverb (or intensifier) *very* in sentences involving an expression of degree is a problem encountered by many elementary Hong Kong Chinese EFL learners. Instead of expressing the degree using an adverbial such as *very much* or *so much*, elementary EFL learners tend to place the intensifier *very* before the verb, resulting in anomalous sentences such as the following:

(4)	*I *very like* music.	(cf. I like music very much).
(5)	*I *very enjoy* playing basketball.	(cf. I enjoy playing basketball very much.)

This structural problem may be due to multiple factors, some of which being L1-related. In Chinese/Cantonese, the corresponding adverb or intensifier 很 (*han*^{35}) is placed invariably before verbs (e.g., 很喜歡, *han*^{35} *hei*^{35}*fun*^{55}, 'very like'), and predicative adjectives or adjectival verbs (e.g., 很有用, *han*^{35} *jau*^{23}*jung*^{22}, 'very useful') (see Li and Thompson 1981; Matthews and Yip 2011). Such resemblance between the syntactic behavior of Chinese verbs and adjectives, coupled with the acceptability of a similar '*very* + Adj' structure in English (e.g., *very good, very big*) as in (6) may mislead students into thinking that the '*very* + V' structure is acceptable in English (e.g., **very like*):

(6)	This is a *very useful* book.

There is one L2-related factor that cannot be ruled out leading to the misplacement of *very*: while this intensifier is typically used as a pre-modifier of an Adj-NP (7) or Adv-NP (8) <u>*after*</u> the finite verb:

(7)	This book is *very useful*.
(8)	She sings *very well*.

it is nonetheless acceptable to place a degree adverbial (or an adverbial expressing other meanings such as *manner*) like *very much* <u>*before*</u> the verb, as in (9a) (see *Collins COBUILD English Grammar* 1990; *Collins COBUILD English Usage* 1992).

(9) a.	They *very much* want to go.

For EFL learners struggling to make meaning in English, (9a) may seem to provide positive evidence that pre-modifying a finite verb or VP with the intensifying adverb *very* is quite acceptable. Compare (9b):

(9) b.	他們很想去			
	taa^{55}*mun*^{21}	*han*^{35}	*soeng*^{35}	*heoi*^{33}
	3pl	very	want	go
	'They *very much* want to go.'			

It may take eager learners a long time to figure out that the adverbial *very much* – but not *very* – could be used as in (9a), which is probably why the misplacement of *very* is a persistent learner English feature over an extended period of time, as in (4) and (5) (Chan et al. 2003b). For some Chinese elementary learners, such an over-generalization concerning the misplacement of *very* may be seen as *the* correct model and will never get corrected.

4.4.2 Deviation from EAP 2: Expressing Existential Meaning Using **'There HAVE'** *(Elementary)*

For elementary EFL learners in Hong Kong, the normative '*there BE*' structure used for expressing existential or presentative meaning is not easy to grasp. Instead, the verb *HAVE* is often misused to express this meaning or function, as in the following:

(10)	*There *has* a book on the table.
(11)	*There *have* many computers in the room.

The probable causes of this structural problem are arguably both L1- and L2-related. First, the corresponding existential meaning in Chinese/Cantonese is expressed using *jau*^{23} ('have'), rather than the verb to *BE* as used in English. For example:

(12)	馬路上有很多車			
	maa^{23}*lou*^{22}	*soeng*^{22}	*jau*^{23} *han*^{35}	*do*^{55} *ce*^{55}
	road	on	have many	car
	'There are many cars on the road.'			

Second, in an existential '*there BE*' sentence the dummy subject *there* is often mistakenly regarded as syntactically and semantically equivalent to the Cantonese sentence-initial adverb of place *go*^{35}*dou*^{22} (嗰度, 'there'), as in example 13. This, coupled with the misuse of 'have' to mean the existential *jau*^{23} in Chinese, results in the non-standard '*there HAVE*' structure, as in sentences (10 and 11).

(13)	嗰度有好多人				
	go^{35}*dou*^{22}	*jau*^{23}	*hou*^{35}	*do*^{55}	*jan*^{21}
	there	have	many	people	
	'There are many people over there.'				

Negative transfer from L1 is probably not the only reason. Students' inadequate mastery of the different forms of the verb to *BE* may also contribute to this learner English feature. As the present perfect forms of the verb to BE – *have been* and *has been* – are morphologically similar to the verb *HAVE*, confusion due to such acceptable structures as in (14) and (15) may also reinforce this anomaly:

(14)	There *have been* a lot of visitors in Hong Kong.
(15)	There *has been* a dog sleeping there.

4.4.3 *Deviation from EAP 3: The 'Somewhere Has Something' Problem (Elementary)*

A lot of elementary EFL students in Hong Kong have problems using sentences beginning with the subject *there* and the verb to *BE* involving a locative expression (usually realized by a prepositional phrase) such as (16) and (17):

(16)	There are a lot of books on the table.
(17)	There is a lot of rubbish on the beach.

They tend to use a 'somewhere has something' structure where the location is realized by an NP (e.g., *the beach, the table*) and used as the subject of sentences with the verb *have*, as in (18) and (19):

(18)	*The table *has* a lot of books.
(19)	*The beach *has* a lot of rubbish.

Alternatively, an adverbial of place expressed by a prepositional phrase (e.g., *in the park, on the floor*) or an adverb (e.g., *here*) is used at the sentence-initial position, in effect treating the sentence-initial adverbial as the subject, as in (20) to (22):

(20)	*In the park *has* many children.
(21)	*In the classroom *has* a plant.
(22)	*Here *has* a lot of people.

Such non-standard structures may be attributed to different factors, of which the most important is probably cross-linguistic influence from the learners' L1. Cantonese allows, and typically employs, the 'somewhere has something' structure to express the same ideas as those expressed in *There BE* sentences in English, either using a noun phrase (e.g., **海灘**, *hoi*^{35}*taan*^{55}, 'beach'; **課室**, *fo*^{33}*sat*^{55}, 'classroom') or a prepositional phrase (e.g., **在公園裏**, *zoi*^{22} *gung*^{55}*jyun*^{35} *leoi*^{23}, 'in the park'; **在街上**, *zoi*^{22} *gaai*^{55} *soeng*^{22}, 'in the street') to denote the location. For example:

(23)	海灘有很多垃圾				
	hoi^{35}*taan*^{55}	*jau*^{23}	*han*^{35} *do*^{55}	*laap*^{22}*saap*^{33}	
	beach	have	a lot of	rubbish	
	'There is a lot of rubbish on the beach.'				
(24)	在公園裏有很多小朋友				
	zoi^{22}	*gung*^{55}*jyun*^{35}	*leoi*^{23} *jau*^{23}	*han*^{35} *do*^{55}	*siu*^{35}*pang*^{21}*jau*^{23}
	at	park	inside have	many	children
	'There are many children in the park.'				

Elementary EFL learners may not be aware that the Chinese verb *jau*^{23} ('have') is used for two different functions, one showing existence, as in (23) and (24) above, and the other showing possession, like those in (25) and (26) below:

(25)	我有一枝筆		
	ngo^{23}	*jau*^{23} *jat*^{55} *zi*^{55}	*bat*^{55}
	1sg	have one CL	pen
	'I have a pen.'		
(26)	他有一個女兒		
	taa^{55}	*jau*^{23} *jat*^{55} *go*^{33}	*neoi*^{23}*ji*^{21}
	3sg	have one CL	daughter
	'He has a daughter.'		

Corresponding structures in English, however, are expressed differently: the *There BE* construction is used to show existence, while the possessive construction with the verb *HAVE* is used to show possession. Thus, while the Cantonese examples (27) and (28) below are both expressed with *jau*^{23} (有), carrying possessive meaning, they are rendered in English with 'have'. This is not possible in (29) and (30), where the existential meaning of *jau*^{23}calls for the use of *There BE*, and their translation using *HAVE* in English is generally ungrammatical.

(27)	這間房有一個大露台				
	ze^{35} *gaan*^{55}	*fong*^{21} *jau*^{23}	*jat*^{55} *go*^{33}	*daai*^{22}	*lou*^{22}*toi*^{21}
	this CL	room have	one CL	big	balcony
	'This room has a big balcony.'				
(28)	這張台有四隻腳				
	ze^{35} *zoeng*^{55}	*toi*^{35} *jau*^{23} *sei*^{33} *zek*^{33}	*goek*^{33}		
	this CL	table have four CL	leg		
	'This table has four legs.'				

(29)	這間房有很多植物			
	ze^{23} *gaan*^{55}	*fong*^{21} *jau*^{23}	*han*^{35} *do*^{55}	*zik*^{22}*mat*^{22}
	this CL	room have	a lot of	plant
	'There are many plants in this room.'			
	*'This room has a lot of plants.'			

(30)	這張台有很多書			
	ze^{35} *zoeng*^{55}	*toi*^{35} *jau*^{23}	*han*^{35} *do*^{55}	*syu*^{55}
	this CL	table have	a lot of	book
	'There are many books on this table.'			
	*'This table has a lot of books.'			

The main difference between (27) – (28) and (29) – (30) is that in the former, the NPs after *jau*^{23} (a big balcony, four legs) may be interpreted as inherent parts of their respective subjects (this room, this table), hence possessive meaning requiring the use of (English) *HAVE* and (Cantonese) *jau*^{23} (有). By contrast, in (29) – (30), as the NPs after *jau*^{23} (a lot of plants, a lot of books) cannot be interpreted as inherent parts of their respective subjects (this room, this table), the existential meaning prevails, hence the use of *jau*^{23} in Cantonese, and *There BE* in English.

4.4.4 Deviation from EAP 4: Topic-prominent Structure (Elementary)

There is general consensus among Chinese grammarians that the important concept in English grammar – the subject – is not so useful when analyzing the syntactic functions of constituents in a Chinese sentence (Chao 1968; Li and Thompson 1981). There are two main types of evidence for this. First, the subject is not a salient grammatical category in Chinese, as shown in many 'subjectless' sentences such as *xiàyu le*! (下雨了!) or *lok*^{22} *jyu*^{23} *laa*^{33}! (落雨啦!), both meaning 'it rains' or 'it is raining'. Second, it may not be appropriate to analyze the sentence-initial constituent of a Chinese sentence as the subject, even though a subject may be identified elsewhere in the sentence. For example:

(31) a.	這塊田種米最好
	ze kuài tián zhòng mǐ zuìhǎo
	this field grow rice the best
	'This field is best for growing rice.'

(32) a.	咖啡我鍾意巴西嘅!				
	gaa^{33}*fe*^{55}	*ngo*^{23}	*zung*^{55}*ji*^{33}	*baa*^{55}*sai*^{55}	*ge*^{33}
	coffee	1sg	like	Brazil	NOM
	'As for coffee, I like Brazilian (coffee)!'				

(33) a.	申請獎學金今日截止啦!			
	san^{55}*cing*^{35}	*zoeng*^{55}*hok*^{22}*gam*^{55}	*gam*^{55}*jat*^{22}	*zit*^{22}*zi*^{35} *laa*^{33}
	apply	scholarship	today	deadline FP
	[Literally] Applying for scholarships, today is the deadline!			
	[Idiomatically] 'Today is the deadline for scholarship applications!'			

What (31a), (32a) and (33a) have in common is that the sentence-initial constituent (i.e., 'this field', 'coffee', 'apply for scholarship') provides the frame of reference (i.e., theme) for interpreting the meanings of the constituents in the rest of the sentence (i.e., rheme). To account for the semantic role of such sentence-initial constituents in Chinese, some grammarians coined the term 'topic'. This is the background against which Chinese is often referred to as a 'topic-prominent language' (Li and Thompson 1981), as opposed to 'subject-prominent languages' such as English, French and German, where the subject has been grammaticalized. That is, the preverbal subject position must be filled by a 'dummy subject' if there is no naturally occurring subject, as in *it is raining* / *il pleut* / *es regnet*. To sum up, unlike the 'subject–predicate' (S–P) syntactic analysis in English, it is believed that 'topic–comment' (T–C) is a more productive analytical frame for a language like Chinese. Such a significant typological difference between English and Chinese – subject-prominence vs. topic-prominence – helps explain why elementary Chinese EFL learners tend to produce non-standard or unidiomatic sentences such as the following:

(31) b.	* This field, grow rice is best!
(32) b.	?? Coffee, I like Brazilian coffee!
(33) b.	?? Apply scholarship, today is deadline!

4.4.5 Deviation from EAP 5: 'Pseudo-tough Movement' (Intermediate)

It is generally difficult for Chinese EFL learners to master the 'postponed carrier' structure (Lock 1996). This term, of which the previous sentence is an illustration, is used to characterize a sentence pattern headed by an anticipatory 'it' such as (34a) and (35a):

(34) a.	It is difficult	for us to go to Tibet by bus.
(35) a.	It is not convenient	for us to tell you the name of our guest.

From the point of view of syntactic function, the 'real' subject in these sentences is 'postponed' in accordance with a general trend in modern English to defer lengthy preverbal subjects to the post-verbal position, usually toward the end of the sentence (Huddleston and Pullum 2005). Then, in place of the 'real' subject, a 'dummy subject' – the pronoun *it* – is used instead in the subject position. It is of course possible to package the same information using the real subject, but the resultant structure, as shown in (34b) and (35b), tends to sound less idiomatic, except when there is a good reason for the speaker/writer to package the 'carrier' in the sentence-initial position (e.g., 36):

(34) b.	For us to go to Tibet by bus is very difficult.
(35) b.	For us to tell you the name of our guest is not convenient.
(36)	"For me to have got this far and have a taste of what I felt at that time, to be part of the future, is amazing," she said.[4]

In (36), Sarah Brightman, a soprano made famous by her role in the musical *The Phantom of the Opera*, was asked by a journalist how she felt about being trained to become the eighth space tourist and to sing in space. The 24-word, front-heavy subject was probably felt to be necessary for maintaining coherence in response to a question like "How do you feel about…?". In a personal narrative, with that interactional focus removed, it would sound more natural to package that same meaning using the postponed carrier structure, viz.: 'It is amazing for me to … of the future'.

Typical adjectives involved in the 'postponed carrier' structure are those expressing a degree of facility or potentiality such as *easy, difficult, necessary, common, convenient, possible, probable, impossible*, etc. (see *Collins CoBuild English Grammar* 1990). In addition to the complexity of this structure, another source of learning difficulty is probably due to the fact that, to express the same meaning in Chinese, the sentence would typically start with a human subject. Compare (34c) and (35c), the Cantonese counterparts of (34b) and (35b), which are structurally very similar:

(34) c.	我們很難坐巴士到西藏去						
	ngo^{23}mun^{21}	*han^{35} naan^{21}*	*co^{23}*	*baa^{55}si^{35}*	*dou^{33}*	*sai^{55}zong^{22}*	*heoi^{33}*
	1pl	very difficult	take	bus	to	Tibet	go
	'It is very difficult for us to go to Tibet by bus.'						

(35) c.	我們	不方便	把	客人的	名字	告訴	你
	ngo^{23}mun^{21}	*bat^{55} fong^{55}bin^{22}*	*baa^{35}*	*haak^{33}jan^{21} dik^{55}*	*ming^{21}zi^{22}*	*gou^{33}sou^{33}*	*nei^{23}*
	1pl	not convenient	DISP	guest's	name	tell	2sg
	'It is not convenient for us to tell you the name of our guest.'						

Consequently, Chinese EFL learners tend to produce a non-standard structure, as in (34d) and (35d), which mirrors the normative structure in Chinese as in (34c) and (35c):

(34) d.	*We are very difficult to go to Tibet by bus.
(35) d.	*We are not convenient to tell you the name of our guest.

Such a structure has been characterized as 'pseudo-tough movement' (Yip 1995; cf. Li and Chan 2001). In addition, Chinese EFL learners may have been misled by grammatical English sentences such as (37a) and (38a), which carry a very similar surface structure as that of the ungrammatical sentences in (34d) and (35d):

[4] 'Brightman ready for her date with the stars', *China Daily*, 14 Mar 2015, p. 12.

(37) a.	Jim is not easy to convince [...].
(38) a.	Madeleine is difficult to find [...].

Chinese EFL learners who get confused fail to realize that in grammatical sentences like (37a) and (38a), the subject noun (*Jim* and *Madeleine*) is at the same time the underlying object of the main verb (*convince* and *find*), that is, in response to the questions: to convince whom? (Jim); to find whom? (Madeleine). It takes very keen learners to observe the transformational relationship that exists between these grammatical sentences which begin with a human subject, as in (37a) and (38a), and those headed by the anticipatory 'dummy *it*', as in (37b) and (38b):

(37) b.	It is not easy to convince Jim.
(38) b.	It is difficult to find Madeleine.

Notice, however, that no such transformational relationship exists in (34a) and (34b) involving the intransitive verb *go*, nor in (35a) and (35b) involving the ditransitive verb *tell*. Based on the above analysis, it may be argued that the non-standard 'pseudo-tough movement' structure (Yip 1995), as exemplified in (34d) and (35d), is jointly attributable to a combination of cross-linguistic influence from the students' mother tongue, Chinese, and the structural complexity of the 'postponed carrier' structure in the target language, English. One major reason why learners may not notice (Schmidt 1990) such an anomaly is that L2 appears to provide positive evidence (e.g., *John is easy to please*), which parallels the L1 structure.[5] Another example showing similar positive evidence may be found in the jubilant remark made by the former leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), Alex Salmond, after SNP had won 56 of Scotland's 59 parliamentary seats in the national election in May 2015 (emphasis added): "We're seeing an electoral tsunami on a gigantic scale (...). *The SNP are going to be impossible to ignore and very difficult to stop*" (Reuters 2015). Further, to the extent that communication is rarely affected by this anomalous structure, it often goes unnoticed (Li and Chan 2001; for correction strategies, see Li et al. 2001, http://personal.cityu.edu.hk/~encrproj/).

4.4.6 *Deviation from EAP 6: Independent Clause as Subject (Intermediate)*

The verb group in an English clause may be simple (e.g., *we like it*) or complex (e.g., *he could have arrived earlier; I would like to make a suggestion*). When there is more than one verb in the same clause, the first verb will appear in finite form (marked for tense and, if present tense, number and person as well), while the other

[5] Compare, e.g., 我很難學好英文 (*ngo^{23} han^{35} naan^{21} hok^{22} ho^{35} jing^{55}man^{35}* / *wǒ hǎn nán xué hǎo yīngwén*, literally *'I am difficult to learn well English'.

verbs should appear in non-finite form (e.g., infinitive: *I can help distribute this questionnaire for you*; past participle or present participle: *I have been doing this for years*). This is why in examples (39a) – (42a) below, all the verbs (*applied, objected*) and adjectives (*eager, willing*) have to be converted to nouns (*application*, *objection*) when they are embedded in the subject of a longer sentence (39b – 42b), or to gerunds when serving as the complement of a preposition like *for* (43a – 45a). Compare:

(39) a.	Jack applied for this job.
(40) a.	Jim objected to your plan.
(41) a.	Mary was eager to quit.
(42) a.	John was willing to stay.

(39) b.	Jack's application for this job	was successful.
(40) b.	Jim's objection/objecting to your plan	was totally ungrounded.
(41) b.	Mary's eagerness to quit	embarrassed her boss.
(42) b.	John's willingness to stay	surprised us all.

(43) a.	Thank you for coming…
(44) a.	Jim apologized for being late…
(45) a.	Ann's handling of the complaint is very reasonable…

When a finite, independent clause itself becomes the subject or object of a longer sentence, it is necessary to head this clause with the subordinator *that* (cf. *que* in French; *dass* in German). The resultant dependent '*that* clause' may similarly function as the subject of a longer clause (39c) – (42c):

(39) c.	*That Jack applied for this job*	was successful.
(40) c.	*That Jim objected to your plan*	was totally ungrounded.
(41) c.	*That Mary was eager to quit*	embarrassed her boss.
(42) c.	*That John was willing to stay*	surprised us all.

Notice that the same '*that* clause' may also function as the object of a longer clause (39d) – (42d). For example:

(39) d.	I know	(*that*) *Jack applied for this job*.
(40) d.	I was told	(*that*) *Jim objected to your plan*.
(41) d.	I was surprised	(*that*) *Mary was eager to quit*.
(42) d.	I was relieved to hear	(*that*) *John was willing to stay*.

Whereas the use of the subordinator *that* in (39d) – (42d) is optional, failing to mark the finite-clause subject as a dependent '*that* clause' with *that*, as in (39e) – (42e), will result in non-standard sentences (Chan et al. 2003a):

(39) e.	**Jack applied for this job*	was successful.
(40) e.	**Jim objected to your plan*	was totally ungrounded.
(41) e.	**Mary was eager to quit*	embarrassed her boss.
(42) e.	**John was willing to stay*	surprised us all.

The syntactic requirement or constraint for using an independent clause as the subject of a longer clause is often overlooked by even advanced Chinese EFL learners. This is partly because there is little *formal* restriction when Chinese verbs are chained together to express a sequence of processes. Such a feature is generally known as 'serial-verb construction'. In other words, the chaining of verbs in Chinese is much freer in that no inflectional change is required (cf. finite vs. non-finite verb forms in English). The following utterance in Cantonese (43), involving no less than a sequence of eight verbs (highlighted), is commonplace in everyday communication in any Chinese variety:

(43)	我想落街買菜返黎煮飯俾你食完至去返工
	ngo^{23} ***soeng***^{35} ***lok***^{22}*gaai*^{55} ***maai***^{35}*coi*^{33} ***faan***^{55} ***lai***^{21} ***zyu***^{35}*faan*^{22}
	1sg want go-down-street buy-food come-back cook-meal
	bei^{35} *nei*^{23} ***sik***^{22} *jyun*^{21} *zi*^{33} ***heoi***^{33} **faan**^{55}**gung**^{55}
	for you eat-finish then go-to-work
	[Literally] 'I want to go (down to the street to) buy food and come back to cook the meal for you to eat till [you] finish then [you] go to work.'
	[Idiomatically] 'I want to go and buy some food now, and when I come back, I'll fix the meal for you; don't go until you have finished eating.'

Notice that the more idiomatic-sounding English rendition of (43) would have the verb processes expressed in separate clauses rather than in one serial verb construction as in Chinese. This Cantonese utterance, which contains a serial verb construction, sounds not at all unnatural. Notice how the verbs in Chinese are sequenced together freely without inflection (compare: *to*-infinitive, -*ing* forms, -*ed* forms, etc. in English). Due to cross-linguistic influence, it is conceivable that Chinese EFL learners are tempted to sequence English verbs together, paying no attention to inflectional changes when putting verbs together in a sequence. This helps explain the misuse of an independent clause as the subject of a sentence (e.g., 39e – 42e; for correction strategies, see Chan et al. 2003a). Such a trend is even more apparent in elementary Chinese learners' EFL output, where the common feature of verb-chaining is often mapped directly onto English verbs, showing little or no awareness of the normative non-finite English verb forms, as in (44a) – (44c):

(44).	a. **They want me go.*
	b. **We like play football.*
	c. **She enjoy watch Twins.*

4.4.7 Deviation from EAP 7: Missing Relative Pronoun (Intermediate)

Another common non-standard feature associated with the formation of complex sentences is the omission of a suitable relative pronoun in a relative clause, as in the following two examples:

(45) a.	*I saw the accident *happened* last year.
(46) a.	*They are the parents *attended* the graduation ceremony.

This non-standard feature may be partly attributed to cross-linguistic influence. In Chinese, there is no distinction between finite and non-finite verb forms; serial verb constructions with more than one verb/verb phrase juxtaposed in the same construction without having any markers to show their relationship are perfectly acceptable and very common. What complicates the situation further is that no relative pronoun is required in the corresponding relative clauses in Chinese (45b) and (46b). It is not surprising, therefore, that many Chinese EFL learners would overlook the need for a relative pronoun, and use a chain of verbs to link up processes together, as in (45a) and (46a).

(45) b.	我 看 到 去 年 發 生 的 意 外				
	ngo^{23}	*hon*^{33}*dou*^{33}	*heoi*^{33}*nin*^{21}	*faat*^{33}*sang*^{55}	*dik*^{55} *ji*^{33}*ngoi*^{22}
	1sg	see	last year	happen	NOM accident
	'I saw the accident that happened last year.'				
(46) b.	他 們 是 出 席 畢 業 典 禮 的 家 長				
	taa^{55}*mun*^{21}	*si*^{22}	*ceot*^{55}*zik*^{22} *bat*^{55}*jip*^{22} *din*^{35}*lai*^{23}	*dik*^{55} *gaa*^{55}*zoeng*^{35}	
	3pl	be	attend graduation ceremony	NOM parents	
	'They are the parents who attended the graduation ceremony.'				

Apart from L1-related factors, the allowance of a seemingly similar structure in English also contributes to Chinese EFL learners' misunderstanding of the correct usage. Sentences such as (47) and (48) below, containing a reduced relative clause with the relative pronoun and the finite verb omitted, may cause confusion:

(47)	I like her book **published** last year.
(48)	I have seen some of the parents **interviewed**.

Learners who are unaware of the conditions under which a relative clause may be reduced, as in (47) and (48), may incorrectly overgeneralize and omit the relative pronoun incorrectly, as in (45a) and (46a). For suggested correction strategies, see Chan et al. (2002b).

4.4.8 Deviation from EAP 8: Dangling Modifier (Intermediate)

Many intermediate or even advanced Chinese EFL learners have problems writing complex sentences involving a non-finite clause without an overt subject. The problem of *dangling modifier* often results, as in (49) and (50):

(49)	*Entering the stadium, *the size of the crowd* surprised John.
(50)	*Having eaten our lunch, *the ship* departed.

The gist of the problem lies in the fact that the subject of the second, main clause cannot be interpreted as the subject of the preceding non-finite, subordinate clause. Inadequate knowledge of the correct usage of the target structure appears to be the only cause of this problem. Students are unaware that according to Standard English or EAP norms, the subject of the main clause (e.g., 'the size of the crowd', or 'the ship') must be the same as the implicit subject of the non-finite, subordinate clause (e.g., 'entering the stadium', and 'having eaten our lunch'). Since no such selectional restriction is found in Chinese, the non-standard structure 'dangling modifier' is unlikely to be due to cross-linguistic influence (see Chan et al. 2002b for correction strategies).

4.4.9 Deviation from EAP 9: The '**too** *Adj.* **to** *VP*' Structure (Intermediate)

This common lexico-grammatical problem may be illustrated by a widely publicized jumbo-sized slogan advertised some years ago on wall posters of a musical called *Chicago*. The slogan reads: *Chicago: too much fun to miss*. As no attempt was made to render this message into Chinese, it is doubtful whether the intended meaning is correctly understood by those Cantonese-L1 speakers who are accustomed to saying *?I am too happy to see you* to mean 'I am so/very happy to see you'. To many Chinese EFL learners, the negative meaning embedded in the '*too* Adj. *to* VP' structure is opaque; it may be paraphrased as follows:

too Adj. *to* VP
so Adj. *that … cannot / should not / must not* VP

e.g.,	Chicago: *too much fun to miss*
	'Chicago is <u>so</u> much fun that [you] <u>should/must not</u> miss [it]'

The problem is that the negative meaning embedded in the '*too* Adj. *to* VP' structure is implicit and not at all transparent. This is largely due to its semantic and

Table 4.6 Semantic equivalence between '*too* Adj. *to* VP' and '*so* Adj. + *that*-clause with negative polarity'

***too* Adj. *to* VP: with negative polarity**	***so* Adj. + *that*-clause: with negative polarity**
I am *too* tired *to walk*.	I am *so* tired *that I cannot walk*.
John is *too* angry *to speak*.	John is *so* angry *that he cannot speak*.
Mary is *too* busy *to talk to you now*.	Mary is *so* busy *that she cannot talk to you now*.

Table 4.7 Inappropriate use of the intensifier *too* and its correct substitutes

Inappropriate use of *too*	**Substituting *so/very* for *too***
?I am *too* happy to see you.	I am *so/very* happy to see you.
?He is *too* excited to have a chance to meet the CEO.	He is *so/very* excited to have a chance to meet the CEO.
?Peter is *too* interesting to talk to.	Peter is *so/very* interesting to talk to.

syntactic complexity, and the functional difference between the English intensifier *too* and its Chinese counterpart 太 (*taai*^{33}/*tài*). The Chinese intensifier 太, rather than giving a negative interpretation of an unwanted excessive degree of whatever meaning conveyed by the adjective that follows (e.g., 高興, *gou*^{55}*hing*^{33}/*gāoxìng*, 'happy'), denotes a positive and high level of intensity with regard to the adjective it modifies (e.g., 太高興, 'too happy' or 'jubilant'). Being unaware of the implicit negative meaning embedded in the '*too* Adj. *to* VP' structure, most Chinese learners would use the intensifier *too* as a substitute for the meaning 'very, very'. Table 4.6 shows the similarity in meaning between the '*too* Adj. *to* VP' structure and its semantic equivalent '*so* + Adj. + *that*-clause with negative polarity'.

The fact that a lot of Chinese EFL learners produce inappropriate sentences such as? *I am too happy to see you* (intended meaning: 'I am very, very happy to see you') suggests that they have failed to grasp the proper meaning and usage of the '*too* Adj. *to* VP' structure. Since the sentences in question are grammatically correct, except that they express exactly the opposite of what the speaker wants to say, the problem should be tackled at its root: learners should be made aware of the semantic implication of the intensifier *too*, and substitute some other intensifier for it, as in Table 4.7.

4.4.10 Deviation from EAP 10: Periphrastic Topic-Constructions (Intermediate)

The periphrastic topic-construction is a non-standard feature which is commonly found in academic essays written by Chinese EFL speakers in Hong Kong. It consists in the use of a redundant subject pronoun, referring to a subject NP denoting the source of information in a sentence-initial adverbial where that source is stated. Below are a number of examples that illustrate this stylistic anomaly:

(51)	a. ? *According to Tung Chee-Hwa, he said that* $2 billion would be set aside for education reforms.
	b. According to Tung Chee-Hwa, $2 billion would be set aside for education reforms.
(52)	a. ? *Based on the book, it describes* two ways to solve the problem.
	b. Based on the book, there are two ways to solve the problem.
(53)	a. *In a reliable report, it says that* 300 cases have been reported to the police.
	b. In a reliable report, 300 cases have been reported to the police.

As shown in (51c) below, using a pronoun in the main clause (佢話, *keoi*^{23} *waa*^{22}) to refer to the NP (Tung Chee-Hwa) mentioned in the topicalized adverbial is perfectly acceptable in Cantonese:

(51) c.	根 據	董 建 華	佢 話...
	gan^{55}*geoi*^{33}	*Dung*^{35}*gin*^{33}*waa*^{21}	*keoi*^{23} *waa*^{22}…
	According to	Tung Chee-Hwa	he say…
	'According to Tung Chee-Hwa, he said…'		

It is highly probable that this Cantonese structure is transferred verbatim and rendered into English as in (51a), resulting in a stylistic anomaly (see Fig. 4.1).

Notice that in the Cantonese structure, the NP identified in the sentence-initial adverbial (e.g., 董建華, *Dung*^{35}*gin*^{33}*waa*^{21}, 'Tung Chee-Hwa') and the subject of the following main clause (佢, *keoi*^{23}, 'he') are co-referential. In light of the structural parallel such as (51a) and (51c), there seems strong evidence that the Cantonese preference for repeating the NP pick-up theme in the main clause is overgeneralized and transferred when expressing the same meaning in English. This is manifestly also the cause of the periphrastic topic-construction in (52a) and (53a): '*Based on*

Cantonese topic-comment structure: NP pick-up theme identified in the sentence-initial adverbial being repeated in the main clause	e.g. 根據 X_i, 佢$_i$ 話 [main clause]... According to X_i, he$_i$ SAY [main clause]…
English subject-predicate structure: NP pick-up theme identified in the sentence-initial adverbial NOT repeated in the main clause	e.g. According to X, [main clause]…

Fig. 4.1 A schematic comparison of the NP pick-up theme in Chinese and English

<u>the book</u>, <u>it</u> describes…'; '*In <u>a reliable report</u>, <u>it</u> says that…*', which is considered stylistically anomalous according to Standard English or EAP norms. A general lack of negative feedback given by teachers may be another reason for the persistence of this stylistic anomaly. As periphrastic topic construction does not usually rank high on teachers' priority for correction or corrective feedback, it is often overlooked by even advanced EFL learners.

4.4.11 *Deviation from EAP 11:* On the Contrary *(Intermediate)*

The next non-standard feature is related to the use of the connective *on the contrary*, whose dictionary translation in Chinese (**相反地**, *soeng*^{55}*faan*^{35}*dei*^{22}) tends to mislead learners into believing that it is functionally synonymous and identical with other connectives such as *in contrast, by contrast*, or even *but*, resulting in non-standard sentences such as the following:

(54)	**小明是一個勤奮的學生;相反地,美玲非常懶惰.**						
	Siu^{35}*Ming*^{21}	*si*^{22}	*jat*^{55}	*go*^{33}	*kan*^{21}*fan*^{23}	*dik*^{55}	*hok*^{22}*saang*^{55}
	Siu Ming	be	a	CL.	diligent	NOM	student
	soeng^{55}*faan*^{35}*dei*^{22}*,*		*Mei*^{23}*Ling*^{21}		*fei*^{55} *soeng*^{21}		*laan*^{23}*do*^{22}
	by contrast/in contrast		Mei Ling		very		lazy
	'Siu Ming is a diligent student. In contrast, Mei Ling is very lazy.'						
	*'Siu Ming is a diligent student. On the contrary, Mei Ling is very lazy.'						
(55)	*Tim is very fat. *On the contra*ry, his brother is very thin.						
(56)	*Japan is in Asia. *On the contrary*, Britain is in Europe.						

In all of these examples (54) – (56), 'by contrast' or 'in contrast' should be used instead. The misuse of the connective *on the contrary* to express a contrast between two different persons or things is probably due to incomplete or inaccurate understanding of the function of *on the contrary*. In particular, such learners are not aware that *on the contrary* should only be used when we have just said or implied that something is not true, and are going to say that the opposite is true (*Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* 1995). For instance:

(57)	The assignment is not difficult. On the contrary, it is very easy.
(58)	I don't think the marking scheme is lenient; on the contrary, it is very strict.

For suggested correction strategies, see Li and Chan (2001).

The EFL anomalies that we have examined above are concerned with grammatical or structural problems, which may or may not be attributable to cross-linguistic influence from Chinese/Cantonese. At the lexical level, similar non-standard vocabulary usages may be found, some of which are arguably due to simplistic translation in bilingual dictionaries, with little or no specification of the structural requirement and collocation(s) that must be observed in accordance with their normative usage in Standard English. For instance, the verbs *substitute* and *replace* are synonyms which are given very similar translations in Chinese (e.g., 替代, *tai*^{33}*doi*^{22}/*tì dài*; 代替, *doi*^{22}*tai*^{33}/*dài tì*; 更換, *gang*^{55}*wun*^{22}/*gēng huàn*, among other possible translations). Few English-Chinese dictionaries provide additional tips that specify their respective normative usages correctly. Consequently, while most EFL learners and users have receptive knowledge of the verbs *substitute* and *replace* being synonymous, their fine usage differences may elude them. Even teachers who are not subject-trained in English may not have the normative usage patterns of these two verbs within their productive competence. Consider a context in which, instead of a test as proposed by the teacher, students prefer to write an essay. How would they convey their preference to their teacher? Below are two possible ways to express that preference:

(59)	We wish to *replace* the test *with/by* an essay.
(60)	We wish to *substitute* an essay *for* the test.

In other words, given two objects, an existing one (X) being replaced, and a new one (Y) that will take the place of X, the Standard English usage patterns of the two verbs not only specify the sequence (i.e., which one to come first, X or Y), but they also require the collocation of a particular preposition, as follows:

(61)	to *replace* X *with/by* Y
(62)	to *substitute* Y *for* X

Accordingly, the learning of these two verbs would be incomplete without noting the correct word order and choice of preposition. When students show signs of confusing the usage patterns of these two verbs, therefore, their differences should be explicitly taught and consolidated, probably best through a simple consciousness-raising exercise by drawing students' attention to the basic patterns as shown above, and to follow it up with practice in context. For instance, upon knowing that an important guest who will be visiting the school is a vegetarian, some change need to be made to the menu of the banquet. Assuming the choice is between soup and salad, a teacher may guide students to ask appropriate questions and give proper responses using these two verbs. For example:

(63)	Should we *replace* soup *with/by* salad?
(64)	Should we *substitute* salad *for* soup?
(65)	We should *replace* soup *with/by* salad.
(66)	Let us *substitute* salad *for* soup.

4.4.12 *Deviation from EAP 12:* Concern *(v.)* / Be concerned about/with *(Intermediate)*

Simplistic translation provided by lexicographers of bilingual dictionaries is also likely to be the main reason for the non-standard use of the lexeme *concern* (verb or noun), which is typically glossed as 關心 (*gwaan*^{55}*sam*^{55}/*guānxīn*) or 關注 (*gwaan*-^{55}*zyu*^{33}/ *guānzhù*). This is probably why even advanced learners would overlook the structural constraints associated with the verb *concern* and the corresponding periphrastic expression *be concerned about*, as in the following examples adapted from two doctoral dissertations (slightly altered, emphasis added):

(67)	At the beginning of the '90s, people in Hong Kong educational field *concerned about* the language enhancement of (students).
(68)	The Hong Kong Education Commission also *concerned about* the proficiency level of language teachers.
(69)	What we *concern* here is that the absolute majority, perhaps all, of the Chinese inhabitants were of Hakkas.

To help students identify the error, the teacher may guide them to recognize the structural difference between 'something *concerns* someone' and 'someone *is concerned about* something' (Li and Chan 2001; see also below).

Frequently misused is not only the verb *concern*, but also its derivatives such as *concern* (noun) and the -*ed* adjective as in *be concerned about*, and *be concerned with*. The confusion may be explained in part by the complex mapping of forms and functions. For instance, *be concerned with*, which occurs in the first sentence of this section (69a), may be replaced with *be about* (69b):

(69) a.	The EFL anomalies that we have examined above *are concerned with* grammatical or structural problems, …
(69) b.	The EFL anomalies that we have examined above *are about* grammatical or structural problems, …

On the other hand, *be concerned about* carries a similar meaning as 'be worried about' or 'to worry about'. Compare: (70a) – (70c):

(70) a.	He *is concerned about* your future.
(70) b.	He *is worried about* your future. (adjective)
(70) c.	He *worries about* your future. (verb)

Simplistic translations of the word *concern*, verb or noun, in Chinese bilingual dictionaries (e.g., 關心, *gwaan*^{55} *sam*^{55}/*guānxīn*, 'to care about'; 擔心, *daam*^{55} *sam*^{55}/*dānxīn*, 'to worry about') tends to give the false impression that this English lexeme is functionally and structurally equivalent to its Chinese counterparts. This is evidenced by the fact that (70d), a word-for-word translation of the non-standard sentence (70e) in Chinese, is perfectly acceptable. Other non-standard sentences like (71) and (72), also accountable by this faulty perception, arguably result from similar cross-linguistic influence:

(70) d.	**他關心你的前途**			
	taa^{55}	*gwaan*^{55} *sam*^{55}	*nei*^{23} *dik*^{55}	*cin*^{21}*tou*^{21}
	he	be concerned about	your	future
	'He is concerned about your future.'			
(70) e.	*He *concerns* your future. (Variant: *He *concerns about* your future.)			
(71)	*The only thing I *must concern* is the style of clothes.			
(72)	*I never *concern about* my clothes are fashionable or not.			

The lexeme *concern* and its derivatives are often misused in news summaries prepared by staff at a local tertiary institution for dissemination on the Intranet. In one news summary on the survey results of the numbers and percentages of Hong Kong secondary school-leavers planning to further their studies in Taiwan and Mainland China, it was stated that:

(73)	while the number of students to Taiwan for higher education increased by 3% compared to the previous year, the number to the mainland dropped by 3%. Students' consideration mainly *concerns with* requirements and tuition fees (9 Mar 2015, emphasis added)

Apart from cross-linguistic influence, inadequate understanding of the correct usage of the target language items is probably another major source of confusion. Indeed, the picture gets even more complex with a high-frequency derivative such as *concerning* which, like *regarding*, is listed in the dictionary as a preposition (see, e.g., the next and last sentence in this paragraph). Regarding the correct usage of *concern/concerned*, many EFL learners are unaware of the structural constraints of these two words when expressing the meanings 'to care about' or 'to worry about', namely:

Something *concerns* someone, for example:	
(74) a.	Your high blood pressure concerns us all.

Someone *is concerned about* something, for example:	
(74) b.	We are all concerned about your high blood pressure.

For more details concerning correction strategies of this lexico-grammatical anomaly, see Li and Chan (2001); Li et al. (2001).

4.5 Deviation from EAP 13: Q-A Sequence Involving ‘Negative Yes-No Questions’

In the middle of an English test, I saw one student asking his buddy seated in front of him to pick up a pen that he had dropped accidentally. I went over to that student and asked jokingly: “You’re not cheating, are you?” I was expecting the simple answer ‘No’, but to my surprise, that student responded ‘Yes’, which made me unsure for a moment whether he was in fact cheating. According to the grammar of Standard English or EAP, that student’s response amounted to admitting to cheating (“Yes, I am cheating.”). But other contextual cues, including the student’s facial expression, suggested that somehow this was not what he was trying to say. This little incident epitomizes one interesting problem concerning the proper way of responding to a ‘negative yes-no question’ in English. A negative yes-no question is one that anticipates a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, and which contains an element of negation, typically ‘no’ or ‘not’ in the main clause before the question tag expressed by an appropriate auxiliary verb in positive polarity, as in “You’re <u>not</u> cheating, <u>are</u> you?”

The Q-A sequence is among the most common conversational features in any language. The preferred patterns of responses to negative yes-no questions, however, differ considerably in Chinese and English. To understand how the two systems differ, consider the following contrastive examples in Standard English and Putonghua/Mandarin:

(75)	A:	You don’t drive, do you? / right?
	B(i):	No (, I don’t).
	B(ii):	Yes (, I do).

(76)	A:	你是不開車的, 對嗎?
		nǐ shì bù kāi chē de, duì ma?
		2sg BE not drive car, right F.P.?
		‘You don’t drive, do you?’
	B(i):	是 / 對 (我是不開車的)
		shì / duì (wǒ shì bù kāi chē de).
		‘Yes (you are right; I don’t drive).’
	B(ii):	不是 / 不對, 我是開車的
		bùshi / bùduì (wǒ shì kāi chē de)
		‘No (you are wrong; I do drive).’

As shown in (75) and (76), in response to a negative yes-no question, Standard English requires the respondent to attend to the proposition (here: ‘I drive’), and affirm it with ‘yes’, or deny it with ‘no’. In the Standard Chinese (Putonghua) response to a negative yes-no question, however, the choice between positive and negative polarity hinges upon whether the questioner’s supposition is agreeable to the respondent. If it is agreeable, the respondent should say ‘yes’ (*shì*/*duì*), with the implicit meaning ‘you are right’; if the questioner’s supposition is invalid, then the respondent should say ‘no’ (*bùshi*/*bùduì*), suggesting implicitly ‘you are wrong’. Given that the meanings assigned to responses to negative yes-no questions in Putonghua and English are diametrically opposed to each other, it is not difficult to understand why Chinese EFL learners find it so difficult to adjust to the pattern of Q-A sequence in Standard English, and that ambiguous responses from fluent Chinese EFL users such as (77) and (78) are not at all rare:

(77)	A:	You’re not waiting for me, are you?
	B(i):	Yes (, you are right; I’m not waiting for you).
	B(ii):	No (, you are wrong; I’m waiting for you).

(78)	A:	You don’t smoke, do you?
	B(i):	Yes (, you are right; I don’t smoke).
	B(ii):	No (, you are wrong; I do smoke).

To avoid misunderstanding, it is advisable for native-speakers of English who are unaccustomed to the Q-A sequence involving negative yes-no questions in Chinese to be vigilant about the possibility of their Chinese interlocutors operating with the Chinese Q-A sequence subsystem. Where the Standard English Q-A subsystem governing responses to negative yes-no questions is upheld to be the norm (e.g., in high-stake gate-keeping encounters such as oral exams and job interviews), it is not difficult to understand why ‘inappropriate’ responses to negative yes-no questions are among the most common features or ‘errors’ in Chinese EFL users’ English outputs, including those whose proficiency level is quite high.

4.6 Conclusion

Owing to tremendous typological and linguistic differences between Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua, among other Chinese ‘dialects’) and English (notably Standard English or EAP), Chinese EFL learners tend to find it difficult to learn English up to a high proficiency level. Acquisitional problems occur at practically all linguistic levels: phonological, lexico-grammatical and discourse-pragmatic. In this chapter, we have discussed and illustrated several patterned deviations from RP pronunciation, as well as a number of salient learning difficulties at the lexico-grammatical level as evidenced in Chinese elementary and intermediate EFL learners’ non-standard English outputs. All this helps explain why, for the majority of Chinese EFL learners who have little home support and few opportunities to practice using the target language, mastering English (Standard English or EAP) up to a high level is such a daunting task despite years of hard work. Apart from linguistic factors resulting from tremendous typological differences between Chinese and English, a lack of a conducive English-learning environment is another important factor behind various acquisitional problems confronted by Hong Kong Chinese EFL learners. To the extent that English is seldom used among Chinese speakers for intra-ethnic communication – unlike Chinese Singaporeans in this regard – the conditions of the learning and use of English make it an untypical second language in Hong Kong, though not exactly a foreign language as in the rest of Greater China.

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Chapter 5
Medium-of-Instruction Debate I: Mother Tongue Education and the Dual MoI Streaming Policy (1998–)

5.1 Introduction

Given the marked linguistic distance between Cantonese and Modern Standard Chinese (MSC) on one hand (Chap. 3) and English on the other (Chap. 4), for Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers to come to grips with Chinese (SWC and spoken Putonghua) and English essentially through schooling under largely foreign-language-learning conditions is nothing short of a tall order (So 1992, 1998; cf. So 1984). But this is exactly the language-in-education policy goal of successive administrations of the Hong Kong government since the early 1990s, which came to be known as biliteracy and trilingualism[1] in the Special Administrative Region since the handover from 1 July 1997. Rather than enforcing the 'mother tongue education' policy across the board in all secondary schools from September 1998, the education authorities under the first Chief Executive of the SAR government, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, allowed about 30% of the 400+ secondary schools to retain their much coveted English-medium status, provided a number of stringent conditions are met.[2] In other words, the mother tongue education policy was enforced mandatorily in about 70% of the schools, that is, CMI schools which resisted or did not merit the 'EMI school' label. Since 1998, as EMI schools tend to be more prestigious Band 1 schools,[3] the 30% of EMI school places have become the prize of

[1] **兩文三語** (*loeng*[23]*man*[21]*saam*[55]*jyu*[23]/*liǎng wén sān yǔ*).

[2] Threshold levels of English proficiency requirements are set for both EMI teachers and students. The 'social selection' of students is based on their MIGA (Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment) performance in English: a school that lays claim to the EMI label must have no less than 85 percent of all students from the Secondary 1 intake meeting the minimal English benchmark requirement; benchmark proficiency requirements are also set for teachers (see 'firm guidance', Education Department, April 1997, Annexes I & II, pp. 8-9). These benchmark requirements were later modified in December 2005; for details, see Poon 2010, p. 41).

[3] From 1978, primary school-leavers were classified into five bands, with Band 1 students having the highest priority, while lower-banding students would have lower priorities, in being allocated to their first-choice schools. From 2001, the number of bandings was reduced from five to three,

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competition among keen primary school-leavers and their parents, especially those to whom 'no English, no future' reverberates like a relentless and haunting truism. In short, under the first SAR government, a well-intentioned mother tongue education policy was twisted and turned into a highly controversial, socially divisive dual MoI streaming policy.

That CMI schools and their students are routinely portrayed as 'second rate at best' in public discourse may be gauged by a mini critical discourse analysis (CDA) of a news story involving a retiring primary school principal surnamed Leung.[4] According to that report, the principal received a marvelous "farewell gift" on the day when allocation of secondary school places were announced: it was reported that 20 out of 64 of the eligible pupils had been admitted to English-medium secondary schools – the best academic performance ever for that school located in Tai Kwok Tsui, a district inhabited by typically working class families. Of interest to us is what the exhilarated principal reportedly said, which was paraphrased towards the end of that news story:

> Leung said pupils allocated to their favorite schools would find it a challenge as band-one schools are usually more demanding. *He encouraged those going to Chinese-medium schools not to be disappointed, saying they will have more chances to stand out*. (*The Standard*, emphasis added)

It doesn't take a CDA expert to tell that the students' disappointment was discursively constructed as a direct result of being allocated to Chinese-medium schools, an indelible label synonymous with 'second rate at best', which is destined to follow the CMI students for the rest of their lives. Regardless of whether such a denigration was intended by the school principal or the journalist, or both, the fact remains that in Hong Kong, being allocated to a CMI school is widely perceived as signifying 'failure to secure a place in a first-rate EMI school'.

As the impact of education is far-reaching, affecting the life chances of future generations, it is understandable how the choice of medium of instruction is intimately tied up with a social concern about access to various forms of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991). Such a popular concern, in turn, helps explain why under the streaming policy, a school's MoI label came to be perceived as indicative of its academic standards and standing, and how well its teaching staff and students 'live up to' the expectations of teaching and learning effectively through the medium of English. Before the mandatory segregation of schools by MoI effective from September 1998, it was this same perception which motivated secondary schools to label themselves as Anglo-Chinese schools rather than Chinese Middle Schools (So 1984, 1992). But the social dynamics involved in the MoI debate, within and beyond the realm of education, is much more complex than this. A clear understanding of the complexity of the intricate issues engrossed in this MoI debate is incomplete without clear answers to a number of questions. These include:

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the purpose being to reduce the degree of segregation among schools (Ho and Man 2007, pp. 8, 12).

[4] *The Standard*. (2015). Pupils' success a fine retirement gift [for Principal K.-C. Leung]. 8 July 2015, p. 6.

1. Why did the originally intended mother tongue education policy (100% Chinese-medium) eventually give way to the streaming policy (70% Chinese-medium; 30% English-medium)?
2. At the goal-setting stage, what divergent social forces and competing ideological premises were at work in the consultation and deliberation process, and how were they addressed by the education authorities?
3. Before and after the implementation of the dual MoI streaming proposal, what is it that makes streaming so controversial?
4. In the end, which social forces and ideological premises got the upper hand when the streaming proposal prevailed, and why?
5. Above all, who are the key stakeholders in the streaming policy debate, and what are their main concerns from their respective vantage points?

The last-mentioned question will be dealt with in Chap. 6. In this chapter, we will try to disentangle the main critical issues involved by addressing questions 1 to 4 above, which will necessarily require a fairly detailed retrospective account of the milestones and key issues arising at the policy goal-setting and implementation stages. Owing to its controversial nature, the MoI debate has generated a sizable body of critical works in the form of monographs (including PhD dissertations and departmental research reports), journal articles, chapters in edited books, and feature articles in local newspapers and magazines, in Chinese as well as in English. To understand how the SAR's current language-in-education policy has evolved in the past decades since the colonial era, we will conduct a critical review of the relevant literature published mainly in the last two decades (Asker 1998; Choi 2003a, b; Evans 2000; Ho and Man 2007; Li 1998, 2008; Li and Tse 2002; Lin 1996, 1997, 2000, 2006, 2008; Lin and Man 2009; Luke 1992a, 1992b, 1998, 2005; Pennington 1998; Poon 2010, 2013; So 1984, 1992, 1998; Tang 2004; Tsui et al. 1999; Tung 1992, 1998; Wang and Kirkpatrick 2015). Below, we will first briefly recapitulate the key milestones since the 1970s. In particular, we will examine the ideological underpinnings embedded in one important policy paper – Education Commission Report No. 4 (ECR4 1990) – a 208-page document in which the rationale behind the controversial and socially divisive dual MoI streaming policy is spelled out. In the process, we will also make reference to other Education Commission Reports produced from the 1980s to the 1990s (ECR1–ECR7) where appropriate.

5.2 Language-in-Education Policy: From Goal-setting (1970s) to Implementation (1998)

The implementation of compulsory vernacular primary education in 1971 produced more and more English-knowing teenagers (So 1984, 1998), but the learning outcomes at secondary level, including English but also other content subjects, were disappointing. Like many home-grown Hong Kong academics and educators, successive British education panels (see Table 5.1) and experts were clearly aware of

Table 5.1 A selected list of education panel reports during the colonial era

Year	Education expert(s)/ source	Recommendations
1860s	Frederick Stewart, Inspector of Government schools, Principal of Government Central School (中央書院), later renamed Queen's College (Bickley 1997)	Using a foreign language to learn content subjects would affect the quality of learning adversely; studying Chinese would help students to learn English better; these recommendations were not heeded by the government (especially under Governor Sir John Pope Hennessey)
1935	Edmund Burney	Recommended that the colony's educational policy be gradually reoriented in order that the pupils could first develop a command of their own language "sufficient for all needs of thought and expression" before developing a command of English to be "limited to the satisfaction of vocational needs" (Burney 1935, p. 25)
1963	R. Marsh and J. Sampson	In view of the students' "very heavy burden" learning through the medium of English, and following the establishment of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (1963), the panel recommended that more Chinese-medium schools be set up where English is taught as a second language (Marsh and Sampson 1963, p. 107)
1973	Report of the Board of Education on the expansion of secondary school education in Hong Kong (Education Green Paper, Hong Kong government)	"The medium of instruction bears significantly upon the quality of education offered at post-primary level. Pupils coming from primary schools where they have been taught in the medium of Cantonese have a grievous burden put on them when required to absorb new subjects through the medium of English. We recommend that Chinese become the usual language of instruction in the lower forms of secondary schools, and that English should be studied as the second language" (Hong Kong Government, 1973, para. 16, p. 6).
1982	Llewellyn et al.	"Many Chinese speakers find it almost impossible to master English at the level of proficiency required for intricate thinking; and yet pupils from non-English speaking Chinese families have to express themselves in English at school. Under these conditions, more emphasis tends to be placed upon rote learning. (...) Many of the problems associated with schooling in Hong Kong – excessive hours of homework, quiescent pupils – are magnified, even if not caused, by the attempt to use English as a teaching medium for students" (Llewellyn et al. 1982, pp. 26–27)

(based on Tsui et al. 1999)

the obvious pitfalls – cognitive, linguistic and affective – of learning through an alien language. For instance, in the Llewellyn report (1982), reference is made to "quiescent pupils" (III.I.10, p. 26), while Lord (1987, p. 16) speaks of the "submerged majority" (cf. Tang 2004, p. 63). This highly unfavorable MoI-related learning condition prompted a group of young, home-grown intellectuals to openly query the socio-educational cost of learning through the medium of English (cf. title of the booklet *At what cost*, see Cheng et al. 1973/1979; Cheng 1979), and to question the inferior status of Chinese as a non-official language. Protests and rallies were organized, accompanied by critical commentaries in the mass media. These events gradually gathered strengths and culminated in a 'Chinese as Official Language' social movement.[5] Yielding to massive pressure, in 1974, the government under Governor Sir Murray MacLehose agreed to recognize Chinese as a co-official language. Despite this significant landmark event and achievement, however, there was an overriding clause whereby English continued to reign supreme and its status remained unchallenged. In the legal domain, for instance, it was clearly stipulated that where diverging interpretations of different language versions should occur (various Ordinances, the Criminal Code, etc.), the English version would prevail.

In 1978, a nine-year compulsory education policy up to Secondary 3 (Grade 9) was implemented. In 1981, a panel of four experts led by Sir John Llewellyn from the UK was invited to review the language situation and educational policy provisions in the colony. After extensive investigation and meeting with representatives from various groups of stakeholders, the panel submitted a report to the government (the Llewellyn Report 1982), where the dilemmas were clearly articulated and the recommended policy options spelt out unambiguously. While it was widely recognized that learning through one's mother tongue was the most effective (UNESCO 1953, cf. UNESCO 2003), the panel had no doubt that the economic well-being of Hong Kong hinged on a significant part of its workforce being conversant in English. Failing this, internally the government would be short of English-knowing skilled workers to staff its civil service at different departments, offices and ranks, in which case effective governance would be adversely affected. Externally, employers of transnational consortiums and local companies would find it difficult to hire employable English-speaking staff to engage and meet the needs of non-Cantonese-speaking employers and clients.

In view of such "a classic public policy dilemma", a difficult choice between, on one hand, prioritizing the lingua-cultural needs of Chinese Hongkongers but with "a possible decline in the economic prosperity" as a consequence, and, on the other hand, ensuring sufficient numbers of speakers conversant in English at the expense of "the educational progress of the majority" (Llewellyn et al. 1982, p. 29), the Llewellyn Report made a compromise recommendation as follows:[6]

> The dilemma lends itself to a typically Hong Kong solution, that of compromise. This would involve, in the long term, a shift towards complete mother tongue education in the early compulsory years through abandoning the fiction that the Anglo-Chinese and Chinese middle schools use only one language as the medium of instruction. Such a solution would support a wholehearted push towards genuine bilingualism after P6 [Primary 6], including

[5] **中文成為法定語文運動** (*zung*^{55}*man*^{21}*sing*^{21}*wai*^{21}*faat*^{33}*ding*^{22}*jyu*^{23}*man*^{21}*wan*^{22}*dung*^{22}/*zhōngwén chéngwéi fǎdìng yǔwén yùndòng*).

[6] See also Ho and Man (2007). For a critical review of the MoI policy in Hong Kong from 1982 to 1997, see Tang (2004) and Tsui et al. (1999). For other critical studies with a focus on ECR4 (1990), see Luke (1992a). Asker (1998) is a collection of book chapters that examine the SAR's language-in-education policy of biliteracy and trilingualism from different vantage points; a few other relevant book chapters may be found in Pennington (1998).

> the tertiary level. From F1 [Secondary 1] there should be a progressive shift to genuinely bilingual programmes so that by the end of FIII [Secondary 3] students are receiving approximately half of their instruction in each language, with putonghua continuing to be an option which can be built into the secondary school timetable as well as being offered on an extra-curricula [sic.] basis at public expense. (Llewellyn et al. 1982, p. 29, para. III.1.20)

From the point of view of safeguarding the best interests of Hong Kong society, this recommendation appears to have the merit of reconciling the dilemma rooted in Cantonese-L1 students' difficulties of learning through an unfamiliar language (Chap. 4), and the need to foster and facilitate the development of plurilinguality among those students who manage to survive an EMI teaching and learning environment. More importantly, this report probably sowed the seeds of dual MoI streaming some 15 years later. Three paragraphs earlier, it states that:

> An obvious way out (…) is for the Government to impose Cantonese as the medium of instruction in FI-III [Secondary 1 – Secondary 3] of all secondary schools so that the first nine years of schooling (PI-FIII) [Primary 1 – Secondary 3] would be in the 'language of the heart'. *A pragmatic variant on this would be to leave alone the small number of schools which have been genuinely successful in using English as a medium of instruction*. (1982, para. III.1.17, emphasis added)

In the domain of employment, however, after the Second World War English gradually became more and more relevant to Hongkongers' education and work life, largely because many Chinese parents in an emerging middle class were attracted by the symbolic value of English in terms of its strong potential for facilitating "upward and outward mobility" (So 1992). This helps explain why Chinese Middle schools were eclipsed by the immensely more popular Anglo-Chinese schools since 1950s, as So (1992) remarks (cf. Li 2002a):

> For somebody who possesses tertiary education qualifications or more, he will be assured of either an upward passage and become a member of the local, expanding bourgeoisie; or an outward passage and become a member of the Overseas Chinese communities in one of the advanced, English-speaking nations of the world.
>
> In short, a successful English-medium secondary education has become the principal determinant of upward and outward mobility for the people of Hong Kong. Many, if not most, aspire to both. (So 1992, p. 78)

As a result, many Hongkongers no longer felt so strongly that English was imposed on them; rather, English was gradually seen society-wide as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991) that is worth harnessing through hard work and investment (Poon 2010; cf. Norton 2013a, b). This perception, in turn, fuels the prestige of English-medium schools, which explains the general preference for schools to label themselves as Anglo-Chinese before the policy of mandatory segregation of MoI-based schools was implemented in 1998. Such a perception manifestly remains pervasive some 19 years after the handover. According to a recent corporate survey conducted by a Singaporean company on behalf of the credit card consortium Visa (Kwong 2015), of all the middle class parents polled in Asia, mainland Chinese respondents topped the list, with 51 per cent expressing a strong desire for their children to be sent abroad for education. Hong Kong and Indian respondents, at 39% and 34% respectively, were second and third on the list. Their most favored destination was the US, followed by Britain and Australia, for "it affords a broader outlook later in life and widens career options" (Kwong 2015).

Another lasting impact of the Llewellyn Report (1982) is the proposal that an Education Commission be set up to oversee the language-in-education policy provisions by deliberating long-term and short-term priorities, scrutinizing their resource implications, and rolling out a road map for the government's consideration. Subsequent to the formation of the Education Commission in 1983, three Reports (ECR1 1984; ECR2 1986; ECR3 1988) were issued. All this culminated in the concretization of the dual MoI streaming policy in ECR4 (1990):

> Needs were defined in ECR1 [1984]. Research findings were selectively provided in ECR2 [1986] to substantiate the views on those needs. Assuming that the substantiation was not problematic, ECR4 [1990] proposed a framework hoping that the process by which those needs were to be achieved could be well managed and monitored. (Tang 2004, p. 157)

Drawing on research findings suggesting that "only around 30% of students may be able to learn effectively through English" (ECR4 1990, p. 102), ECR4 proposed a Medium-of-Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) framework, whereby primary school-leavers would be assigned to one of three types in terms of their academic ability to learn through the medium of Chinese or English:

> C – Students who would learn best through the Chinese medium
> B – Students who would probably learn better through the Chinese medium but who are possibly able also to learn in English
> E – Students who are able to learn effectively in English many of whom could equally well learn in Chinese should they so wish (ECR4 1990, p. 107)

ECR4 (1990) further proposes that schools be classified into three types: Chinese-medium, two-medium, and English-medium. By providing parents and schools of students' MIGA results, it was believed that individual schools would be able to make an informed and responsible decision regarding the pedagogically most reasonable and productive MoI for their students.[7]

By 1996, mechanisms for streaming Hong Kong students into Chinese-medium and English-medium schools were progressively concretized for implementation shortly after the return of sovereignty to the People's Republic. As noted by Poon (2010), several months before the first Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, took office on 1 July 1997, a draft decree to introduce comprehensive Chinese-medium education across the board in all secondary schools was floated, only to be aborted after being severely criticized in the media and strongly resisted by various stakeholders in the education sector. Indeed, so overwhelming was the popular outcry and the craving for some space for English-medium education in the media that the

[7] Choi (2003a, p. 637) observes that "Back in 1991, the Education and Manpower Branch and the Education Department jointly issued a document entitled The School Management Initiative (SMI), which spelled out, for the first time, a framework for future reforms in education. (...). The SMI document heralded the thoroughgoing insertion of managerialism into education, with education quality thereafter being narrowly defined as good management, and with increased surveillance over processes and products via a revamped information system and the use of quantifiable indicators."

first SAR government had no choice but to give in and replace that comprehensive 'mother tongue education' policy with the dual MoI streaming policy. Based on public opinions amplified in local newspapers, Poon (2010) identified support for the "compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy" on educational grounds (e.g., the Professional Teachers' Union and the Hong Kong Government Secondary Schools Principals Association) and patriotic grounds (e.g., the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers). In general, however, "the policy was poorly received territorially by students, parents and schools" (Poon 2010, p. 38). With regard to the nature and extent of the medium-of-instruction dilemma, the results of a survey conducted in July-August 1997 by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups said it all: whereas 55% of the students and parents agreed that CMI was more effective, 73% expressed concerns about lower English standards, while half of the respondents were convinced that CMI students' life chances in terms of access to university education and job opportunities would be unduly compromised (*South China Morning Post*, 19 September 1997). There is also evidence that the latter concern was widely shared. In May 1997, some schools and Parent-Teacher Associations put up adverts in several newspapers stating their firm support for English-medium education (Poon 2010, p. 38).

In their critical review of the MoI debate during the past 100 years from colonial days to 1 year after Hong Kong's return of sovereignty to China, Tsui et al. (1999) observe that successive panels of British education inspectors and experts were unanimous in recommending the use of the local students' mother tongue as the MoI (see Table 5.1). However, up until the early 1980s, the expert recommendation for some form of vernacular education was consistently disregarded by the colonial government.[8] This led Tsui et al. (1999) to conclude that, despite its obvious pedagogical merit, the educational agenda (of providing vernacular education) was consistently neglected so long as the political agenda (of promoting English through education under the colonial government) prevailed. To justify its policy choice, however, the colonial government never failed to point to societal needs for English, as evidenced by its arguably indispensable role in international trade and commerce, in addition to strong parental preference of English for their children. The social and economic agendas, therefore, were used as a convenient pretext for privileging the political agenda at the expense of the educational agenda. Such a stance appeared to have changed, however, after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, when the political future of Hong Kong was sealed. From then on, successive colonial administrations began to embrace a pro-mother-tongue-education stance, as reflected in the policy documents, ECR1 (1984) – ECR7 (1997). As Lee Kwok-Sung, Principal Education Officer of the Education Department (1998) put it, until the time of the 1997 language-in-education conference commemorating the renationalization of Hong Kong (Asker 1998), the colonial government had been promoting mother-tongue education for over a decade (Lee 1998, p. 111).

[8] See, e.g., ECR1 (1984), ECR2 (1986), and ECR3 (1988).

In April 1997, a consultation document entitled *Arrangements for Firm Guidance on Secondary Schools' Medium of Instruction* was issued. After undergoing minor revision, the official 'firm guidance' directive was formally rolled out several months later, in September, as detailed in the *Medium of Instruction Guidance for Secondary Schools* (Lee 1998, p. 113; see also Poon 1999). In view of its timing, Tsui et al. (1999, p. 205) believe that it is "by no means a coincidence that the implementation of 'firm guidance' should have been in 1998, a year after the handover in 1997". Then, on the basis of detailed comparison and analysis of the MoI policy (changes) in Malaysia, Singapore and India after these former British colonies attained independence, Tsui et al. (1999) conclude that, in Hong Kong as in other postcolonial societies, the pedagogical merits of mother tongue education were foregrounded and vindicated only after the educational agenda converged with the political agenda (pp. 205–206), and that the "social, economic or educational [agenda] will come to the fore if they converge with the political agenda. If they do not, then they get pushed into the background" (p. 210).

5.3 Dual MoI Streaming Proposal (ECR4 1990): Questionable Premises

In view of its tone-setting function, Education Commission Report No. 4 (ECR4 1990) is in many ways "the watershed marking a new beginning in the language policy evolving process of Hong Kong" (Tang 2004, p. 114), paving the way for the important 'firm guidance' consultation document issued in April 1997. As with any important policy document, ECR4 relies on a number of premises to buttress its policy line – the dual MoI streaming proposal in this case. These premises include: mother tongue education, the threshold hypothesis and the linguistic interdependence hypothesis (Cummins 1979), the maximum exposure argument, societal needs for English in Hong Kong, and local parents' preference for English-medium education for their children. Most of these premises have come under critique by various scholars either at the ideological or the implementation level, as shown in the critical review below.[9]

5.3.1 Threshold Hypothesis and Interdependence Hypothesis

According to ECR4 (1990), the dual MoI streaming proposal is guided by Cummins's (1979) threshold hypothesis and interdependence hypothesis. Tung (1992) examines the theoretical grounding and support of the threshold hypothesis and observes that:

[9] For critical issues related to mother tongue education, see above.

> It is clear that Cummins's Threshold Hypothesis specifies two different thresholds. However, in the *Report of the working group set up to review language improvement measures* [Education Department 1989], there is reference to only one threshold. The problem is, it is unclear that the Education Department's threshold coincides with either of the two thresholds. (Tung 1992, p. 121)

Tung (1992) then examines the projected percentage of students seen as capable of following English-medium (30%) and Chinese-medium education (70%) in ECR4 (1990) respectively, and points out that neither accords with Cummins' (1979) higher or lower threshold. Tung (1992) further queries the quality and quantity of ECR4's empirical evidence as follows:

> So far, the threshold levels have typically been indicated by children's scores on vocabulary measures or reading comprehension tests. This is acceptable for research purposes but not for applications where we wish to determine whether a particular child can benefit from instruction in a second language. (Tung 1992, p. 122)

All this leads Tung (1992) to conclude that "the attempt by the Education Department to apply the Threshold Hypothesis in Hong Kong is clearly an example of misapplication of Western ideas" (p. 123).

On the other hand, Tung (1992) considers Cummins's (1979) interdependence hypothesis entirely worth supporting. He reviews a number of empirical studies in other multilingual contexts in which solid evidence was obtained regarding the linguistic and cognitive advantages of a threshold level of competence in the students' first language on their learning of content subjects in a second language, suggesting that positive transfer is at work. Tung (1992) believes that linguistic interdependence (e.g., between Chinese L1 and English L2) is especially crucial for decontextualized learning of content subjects through reading and writing in L2 (Cummins 1983). On this basis, Tung (1992) pleads for stronger support for more local research into the linguistic interdependence between Chinese and English in the education domain.

5.3.2 Maximum Exposure Hypothesis

According to ECR4 (1990), the streaming proposal was conceived largely to facilitate students' English proficiency development by maximizing their exposure to English in school. The idea is to produce proficient users of a target language by maximizing students' exposure through using it as a medium of instruction exclusively. Such a premise may be traced back to one of the six recommendations in ECR1 (1984), as follows:

> Secondary schools which use Chinese as the instructing medium should be given additional resources to strengthen the teaching of English to avert any conseqential drop in the standard of English *due to reduced exposure*. (Lee 1998, p. 111, emphasis added)

The 'maximum exposure' hypothesis looms large in ECR4, with 30% of students being assigned to EMI secondary schools to receive English-only instruction

(ECR4 1990, pp. 103–104). The 'maximum exposure' argument is also used to condemn the use of mixed code in what is supposed to be English-medium classes (pp. 100–101). Tung (1992, p. 128) suspects that with 'maximum exposure' being hailed as a premise, the government was trying, on one hand, to please the business sector by acceding to their demand for English-speaking or English-knowing workers through schooling, and on the other hand, to satisfy the wish of many parents to whom English-medium education is equated with their children's career development and success. As Tung (1992, p. 129) further points out, drumming up the 'maximum exposure' argument for support is misguided for it has been widely discredited in earlier research, as Cummins and Swain (1986) have noted:

> Although intuitively appealing, there is a considerable amount of research evidence that refutes a simplistic 'maximum exposure' hypothesis. Clearly, sufficient exposure to the school language is essential for the development of academic skills; however, equally or more important, is the extent to which students are capable of understanding the academic input to which they are exposed. (Cummins and Swain 1986, p. 80)

Pedagogically speaking, therefore, privileging exposure to a target language at the expense of students' understanding borders on being unethical (Choi 2003b; Tang 2004). This view is rightfully stated in Tang's (2004) critique, who draws attention to the sacrifice, cognitive and intellectual, that comes with learning content subjects through an alien tongue:

> [W]hen the purpose of having more exposure to a second language, i.e. English in our case, is to enhance that language as the ultimate goal at the expense of learning more effectively in one's own tongue, the benefit of exposure in such context cannot be justified in either ethical or educational ground. (Tang 2004, p. 139)

Tang (2004) conducts a critical discourse analysis of the key language-in-education policy documents from ECR1 to ECR7. In his eloquent critique, he reveals an unmistakable positivist orientation in their theoretical grounding, which may be characterized as "a technocratic form of policy analysis that emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness" (p. 66). He examines the findings of one government-commissioned classroom-based study in ECR2 (1986), and points out that:

> Overall, *only a tiny percentage (2–3%)* [of students] *preferred monolingual English presentation*. About a half preferred monolingual Chinese oral presentation and a third monolingual Chinese written presentation. The remainder preferred bilingual modes of spoken or written presentation. (...) In other words, students preferred understanding more in the class through either monolingual Chinese or bilingual modes of spoken or written presentation to learn through English. The priority of the students' need was clearly evidenced. (Tang 2004, p. 135, emphasis added).

Notwithstanding students' clear MoI preference (Cantonese or bilingual), ECR4 (1990) focuses on how well the students were "coping well" (learning through English), and opposes that construct with "performing better" (learning through Chinese), whereby the meaning and goal of education is defined as students' 'understanding' when learning through the medium of English. Apart from 'understanding', Tang (2004) also problematizes other constructs such as 'advantage' (p. 136), and 'well-educated' (p. 139). Then, using the dual MoI streaming proposal in ECR4 as an illustration, by "making things clean, calculating, and homogenizing" (p. 156), Tang (2004) shows how thorough the designers of that proposal are in their positivist way of thinking:

> [S]tudents were categorized into three streams[10] for the convenience of mapping a 'clean' and manageable plan. A timetable was designed to make sure that everything would be processed according to schedule and students were properly channeled to different 'homogenizing' groups. Students' ability was turned into numbers so that 'calculation' could be processed based on which streaming or grouping could be made possible and manageable. (Tang 2004, p. 156)

Further, for the sake of 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency', and to minimize 'contingency' and 'uncertainty', bridging programs were prescribed to ensure that the maximum number of students could attain the privileged goal of English competence when learning through the medium of English (Tang 2004, p. 156), even though "many schools see the bridging courses as adding to rather than solving the problems which teachers and students face" (Johnson 1998, p. 268). Finally, after laying bare the ideological premises in successive language-in-education policy documents, Tang (2004) concludes that as an institutional framework, the dual MoI streaming proposal approximates an "input-process-output-quality-assurance factory model, (...) where participants were treated as passive agents serving the functional needs of a system" (Tang 2004, p. 159), with the assumption that people would comply once the targets and criteria were set. Tang (2004) goes on to raise a rhetorical question: Granted, that research findings strongly suggested that some 30% of students were linguistically capable and fit to learn through the medium of English, the problem is: "if this [mastering English as L2] is the aim of education, then it is the aim for just 30% of the student population. What about the rest?" (p. 165).

5.3.3 Economic Forces: Societal Need for English

Pervasive in every single language-in-education policy document from ECR1 (1984) to ECR7 (1997) is a claim or premise that there is great demand for English-speaking or English-knowing workers. Where does this demand come from, and who exactly perceives a demand for it? From the point of view of Hong Kong's demographic composition since the Second World War, it is clear that English has been widely perceived by Chinese Hongkongers as economically a valuable asset to have, but socially and affectively an alien language to learn or use. During the colonial era, despite being the vernacular and the principal medium of written communication among the absolute majority, Cantonese and Hong Kong Written Chinese (HKWC) were only secondary in importance given that until 1974, English was the only official language in the colony. At the same time, from secondary education

[10] That is, students who would (probably) "learn best" in (a) English; (b) Chinese or English; (c) and Chinese only (see ECR4 1990, p. 107).

onwards, owing to the need for more and more people with adequate knowledge of spoken and written English in the multilingual workplace, there was increasing pressure for the colonial government to produce more and more English-knowing school-leavers by expanding the scale of English-medium education. For largely demographic reasons, however, the exclusive use of English for intra-ethnic communication among Chinese Hongkongers has been relatively rare, as So (1998) explains:

> [W]hen over 95 percent of the population in Hong Kong speak the language [Cantonese], its use comes naturally and often is taken as a given except for the few occasions when a bilingual Chinese wants to make a symbolic statement by switching from Cantonese to English or *Putonghua*. Actually, nowadays, *Chaozhou-hua, Kejia-hua, Minnan-hua, Siyi-hua*, *Putonghua* or the English-in-Cantonese Mix (the native tongue of the local educated class) are used more often as group/solidarity markers in Hong Kong than Cantonese. (So 1998, p. 160)

Up until the 1970s, therefore, despite its utilitarian and instrumental value, English was widely perceived by Chinese Hongkongers as minimally relevant to their lifeworld, English was felt by many to be an anomaly imposed by the colonial government on the schooling population (Poon 2010, 2013; cf. Cheng 1979).[11] Such a popular perception, however, is in stark contrast with the expectations of employers in the business sector, who consider English to be essential for sustaining Hong Kong's economic well-being. As noted by a high-ranking executive of "the largest and politically most influential bank in Hong Kong" (Tsui et al. 1999, p. 205) at a conference commemorating the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China:

> English, which some have wrongly associated with colonialism, is today the most widely used language in the world of business. It is the common link and the language of trade in the global village. If Hong Kong is to remain the great economic success that it is in the competitive global economy, it is vital for its voice to be heard and its products to be promoted. A good command of English is essential for that, especially among the territory's leaders. (Au 1998, p. 180)

Au then goes on to lament Hong Kong students' "unsatisfactory level of language standards", university graduates included, and regrets that many employers have to "organize language training to improve the effectiveness of their communications" by offering "remedial as well as vocational training, often to clerks and managers alike", thus adding to the companies' "undesirable business cost" (Au 1998, p. 183).

The bank that Au represented was part of a consortium of big firms which would periodically lament Hong Kong's declining English standards (see, e.g., Evans 2000, pp. 192–194; cf. 'the complaint tradition', Bolton 2003), a voice that was

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[11] I recall being one of those students affected by the imposition of EMI in the secondary school curriculum. Upon completing primary education, I was allocated to an English-medium "technical school" where all academic subjects (except Chinese Language and Chinese History), including Technical Drawing were taught in English. My personal experiences and feelings as a young learner and user of English at different stages may be characterized as a 'love-hate relationship', showing perceptions akin to those discussed in Kachru's 1996 article, 'World Englishes: Agony and ecstasy'; see Li 2002b).

often and continues to be amplified in mass media from time to time. In 1990, in addition to making an "outcry" (Tsui et al. 1999, p. 205), the business sector also launched the Language Campaign, with the explicit goal of helping improve English standards in schools. All this points to the influential role of the business sector in shaping the direction of the government's language-in-education policy. Embedded in the policy's premise, namely 'Hong Kong's strong demand for English', is primarily the voice and interest of the local and transnational business sector. Johnson (1998) speaks of "the English lobby", consisting of the business community and the tertiary institutions, which brought their influence to bear on the policy deliberation process throughout the 1980s, their main argument being, to sustain Hong Kong's future economic development and to assure its status as an international business and financial center, larger numbers of bilinguals with high standards of English are needed (cf. Tang 2004, p. 156). How influential the business sector has been in shaping the local language-in-education policy agenda may be gauged by Lin's (1997) remark, "It seems that what the business interests in Hong Kong want is cheap but good foreign-language-speaking labor, ready made from the school system" (Lin 1997, p. 430).

5.3.4 Social Forces: Local Parents' Preference for English

A similar dilemma was faced by Cantonese-L1 (especially working class) parents who are in favor of an EMI education for their children. Relative to the allegation, that most Cantonese-L1 parents do not understand what is in their children's best educational interest, So (1992) gives a succinct defense from the vantage point of working class parents as follows:

> [M]ost parents somehow know that on the one hand, the educational consequences of English-medium secondary education are not as catastrophic as some pundits would have them believe. On the other hand, the education offered by Chinese Middle Schools is not as easy and effective as their advocates say it is. (...) After all, they know a local Cantonese student will not be able to make his grade in a Chinese Middle School with his Cantonese alone. (...) What matters is really the student – Anglo-Chinese school or English-medium school – could master the two standard languages. (So 1992, p. 80)

And, with regard to the allegation that Cantonese-L1 parents are 'lemmings' who had no idea which language of instruction works best for their children, So (1992) reassures us that these parents know very well what they want:

> [Hong Kong parents] would like their children to have access to English-medium education, and may, as a result attain a level of English proficiency that would enable them to progress in the local society. In fact, what the parents are shunning are Chinese Middle Schools, not instruction in Chinese. These parents may have very high expectations of their children, but they are not lemmings. (So 1992, p. 82)

The pro-EMI position was eloquently argued for by T.-L. Tsim, a business leader of grassroots origin who made it to the English-medium University of Hong Kong

> I don't think anybody would seriously disagree with the findings of the educationists that to impose English as a medium of instruction on Chinese secondary school students who have just started to master their own language retard their intellectual development and affect their ability to express themselves.
>
> The proof which has been gathered to support this view is incontrovertible. The top 20 per cent in the class would probably survive and perhaps even benefit from the transition to English. Later in life they would be able to flit from one language to the other.
>
> But what of the other 80 per cent? Those whose later careers would probably have no use for English anyway? Is it fair to ask them to put up with taking instructions in their weak language when it is painfully obvious that they would benefit more by being taught in their mother tongue?
>
> The answer is no. But on the other hand should those students who are fully capable of handling two languages be forced to forego the opportunity because the majority in their class are unable to keep up?
>
> This is not simply a matter of English versus Chinese. This is also a question of differentiating or not differentiating between average and above-average students. (Tsim 1978/1979, pp. 155–156)

Fig 5.1 T.-L. Tsim's plea that English-medium education should not be barred from bright and linguistically gifted students from a working class background

through hard work. Back in 1978, when the MoI debate flared up again,[12] Tsim wrote in the *South China Morning Post* that whereas EMI secondary education was admittedly a pain for the majority of Cantonese-L1 students, he questioned the wisdom of denying EMI education to bright and linguistically gifted students from modest families, given that access to good English-medium education was a springboard to social mobility (see Fig. 5.1).

Having made a strong case for EMI, Tsim then concluded that "it is children who come from less well-to-do families but who have the potential to succeed that will be losing out" if a blanket mother-tongue education policy were to be implemented regardless of students' and their parents' choice (Tsim 1978/1979, p. 157). That Tsim's views were taken seriously by the education authorities under the colonial government may be gauged by his membership in the influential Education Commission set up in 1983. A few years later, in his commissioned report on English proficiency in Hong Kong submitted to the Hong Kong Language Campaign, Tsim (1989, para. 1.11) states the status and function of this group very clearly:

[12] Three years after the 'Chinese as an Official Language' movement drew to a close successfully in 1974, a newly established Hong Kong Examinations Authority in 1977 announced that the certificate-level Chinese Language subject (taken at Secondary 5) was not required for admission into the University of Hong Kong (only grade E in English was required in the Advanced Level Examination) or the Chinese University (provided the student had grade E in English in the Higher Level Examination). This was viewed by many critics as yet another proof that the majority's native language was denigrated and held by the colonial government to be inferior in status.

> The Hong Kong Chinese who can act as a bridge between East and West, between the expatriates who speak no Cantonese and the locals who speak little English, belong to perhaps the top ten to twenty per cent of the class in our Anglo-Chinese schools. Every effort should be made to ensure that they will be able to learn English, to learn in English if they want to, and use English in their adult life without fear of social ostracism. (Also cited in Choi 2003b, p. 687)

5.4 Discussion

5.4.1 Dual MoI Streaming: A Controversial and Socially Divisive Policy

Without a doubt, English occupies an important place in the Hong Kong SAR government's language-in-education policy, which is largely dictated by its woman- and man-power development needs as the former British colony gradually evolved from a manufacturing base in the 1960s into a knowledge-based economy since the 1980s. English is regarded by language policy makers of the SAR as important linguistic capital which is crucial for the continued well-being of "Asia's World City", and widely perceived by Hongkongers as an indispensable language for upward and outward mobility (So 1992). This is why, notwithstanding the restoration of Chinese sovereignty and the logical move to valorize the Chinese language (vernacular Cantonese and SWC) through the 'mother tongue education' policy, English-medium education continues to have a place in the local secondary-school curriculum. This is also the background to the controversial and socially divisive dual MoI streaming policy, enforced from September 1998, to maintain 100 officially sanctioned English-medium secondary schools, which later expanded to 114 after 14 of the 20 schools complained and subsequently attained the EMI status through appeal. The rest of the 300+ secondary schools have remained Chinese-medium, with the CMI label being received by some schools with pride, but seen as an eyesore by many others.

Above was the backdrop to the implementation of the dual MoI streaming policy which, as warned by critics, proved to be highly controversial. Perhaps the most widespread educational concern with the two-tier secondary school allocation system was the unintended but unavoidable labeling effect on CMI students, who have to put up with a popular perception of having 'failed' to make it to one of the EMI schools, which are without exception more prestigious. How damaging such a perception is to CMI students' self-esteem may be gauged by pictures and TV footages of primary school-leavers in tears shortly after results of the allocation of secondary school places were released in July 1999 – the first time when CMI/EMI secondary school places were allocated after the streaming policy was implemented. Those CMI students who could not hold back their emotions were embittered not only by a shattered dream to enter an EMI school of their choice and wish, but also the harsh, socially constructed label of being academically 'inferior' or 'second rate at best'.

5.4.2 *Scapegoating CCS and 'Mixed Code': Misguided Justification of Segregated Monolingual Instruction*

If the 'language quandary' (Lord 1979) of Hong Kong students' low attainment level in English is metaphorically likened to a disease, then there is no question that classroom code-switching (CCS) has been socially constructed as and popularly held to be the symptom, if not the pathogen, both requiring treatment. CCS, often equated with 'mixed code', refers to "the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom by any of the classroom participants (e.g., teacher, students, teacher aide)" (Lin 2008, p. 273). Whereas the term CCS places a stronger emphasis on the process of switching between conventionally discrete languages, 'mixed code' commonly refers to the language output resulting from CCS. As exemplified below, such a negative view not only pervades policy documents like the Llewellyn Report (1982), Education Commission (1994, 2005); Education Commission Reports 1–7 (ECR1 1984 – ECR7 1997), it is also commonly found in academic and public discourse.

The panel led by Sir John Llewellyn (Llewellyn et al. 1982) was clearly aware of Hong Kong teachers' use of 'mixed code' as a common practice in their teaching, regardless of the stipulated MoI. This is clearly borne out by classroom-based research. In his study of "bilingual switching strategies" in the teacher talk of Anglo-Chinese secondary schools, for example, Johnson (1983) found that bilingual teachers code-switched every 18 seconds on average (cf. Ho and Man 2007, p. 13). Such a common bilingual interaction practice is presented in the 'official MoI discourse' as undesirable, suggesting, implicitly or explicitly, that compared with monolingual instruction, 'mixed code' is pedagogically not conducive or even detrimental to students' learning. For example:

> "teaching and learning are generally more effective if the medium of instruction is either the mother tongue or English" (paragraph 6.4.3, ECR4 1990; also cited in Tang 2004, p. 147)
>
> ECR4 endorsed the principles for MoI and recommended regular reviews to monitor progress and stronger measures to encourage Chinese-medium instruction and *minimize mixed-code teaching* (Education Department 1997, para. 1.2, emphasis added)
>
> [ECR4 recommends] that regular reviews be conducted to monitor progress and to consider whether stronger measures might be needed to achieve the objectives of encouraging Chinese-medium instruction and *minimizing mixed-code teaching*. (Principal Education Officer, Education Department, Lee 1998, p. 112, emphasis added)

Such an 'anti-mixed code' stance is also shared by quite a few academics working in language-related disciplines and other areas within the humanities. For example, an English language teacher educator said:

> [U]ntil very recently, more than 90% [of local secondary schools] advertised themselves as English-medium schools. In effect, what this meant was that textbooks, some writing on the board, and examinations were in English but everything else was mainly in the mother tongue, Cantonese, with some loan words (mainly technical) in English. This form of Cantonese and English use is described as 'mixed code' and is generally thought to be the worst of all modes of instruction. (Falvey 1998, p. 76)

In a (1997) feature article in the *South China Morning Post*, Laurence Goldstein, a professor of philosophy at HKU, made two points in support of the impending streaming policy: to give EMI students partial immersion and maximum exposure in English, "but not a mixing of the two", and to get rid of the "curious mixture of languages". A similarly hostile stance against 'mixed code' may be found in two separate articles authored by a renowned professor of (Chinese-English) translation, (Lau 1997, 1999). In his (1999) article, for instance, he said:

> The problem that Hong Kong is facing now is not whether mother-tongue education should be implemented, but how to root out the mixing of languages of instruction (i.e., sometimes Cantonese, sometimes English)….[13] (Lau 1999, p. 35, my translation)

The 'avoid mixing' advice is also shared by many Chinese language education experts. For instance, Tse et al. (2014) advise bilingual parents who are keen on giving their children the best of two (or more) home languages, as follows:

> Father may wish to communicate with the child only in English, mother only in Cantonese; different people may use specific languages to create a bilingual environment. But it is important to avoid mixing languages in the same sentence, for that would likely lead to misunderstanding when [your child tries to] make sense [of your language input] and get confused when using [the target languages].[14]

Similarly, in her critical analysis of the effectiveness of the SAR government's fine-tuning policy of the MoI policy in 2009, and the extent to which it helps mitigate the dominance of English in the education domain, Poon (2013) characterizes 'mixed code' consistently as a "language problem" on a par with "declining English standards". In her view, any use of classroom translanguaging by the EMI teacher is a pedagogical problem to be resolved and a classroom language use pattern to be eradicated:

> Prior to the 1990s, the Hong Kong government adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards MOI, and *the language problem of using mixed code in teaching* was not addressed. The problem was deepened throughout the 1980s as evident in some studies (e.g., Johnson 1983). The Hong Kong government then proposed the streaming policy in 1990, hoping to address *the problem of using mixed code in EMI schools* and at the same time solve the age-old problem of declining English standards. (Poon 2013, p. 45, emphasis added)

In some cases, the teacher's use of mixed code in class is explained as proficiency-related, which may be true, as Tsui et al. (1999) point out when summarizing the empirical evidence in support of the dual MoI streaming proposal:

> [T]he prevalent use of mixed code in English medium schools was a result of the lack of an adequate command of English not only of students but also teachers. (Tsui et al. 1999, p. 199).

[13]「**香港目前的問題,不是在於應否實行母語教學,而是消滅混雜語言教學(即時粵時英)...**」(Lau 1999, p. 35).

[14]「**父親和孩子溝通時只用英語、母親與孩子溝通時只用粵語,不同的人使用特定的語言,創造雙語環境。但同一語句切忌中英混雜,以致孩兒在語言理解和使用上出現混亂。**」(Tse et al. 2014, p. 10).

Such an observation, however, helps reinforce the popular perception and social stigma against translingual practice, not only in society but also in the education domain, even though elsewhere 'mixed code' is demonstrably more successful in engaging students when they are trying to make sense of EMI subject content. For instance, in their review of Ip and Chan's (1985) two-year longitudinal study involving 7,500 junior secondary students on the amount of English spoken in class, Tsui et al. (1999) point out that:

> Students with a high level of English proficiency coped well in English medium education whereas those who had low English proficiency suffered. This study further showed that more and more Cantonese was used in instruction in Anglo-Chinese schools. Teachers often resorted to Cantonese to explain complex concepts as Cantonese or mixed code was more effective in promoting classroom interaction. (Tsui et al. 1999, p. 198)

There is no question that such an 'anti-mixed code' attitude is pervasive in society, where it is widely perceived as a linguistic anomaly, reflecting a popular perception that 'mixed code' is indicative of the code-mixer's inability to adhere to linguistic purity by failing to use 'pure' language. What is interesting is that some critics and opponents of 'mixed code' may themselves be among the heavy code-mixers themselves, even though when made aware of that common social practice, they may feel the need to apologize, seriously or light-heartedly in passing depending on the context (see Chap. 2).

There is thus strong evidence, at the time when the government's language-in-education policy was being formulated, that 'mixed code' was socially constructed as "the prime cause of educational and language problems in 1990 in the tone-setting Education Commission Report No. 4" (Lin 2000, p. 181). It is thus not surprising that, in accordance with such government-led 'anti-mixed code' rhetoric, the language-in-education policy measures, in ECR4 as well as subsequent policy documents, are so designed as to ensure that 'mixed code' be eradicated, hoping that it would give way to 'pure' language instruction. This is why ECR4 (1990), an important policy paper in which the rationale of the dual MoI streaming policy is spelled out unambiguously, should make the reduction of CCS or 'mixed code' its primary target. Section 6.4.2 warns against "mixed-code teaching, as a result of which children may not become proficient in the full range of language skills in Chinese or English" (ECR4 1990, p. 99). In the overall design of the dual MoI streaming policy, elimination of mixed code is axiomatically a corollary of the 'pure' or 'no mixing allowed' language of instruction philosophy, as stipulated in section 6.4.4:

> 6.4.4 Given our view that it would be better if one clear medium of instruction for teaching, textbooks and examinations were used, it follows that the use of mixed-code should be reduced as far as possible. The corollary to this is that it is necessary for students to be grouped according to which medium of instruction is most appropriate for them. Students will need to be placed in Chinese-medium classes or English-medium classes on the basis of their ability to learn effectively in that medium. (ECR4 1990, pp. 100–101)

The rationale or justification for a CMI/EMI divide is stated in section 6.4.3, as follows:

> 6.4.3 We recognise that teaching and learning are generally more effective if the medium of instruction is either the mother tongue or English (for those who are able to learn effectively through this medium). Unfortunately, however, the use of mixed-code is quite common in many of our classrooms. In English-medium schools, while the textbooks, written work and examinations are in English, teachers often use Cantonese to explain the lesson material to students and to conduct discussions with students. In some cases, this can lead to time being wasted on translation of English texts in class and, worse still, learning being reduced to rote memorisation of facts in English. (ECR4 1990, p. 100)

Choi (2003b, p. 678) notes that "commissioned academic research played a prominent part in the development of the mechanism of selection". Regarding research-based evidence, a few government-commissioned studies are cited, in ECR4 as well as in other Education Commission Reports (e.g., Brimer 1985; Johnson 1985),[15] but in terms of offering the empirical evidence needed to justify the dual MoI streaming policy, the findings of those studies failed to make a convincing case for any causal link between the use of CCS in class and students' weak academic performance. Quite the contrary, there is some indication that it is not at all an impediment to learning as claimed. For instance, in Ho and Man's (2007, p. 16) review of Brimer's (1985) data and findings, they conclude that "mixed code may not be handicapping but it was the requirement to perform in English (tests) that hinders students' performance". Further, relative to the 30/70 split between EMI and CMI in the streaming proposal, both the quality and amount of putative evidence in support of that threshold (30% EMI) are open to doubt. As Tung (1992) observes:

> [I]t is not clear whether any threshold level could be described in such detail as to allow an observer to tell with confidence when a pupil's language ability has reached a threshold level. (...) There needs to be a clear description of a full range of linguistic tasks that a child has to be able to do in order to be judged to have reached a threshold level and to be able to benefit from a certain type of education. (Tung 1992, p. 122)

Ho and Man (2007, p. 17) similarly query: "How can we determine that it is the top 30% and not 20% or less? How can we define and prove whether the students can benefit from English as an MoI?" A more sweeping conclusion is reached by Tung (1992) as follows:

> Arguing from the needs of industry and commerce for more workers capable of functioning in English and concluding that a sizable proportion of the student population should be identified and taught only through the medium of English cannot be supported by research on the development of bilingual proficiency. (Tung 1992, p. 128)

[15] According to the Principal Education Officer of the Planning and Research Division of the Education Department, "In making ECR No. 4 recommendations on MoI in schools [1990], the Education Commission made reference to findings from four language research projects by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong, and the Education Department [ED]. It also took into account the recommendations put forward by ED's Working Group set up to review language improvement measures" (Lee 1998, pp. 116–117). For more details on the government-commissioned studies, especially the impact of MoI on specific academic subjects such as Integrated Science, History, Mathematics, see Ho and Man (2007, pp. 13–24); Tang (2004); 'educational agenda', Tsui et al. (1999, pp. 198–200).

As shown in section 6.4.3 of ECR4 (1990) cited above, rather than reassuring the reader with sound empirical evidence that using 'mixed code' is bad, it is simply reiterated that 'pure' language instruction is not possible due to 'mixed code'. That this claim borders on being a fallacy is evidenced by two types of evidence. First, the more educated Hong Kong Chinese people are, the more difficult it is for them to resist sprinkling English expressions of various lengths into their otherwise 'pure' Cantonese when interacting with fellow Cantonese-English plurilinguals like themselves. So (1998, p. 160), it will be recalled (see above), regards "the English-in-Cantonese Mix" as "the native tongue of the local educated class". That this is the case has been clearly demonstrated by the 'One day with only English' experiment (Li and Tse 2002; cf. Li 2011; see Chap. 2). Plurilingual Chinese readers who have any doubt about this may give it a try; by consciously avoiding the use of any English while interacting with others in Cantonese, it will become clear where the needs for English in plurilingual interaction lie, plus a good chance of first-hand experience why Cantonese-English 'mixed code' (or Chinese-English 'code-mixing' in written mode) is so difficult to avoid.

Second, the claim that no meaningful learning takes place through 'mixed code' or CCS sounds preposterous and simply does not stand up to reason. Perhaps the clearest counter-evidence comes from highly successful Hong Kong Chinese academics whose outstanding achievement would not have been possible without the mediation of 'mixed code' during the formative stage of their education at secondary level. This is reminiscent of Prof. Daniel C. Tsui (**崔琦教授**), recipient of the Nobel Prize in physics in 1998. Inspired by this exciting news story in October 1998, one fellow alumnus of Chinese-medium Pui Ching Middle School wrote a feature article in *Hong Kong Economic Journal* (Anonymous 1998) lamenting the inflexible dual-language streaming policy which had just been announced for about 2 months. Apart from lauding and congratulating Prof. Tsui's crowning achievement for a natural scientist, the writer pointed out that his shining academic performance was due in no small measure to the use of ***both*** English and Chinese at Pui Ching Middle School, where teachers would teach in English first, before explaining the main points again in Chinese:

> 'At that time the teaching methods at Pui Ching Middle School emphasized Chinese and English equally, whatever the mode of bilingual teaching. The purpose was to ensure that students understand completely. Even in English lessons, after something was taught entirely in English, often the main points would be reiterated and explained one more time. That was so different from the present system, where English is forbidden by the mother tongue education policy, while Chinese is so rigidly banned in EMI lessons.' (my translation, cited in Li 2008, p. 26)[16]

What this anonymous alumnus of Pui Ching Middle School said here gives us much food for thought as we ponder and weigh the desirability of two MOI policy options: (a) to rigidly adhere to 'pure' language use by cleansing 'mixed code'

[16]『**當年培正的教學方法是中英並重, 而且不拘泥於形式。務求令同學全面理解。縱然是英文課, 老師以全英文授課後,往往以中文將重點再解釋一次。不若現今的制度,「母語教學」上課不准說英文,而「英語教學」又不准說中文那麼的死死板板。**』(Anonymous 1998).

despite pedagogically sound reasons for translanguaging to students' more familiar language, inside or outside the classroom; or (b) to conduct serious research into productive translanguaging practices and, in so doing, better understand how and under what circumstances such practices could be turned into pedagogical resources to facilitate content-subject teaching and learning more productively and effectively. The choice seems very clear: while the advantage of exposure to 'pure' English is indisputable, it should not come at the cost of clarity and understanding of whatever the students are learning at hand. With educational merits as the yardstick for measuring academic success, it seems unthinkable how a language-in-education policy would value the medium (of teaching and learning) at the expense of the message (the content to be learned).

The ideology of linguistic purism has come under vehement critique. It has been dismissed by many scholars as unduly biased and, given its pervasiveness in plurilingual interaction, amounts to unrealistic wishful thinking (e.g., Choi 2003a, b; Lin 2000; Luke 1992b; So 1992). Luke (1992b, p. 111) found it paradoxical why the mother tongue education policy, if theoretically and pedagogically so well founded, was not applied across the board to all lower secondary students. According to Luke (1992b), the streaming of 30% of primary school-leavers to EMI schools appeared to be a strategic compromise on the part of the government in an attempt to please both parents (cf. 'social agenda', Tsui et al. 1999) and employers in the business sector (cf. 'economic agenda', Tsui et al. 1999) by meeting their demand half way. To justify the provision for EMI schools while rolling out the mother tongue education policy, 'mixed code', which is widely perceived as linguistically 'impure', is foregrounded and presented as a scapegoat.[17] Such an argument, however, is built only on the flimsiest of empirical evidence and support (Luke 1992b, p. 112).[18]

Both Luke (1992b) and So (1992) indicate that what is generally referred to as 'code-mixing' is a natural mode of bilingual interaction, which is commonly found in multilingual societies and is entirely consistent with the government's language-in-education goal of developing students' English proficiency and using Cantonese to facilitate the learning of English-medium content subjects effectively. Such a common practice is more recently referred to as translanguaging (e.g., Creese and Blackledge 2010; García and W. Li 2014; García and Lin, in press; see Chap. 2); being sociolinguistically conditioned, translanguaging cannot be wished away by any top-down policy (Luke 1992b, p. 116). More recently, there is also some evidence of translanguaging taking place in English and Putonghua lessons in some local primary schools (Wang and Kirkpatrick 2015, p. 20). So (1992, p. 83) affirms the constructive role of 'mixed code' on the grounds that "in varying degree of

[17] **代罪羔羊** (*doi*[22]*zeoi*[22]*gou*[55]*joeng*[21]/*dài zuì gāoyáng*, 'scapegoat').

[18] **「[第四號報告書]把混合語提到大原則上,指其爲母語教學推行未果和英語水平下降的罪魁禍首。」** ['(The ECR4 report appeared to have deliberately) foregrounded 'mixed code' and placed it squarely at the level of grand (pedagogic) principles, (in effect) making it a scapegoat for the unsuccessful mother tongue teaching (policy) and declining English standards'], (Luke 1992, p. 112).

effectiveness, [it] helps the student adapt to the English-medium environment". He goes on to dispel ECR4's (1990) stigmatization of 'mixed code' as follows:

> This claim [of 'mixed code' being the culprit of poor learning outcomes] is misplaced, and indicates a lack of understanding of the language dynamics in local classrooms, and of the development of bilinguality under local conditions on the part of the architects of the Streaming Proposal. The fact is the use of the mixed-code is itself a reflection of the reality of students' needs. (So 1992, p. 87)

According to So (1992), rather than being a "form of corrupted speech", 'mixed code' is "a mark of bilingual behaviour", and so any "application of monolingual norms, on the part of language purists" is not only inappropriate, but it also reflects the misguided value judgment of a parochial "monolingual, inward-looking society" (So 1992, p. 87). Rather than pursuing a socially divisive dual MoI streaming policy, therefore, both Luke (1992b) and So (1992) call for more classroom-based research, with a view to identifying pedagogically sound translanguaging practices and productive bilingual teaching and learning strategies.

5.4.3 Outdated Monolingual Classroom Language Ideology

That the training of proficient speakers/writers of English should be factored into the educational outcomes of the SAR's curricula from primary to tertiary levels is beyond dispute. By extension, even though the road map towards biliteracy and trilingualism since the inception of this language-in-education policy in the mid-1990s has been riddled with problems and queries regarding students' learning effectiveness, deemphasizing English or eliminating Putonghua in the curriculum has never been seen as an option. The key question is whether the current policy measures give us the greatest mileage, and in what ways students' learning effectiveness – in content subjects as well as the target additional languages – could be enhanced without unduly complicating an already crowded curriculum and aggravating students' learning burden. Below, I will problematize one tacitly followed axiom or principle that has informed the SAR's language-in-education policy provisions to date, namely, an outdated monolingual classroom language ideology.

In Chap. 2, we saw that in informal social interaction where no monolingual norms prevail, plurilinguals would naturally draw on all the linguistic resources within their repertoire to make meaning. As Canagarajah (2013) has argued convincingly, for centuries in many multilingual societies, notably those in European nation states and their former colonies, that unmarked translingual practice is clearly at odds with the monolingual ideology propagated by national governments which were/are guided politically by the 'one people one language' dogma. Language labels such as Dutch, Flemish, German and Luxembourgish were created, their differences played up while similarities de-emphasized, in order that discrete boundaries between language varieties could be clearly demarcated. Such a reality is subsequently enforced through standardization and codification, and perpetuated through the nation's language policy, which may be monolingual or multilingual. Not only is the choice of national language(s) written into the national constitution, used in mass media, and made visible in society, but such a belief is also hammered into schoolchildren's minds through education. Seen in this light, it comes as no surprise that the linguistic pattern of communication characterized by translanguaging (W. Li 2011; W. Li and Zhu 2013), which is normal, usual, unmarked in social interactional terms, should be viewed with disdain and shame by the populace at large, especially in the education domain. One consequence of the naturalized use of language labels from Arabic to Zulu is that few non-language experts would query the received wisdom of 'pure language', let alone querying the value-loaded judgment of all kinds of identity-driven motivations of translanguaging (including 'crossing', Rampton 1995), which is implicit in such pejorative terms as 'code-mixing', 'mixed code', 'hybridization', or even '(language) bastardization'. We should bear in mind this critical perspective when deliberating issues related to language-in-education policy measures and their implementation in Hong Kong.

Since the colonial era, the language-in-education policy in Hong Kong has been dominated by a monolingual classroom language ideology, as Low and Lu (2006) observe in their survey of 'code-mixing' among teachers and students in the home and classroom:

> Generally, opposition to the use of mixed code is based on the belief that mixed code communications will not only hinder L2 learning but also retard the development of L1 learning. Mixed code has been described as the leading factor contributing to the general decline of students' language proficiency. Such an assertion was found in some documents that support the recent changes and adjustments in educational policies of Hong Kong (...). Conversely, a discussion of the detrimental effects of mixed code was omitted from other reports and research publications. Importantly, there were little data or empirical evidence to show that codemixing was responsible for, or might lead to, low proficiency in L1 and L2 if it was used extensively. Nor was data available to support why mixed code caused undesirable results in language learning. (Low and Lu 2006, p. 183)

Another justification of the 'no code-mixing allowed' MoI policy is premised on the argument that class time taken up by 'mixed code' would be time wasted to the extent that students' exposure to 'pure' English would be reduced. Such a stance is clearly evidenced in, for example, the Education Bureau's (2009) Legislative Council brief on the need to implement the fine-tuning of the medium of instruction policy:

> Although mother-tongue teaching can remove the language barriers for students, effectively stimulate their interest in learning and encourage greater involvement in the learning process, *students learning in their mother tongue have limited exposure to English* during lesson time and this may affect their bridging over from junior secondary levels to senior secondary and/or post-secondary levels at which EMI teaching may be adopted to a comparatively greater extent. (Education Bureau 2009, 'Justifications', p. 2, emphasis added)

These two concerns – eliminating classroom code-switching and ensuring maximum exposure to English – are like both sides of the same coin. At the policy implementation level, their combined effect is that, where English is used as the medium of instruction, be it content subjects or English lessons, no Cantonese is allowed; on the other hand, where the MoI is Cantonese, teachers are advised to refrain from using any English. Failing this, the teacher risks being reprimanded by an inspector ('language police', So 1992, p. 88) dispatched routinely by the education authorities on surprise visits, who would issue (sometimes unfriendly) reminders to all teachers that any mixing of Cantonese into their supposedly pure English-medium lessons would be inappropriate. Worse, such reprimanding may sometimes take place in front of their students. Over the years, in my capacity as lecturer of various courses in different MA in TESOL programs (e.g., a course like 'Social context of language education'), I have heard anecdotes how frustrated in-service teachers were humiliated by rigid and indifferent school principals and/or inspectors. After sharing their emotional outpouring during the break or after class, however, the same in-service teachers made it clear that they saw nothing wrong, for translanguaging to their students' more familiar language at specific junctures of their lessons was, in their professional judgment, pedagogically the most productive and appropriate decision relative to the objective of meeting the teaching and learning goals at hand. Many of the embittered front-line teachers of English also felt that the unsympathetic school inspectors tended to miss or simply chose to ignore that point when repeating their 'no mixing allowed' verdict and reminder regarding the teachers' use of 'mixed code' during the EMI lessons they observed.

How widespread is this shaming experience among front-line EMI teachers, and what impact does it have on the quality of teaching and learning in their lessons? While to my knowledge there has been no research into these two related questions, the extent to which many EMI teachers feel unsure about whether it is right to translanguage to their students' L1 may be gauged by the title of a booklet: *How to have a guilt-free life using Cantonese in the English class: A handbook for the English language teacher in Hong Kong* (Swain et al. 2011). There, the circumstances under which Cantonese may be put to use, by the teacher and/or students, in English-medium content lessons are clearly spelled out. The authors explain why and how Cantonese-dominant students should be allowed to use their L1 in EMI lessons, among other reasons to seek quick clarification, from their peers or teacher, or to process abstract or intellectually challenging information which is already available in their L1 before packaging that information in idiomatic and lexico-grammatically correct English. If teachers have to self-monitor and be constantly on guard against sporadic surveillance occasioned by some school inspector's surprise visit, it is difficult to imagine how they could maintain high morale and have the peace of mind to exercise their professional judgment regarding the most productive pedagogy, which in context may include translanguaging to students' L1 to cater for the weaker students' learning needs. In short, such MoI flexibility is lost, or deprived from resourceful bilingual teachers' inventory of pedagogical options, just to meet the higher-order objective of maximizing students' exposure to English. It is doubtful whether such a guideline, which has been enforced with rigor for nearly two decades, serves the best interests of our students and teachers from the pedagogical point of view. That 'mixed code' is both a cause and result of the students' poor English is a view also shared by some local academics (see above). Such a view suggests that no meaningful learning takes place where 'mixed code' surfaces. It remains unclear, however, to what extent this view is matched by empirical evidence (Low and Lu 2006).[19]

5.4.4 Policy Implications: De-stigmatizing Translanguaging and Researching Pedagogically Sound Translanguaging Practices in the Classroom

Given that English is not often used for intra-ethnic communication among Hong Kong Chinese, who make up the absolute majority of the local population (see Chap. 1), classroom teaching is an important site and context for the majority of Cantonese-L1 students from primary to tertiary levels to learn and be exposed to this international language systematically. Class time being precious, the current language-in-education policy is so designed as to maximize students' exposure to English. Toward this end, however, the empirically discredited 'maximum exposure' hypothesis (Cummins and Swain 1986, p. 80; see above) has been hailed like a dogma, a straitjacket that prevents bilingual EMI teachers from turning to their students' more familiar home and community language to facilitate the give-and-take in classroom teaching and learning. This is so because translanguaging is seen as undermining students' exposure to English and thus prohibited. Punitive measures for EMI teachers who are 'caught' violating the 'no mixed code allowed' guideline are not uncommon, even though when school inspectors or 'language police' (So 1992) are out of sight, EMI teachers often have no choice but to resort to translanguaging to meet the teaching and learning goal at hand – an unapologetic practice in EMI classrooms and an open secret among EMI teaching professionals in Hong Kong.

With effect from September 2012, the 12-year compulsory education policy and new 334 curriculum structure were implemented. Before that, huge amounts of funding were channeled through Language Fund to support various language enhancement initiatives at different levels (Miller and Li 2008). Now that nine-year compulsory education has been extended to 12-year, still more resources are needed. One crucial question is: How efficient is the language enhancement funding used? The current language-in-education policy prioritizes maximum classroom exposure to English and, to ensure that all students assigned to EMI schools have the aptitude to study through the medium of English, a 30/70 split was imposed, such that English-medium education is reserved for the minority. Such a design is meant to simulate teaching and learning conditions akin to those that are characteristic of immersion in English-L1 countries. The research evidence to justify that 30/70 split,

[19] For more detailed discussion of the critical issues, see Lin (1996, 2006), and Lo and Lin (2015), the latter being the Introduction to a special issue on 'Designing multilingual and multimodal CLIL frameworks for EFL students' in the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.

however, is obscure to say the least (Low and Lu 2006; Tung 1992). It is not clear that the primary school-leavers assigned to EMI schools, despite being Band 1 students, are all capable of studying through the medium of English effectively (Choi 2003b, p. 675). This point is echoed by the following rhetorical question:

> [A]nybody who knows the local situation will wonder: Where are we going to find that thirty per cent secondary students who will be able to have their education *exclusively* in English (...)? (So 1992, p. 88, emphasis in original).

So's (1992) skepticism is corroborated by anecdotal evidence of individual EMI students being obliged to repeat Secondary 1 (Grade 7), for according to their academic results, some students could not cope with studying through English and needed more time to adapt to the EMI environment, with no guarantee for survival beyond the repeated school year.

5.5 Conclusion

Towards the end of his critique, So (1992) asks: 'Do we really need linguistic segregation in our schools?' (subheading, pp. 86–88). Recall the three main design features of the dual MoI streaming proposal (cf. So 1992, p. 86):

1. Mother-tongue hypothesis
2. "better if one clear medium of instruction for teaching, textbooks and examinations are (sic.) used" (ECR4 1990, p. 101)
3. "students should be grouped by reference to a medium in which they could learn effectively" (ECR4 1990, p. 101)

As we have seen above, apart from limited educational merits due to its ill-advised and questionable premises, the streaming proposal has proved to be socially divisive largely due to its labeling effect, even though this may not be intended:

> [W]hat streaming will do to the schools is not so much provide them with new information, but put a medium of instruction label on them, as well as on their students; and in so doing, effect linguistic segregation in the secondary sector. The Streaming Model is our linguistic 'Berlin Wall' of the 1990's. (So 1992, p. 86)

In sum, the streaming policy arguably suffers from two inadequacies. Firstly, instead of ensuring students' effective understanding and efficient learning regardless of their choice of MoI, the policy places high priority on maximizing EMI students' exposure to English, the advantage of which is remote compared with the immediate pedagogical concern of the EMI teacher who is under obligation to cover the syllabus timely and whose priority is to ensure that the teaching point at hand is accurately understood. Often there is no choice but to flout the 'no mixed code allowed' guideline by switching to students' more familiar language, an irresistible classroom practice that unleashes a sense of guilt (Swain et al. 2011), which is pedagogically counterproductive to the detriment of the quality of teaching and learning. To overcome this problem, nothing short of a fundamental U-turn in mindset is needed, namely, to think of the language shared by both teacher and students as a pedagogic resource for learning the target language, English. As a prerequisite, the negative or even hostile attitude toward translanguaging (i.e., CCS or 'mixed code') should give way to creative thinking, in particular, how the students' L1 could be mobilized as a teaching strategy and turned into a learning resource. There are plenty of empirical research findings across different multilingual contexts showing how this can be done strategically and productively, for example, translanguaging tasks that facilitate child migrants' cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) development in Canada (Cummins 2013cf. Lewis et al. 2012a, b). Similar classroom MoI studies have been conducted in UK (Creese and Blackledge 2010) and the Hong Kong context (Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015). Rather than being a cause or result of poor English, translanguaging is commonplace in social interaction between plurilinguals (W. Li 2011; W. Li and Zhu 2013). And, far from being a symptom or disease, that plurilingual mode of interaction is natural, independent of the levels of language proficiency within the plurilinguals' repertoire. Put differently, translanguaging involving Cantonese and English is very common among Cantonese-L1 speakers in their informal speech and writing, regardless of their proficiency level in English, especially when the topic is related to things that they have learned or come across through the medium of English, that is, the 'medium-of-learning effect' (MOLE in short, see Li and Tse 2002; Li 2011; Chap. 2). What is needed is rigorous classroom research to identify pedagogically sound and productive translanguaging strategies along the lines proposed by Lo and Lin (2015) and their colleagues (e.g., engaging students in think-pair-share in Cantonese as a means to enhance their understanding and confidence, before helping them produce and package the same information in English in accordance with lexico-grammatical accuracy norms in EAP, see Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Tavares 2015). In this way, rather than being an unwelcomed classroom intrusion to be avoided at all cost, students' L1 has good potential for playing an instrumental role toward better and clearer understanding of conceptual learning, and their quality of learning will more likely be enhanced (cf. flexible education, Weber 2014). This proposed coping strategy is consistent with Choi's (2003b) plea to resolving the dilemma, namely, maximizing pedagogical soundness on one hand, while ensuring students' access to that valuable symbolic capital called English on the other:

> [T]he elitist official policy of language streaming and enforced monolingual mode of learning, based on the ideology of language 'purism', has to be abandoned, or undermined. Various bilingual modes of teaching as well as classroom communication should be explored so that the first language could be used constructively both for content learning and for supporting the development of the second language, for the majority of the students. (Choi 2003b, pp. 690–691)

The second problem is related to the funding formula. Currently, the secondary and tertiary sectors claim the lion's share of funding support for various language enhancement initiatives. As is well-known, however, the language learning outcomes leave much to be desired. According to one statistic widely shared and circulated among ELT professionals, where English is taught and learned as a foreign language, it takes at least 200 class hours to bring a tertiary student's English proficiency level up by half a band score (e.g., an increase from 5.5 to 6.0) on the nine-band IELTS scale.[20] This is just a mean figure, with no guarantee that the 200 class hours would actually produce that result for every individual student. The return is grossly disproportional to the investment. In light of the psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic evidence in the last two decades (see Chap. 7), it would appear that the current funding policy is lopsided, in that the bulk of language enhancement resources is directed to key learning stages at the educational hierarchy where learners' language learning sensitivity is the lowest. To capitalize on the "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382), therefore, in accordance with the Chinese adage 'yielding twice the result with half the effort'[21] rather than the opposite, it would make more sense for stronger support and more resources to be directed at a life stage which, from the point of view of language learning effectiveness, has been shown to be most productive, namely, at the preschool (kindergarten) and lower primary levels (age 4–8, see Chap. 7). As things stand at present, however, these two key stages are relegated to a lower priority, both in terms of regulatory measures and government funding. As of 2016, there is some indication that free compulsory education will likely be further extended from 12 to 15 years to include the preschool years at kindergarten (age 4–6). If that is the case, it would be opportune time for the education authorities to review the existing policy governing preschool education. In Chap. 7, we will examine the empirical evidence in support of the above-mentioned "time-delimited window" and explore its relevance to the early introduction of Putonghua at the preschool and lower primary levels.

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[20] There are several similar sources online, one being attributed to the acting director of studies at IDP Australia in 2003: "…moving up even a single band on the IELTS scale takes considerable effort. 'It varies, but the main figure I've heard is 200 or 300 (class) hours. But I think 200 h refers to studying intensively in a country where English is spoken. So for students coming in here [Thailand], it's probably more like 300 h.'" Retrieved 12 June 2016, from http://ieltsielts.com/more/study-plans/.

[21] **事半功倍** (*si*^{22}*bun*^{33}*gung*^{55}*pui*^{23}/*shì bàn gōng bèi*).

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Chapter 6
Towards 'Biliteracy and Trilingualism' in Hong Kong (SAR): Problems, Dilemmas, and Stakeholders' Views

6.1 Hong Kong SAR's Language-in-Education Policy: Biliteracy and Trilingualism

Like many other parts of the world, Hong Kong's woman- and man-power needs have been largely conditioned by its principal economic realities. From the period between the two World Wars to about the end of the 1950s, Hong Kong prospered essentially through bustling entrepôt trade. In the next three decades until around the mid-1980s, manufacturing became the mainstay of economic activities, with "Made in Hong Kong" being the hallmark of this former British colony, which came to be known as "The Pearl of the Orient". Throughout this period, the needs for English in society were by and large limited to the upper echelons of government officials and business people, as well as senior administrators in the domains of education and law. This was reflected in the relatively restricted numbers of and societal needs for university graduates with a high level of English proficiency. Up until the early 1980s, the competition for a place in one of the two local universities – especially the English-medium University of Hong Kong – was very keen, with a success rate of barely 2.4% of all secondary school-leavers (Secondary 7 or Grade 13, aged around 18) per year (Poon 2010, p. 36; cf. Choi 1998, p. 187).

From the mid-1980s onwards, the manufacturing sector gradually gave way to several other sectors which are more characteristic of a knowledge-based economy. Of these, the most vibrant are banking, investment and finance, imports/exports, tele-communications, transport and logistics, tourism, hotels, restaurants, insurance, wholesale/retail trade, and real estate services. The 1980s also witnessed the gradual transformation of mainland China from a self-secluded communist state to an increasingly export-oriented economy after the open-door policy was enthusiastically embraced and actively implemented by the Beijing government under the

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leadership of the helmsman Deng Xiaoping, who championed the pragmatic sociopolitical party line of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. China's gradual integration into the global economy culminated in her successful accession to WTO in 2001. In August 2010, China overtook Japan as the world's second-largest economy and, by 2014, surpassed the USA in terms of the largest trading nation. All this has tremendous implications for the human resource planning and needs of the SAR, which is geopolitically located at the doorstep of China and which, until the late 1970s, served as China's sole gateway to the outside world. To the extent that business opportunities and transactions with non-Cantonese-speaking mainlanders take place increasingly in Putonghua, pragmatically minded Hongkongers have little choice but to expand their linguistic repertoire to include at least some Putonghua. In April 2009, the government-initiated Task Force on Economic Challenges (TFEC) identified six potential industries for future development: testing and certification, medical services, innovation and technology, cultural and creative industries, environmental industries, and (international) educational services (GovHK 2009). It can be seen that all of these niche industries, which are seen by the government as crucial for the SAR's sustained vitality and future development, require a high level of proficiency in English and Chinese (i.e., Cantonese, Putonghua, and Standard Written Chinese).[1]

Above is thus the background to the SAR government's needs-driven language-in-education policy 'biliteracy and trilingualism' (see Chap. 5), which was first proposed in the Education Commission Report No. 6 (Education Commission 1996) and officially announced in the first Policy Address delivered by Tung Chee Hwa, the first Chief Executive of the SAR government in October 1997 (Poon 2010, p. 43). It aims at graduating students with a reasonably high level of ability to speak Cantonese, English and Putonghua, and to read and write Chinese and English. The increasing need for a biliterate and trilingual workforce is also reflected in the percentage of students gaining access to postsecondary education: from a mere 2.4% of the relevant age group in the early 1980s to 18% in the mid-1990s (Poon 2010, p. 33; see also Lin and Man 2009). According to Poon (2010, pp. 43–46), since 2000, after active consultation with corporate leaders who were willing to play an active role towards improving the English proficiency of the local workforce, the policy of biliteracy and trilingualism has been gradually extended from direct funding in the education domain to other support measures for working adults in the business sector. For instance, the Workplace English Campaign (WEC) was launched in conjunction with the business sector (a total of 242 'corporate supporters' were listed) to encourage employees in various job positions to brush up their English by subsidizing their after-work studies in various continuing education programmes (Workplace English Campaign 2015). All employees who routinely need English at work are eligible for WEC subsidies.

[1] For an overview of the emergence of Hong Kong from a back-water fishing village in 1842 to an international financial center in the 1990s on par with New York and London (cf. 'NyLonKong'), and how historical, sociopolitical and economic developments have impacted on the SAR's language situation and language-in-education policy since the colonial era, see Poon (2010).

Apart from motivating employees to improve their English through sponsored course work, WEC also promotes the 'Hong Kong Workplace English Benchmarks' (HKWEB), and adopts a 4-point scale (i.e., Levels 1–4) to set realistic benchmarks for six job types, the purpose being to provide employers with reliable reference points in recruitment or staff development exercises: (i) clerks, (ii) executives/administrators/associate professionals, (iii) frontline service personnel, (iv) low proficiency job types, (v) receptionists/telephone operators, and (vi) secretaries (Workplace English Campaign 2015).

6.2 Learning English and Putonghua: Two Unfavourable Acquisitional Factors

6.2.1 English in Hong Kong (SAR): Second Language or Foreign Language?

As the majority of Chinese Hongkongers (over 90%) is Cantonese-speaking, Cantonese has always been the dominant vernacular cum regional lingua franca in the Pearl River Delta. This fact has important implications for the ease – or rather a lack of it – with which English and Putonghua are acquired. Since the non-Chinese population has until recently rarely exceeded 5%,[2] the English-speaking people, including the British during colonial times, have always been minority groups. This demographic detail helps explain why, despite the conspicuous presence of English in society – from shop names and street signs to menus and textbooks; from newspapers and magazines to public announcements and broadcast media – English is seldom used by (Chinese) Hongkongers for intraethnic communication among themselves (except in Cantonese-English code-switching or translanguaging, which takes place more often at the intra- than inter-sentential level, Li and Tse 2002; see Chap. 2). Indeed, in the absence of non-Cantonese speakers, the choice of English as the medium of communication is widely perceived as highly marked, probably out of concern for the co-speakers' ethnolinguistic identity (So 1998). One consequence of such a concern is that whoever initiates or persists in maintaining an English-only conversation with no non-Cantonese speakers around is expected to come up with some justification about that unusual language choice. This is what sets Chinese Hongkongers and, say, Chinese Singaporeans apart. In terms of opportunities for language practice or authentic use, what this means is that for the majority of Hongkongers, English has very little reality outside school premises or in their lifeworld. As C.-C. Choi (1998) observes:

[2] So (1998, p. 161) notes that "After 1842, a largely English-speaking expatriate community was also gradually formed in the territory, although various records indicate that the size of this community has never exceeded four percent of the total population."

> Hong Kong has never been able to provide conditions where the majority of its students can master English. There are many reasons for this, but the prime one has to be the lack of a language environment requiring the use of English. That is why it is unfair to compare English standards in Hong Kong and Singapore. Most Hong Kong students need not use English outside the classroom [and they] study English merely because it is a school subject and they are required to pass the examination. (C.-C. Choi 1998, p. 189)

In this regard, sociolinguists would say that Hong Kong lacks a conducive environment relative to the important goal of learning English effectively. No wonder many 'errors' or accuracy problems at the lexico-grammatical level are found at various stages of the learning process (see Chap. 4), thereby fueling criticisms in public discourse mediated by both the print and broadcast media. Setter et al. (2010) regard Hong Kong English (HKE) as an emergent variety, whose speakers vary greatly in their ability to use HKE across a wide spectrum from basilectal to acrolectal features (cf. Bolton 2000). In his book-length treatise on 'Chinese Englishes', including 'Hong Kong English', Bolton (2003) points out that for a long time, there has been a widely shared perception in Hong Kong society that the standards of English are declining. In this connection, he speaks of a 'complaint tradition' (cf. Milroy and Milroy 1985). At the policy level, before the handover, declining language standards was one of two main 'language problems' that the British colonial government was trying to resolve through effective language-in-education policy measures (the other being the use of 'mixed code' in class, Li 2008b; Lin 1997c, 2000; Poon 2010, 2013; see Chap. 5). However, those who complain fail to realize that following the gradual shift from elite education to mass education, the percentage of young people receiving higher education, especially at the university level, has increased considerably, leading to a general decline in average academic performance, including English. As noted by C.-C. Choi (1998), former Secretary of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority:

> Most people have formed their perception that the language standards have been falling through anecdotal evidence. (...) It is easy to forget that in those days, only about 3% of the relevant age group were able to go to university whereas now 18% are able to do so. (C.-C. Choi 1998, p. 187)

Above all, what is often ignored in such complaints and criticisms is the absence of a conducive environment for Hongkongers to practise using English beyond English lessons. Owing to Chinese Hongkongers' inhibition against initiating an English-only conversation among themselves, it is not obvious how the learners' classroom inputs may get consolidated through active meaning-making in natural communication with others. Regarding such a "sociolinguistic ecology", So (1998) comments that:

> the sociolinguistic ecology in Hong Kong is not conducive to the development of individual bilingualism, let alone bilingualism in the mode of *liǎng wén sān yǔ* [biliteracy and trilingualism]. In fact, we are looking at a sociolinguistic ecology wherein one will find it quite difficult to promote the social spread of Putonghua, and quite easy to lose the present degree of spread of English. (So 1998, p. 166)

Table 6.1 Number of respondents indicating 'few opportunities of use after school' was the main learning difficulty

Target language	Respondents (Primary 5)	Respondents (Secondary 1)	Respondents (Secondary 5)
English	573 (57.4%)	761 (70.8%)	979 (91.1%)
Putonghua	340 (70.3%)	303 (76.0%)	115 (53.9%)

Language Proficiency Survey conducted in 1994, So 1998, Table 5, p. 167

So's (1998) argument was borne out by the results of a survey he conducted with hundreds of students at Primary 5, Secondary 1 and Secondary 5 levels. When asked to pick from a list of factors that would make it difficult for them to learn English and/or Putonghua, most respondents selected 'few opportunities of use after school' (see Table 6.1).

This brings us to one interesting issue related to the functions and status of English in Hong Kong: is it more like a second language or a foreign language? As mentioned, English is seldom used by Chinese Hongkongers for intraethnic communication among themselves. This makes English more like a foreign than a second language (Li 1999/2008). At the same time, to the extent that English is one of the official languages (alongside Chinese) which is commonly and actively used, more in print than in speech, in the key domains of government, education, law and business, it functions more like a second language. Such characteristics make English in Hong Kong an untypical second or foreign language. This is probably why in the literature on 'Hong Kong English', different analyses and conclusions are arrived at depending on the World Englishes scholar. Braj Kachru (2005, p. 90) categorizes English in Hong Kong, along with that in China, as a foreign language, albeit a "fast-expanding" one. Falvey (1998) similarly considers it a "myth" to categorize English in Hong Kong as a second language (p. 76); instead, he believes its status is more like a foreign language (EFL) on the grounds that it "is learned primarily in the classroom with little assistance from the language environment" (p. 75). McArthur (2001, pp. 8–9), on the other hand, places Hong Kong along with Bangladesh, Brunei, Ghana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Singapore as one of "the ESL territories". Bolton (2003) likewise places it in the Outer Circle. The placement of Hong Kong in the Outer Circle or the Expanding Circle has theoretical implications in Kachru's three-concentric-circle model (1985, 1992) of World Englishes, namely 'norm-developing' (Outer Circle) vs. 'norm-dependent' (Expanding Circle). The above analysis suggests that a model featuring three concentric circles based essentially on nation-states in abstraction of tremendous variation within them is not as useful for characterizing the status and functions of English in a place like Hong Kong, where percentage-wise only a minority speaks English as a quasi-L1, while the majority of Chinese-English bilinguals fall within a cline of proficiency levels with 'proficient' at one end and 'barely intelligible' at the other. As Lin (1997a, c) argues, between these two poles lies a social divide along the lines of social class, such that for children who are born to middle class or well-to-do families who have the means and material support for English in the home domain, it functions more like a second than a foreign language to them. Conversely, for children born to working class parents with little or no support for English, it is more like a foreign language. Social class is thus an important intervening factor. Thus, in regard to the status of English as a second or foreign language in Hong Kong, any hard-and-fast generalization will not do justice to a segment of the population in the SAR. This is why English in Hong Kong is an untypical second or foreign language, which defies any attempt to have it placed in one Kachruvian circle or the other in a cut-and-dry manner.[3]

6.2.2 Typological Distance Between Chinese and English, and Linguistic Differences Between Cantonese and Putonghua

In addition to the absence of a conducive social environment for using and practising English, another major problem is linguistic, which is rooted in the fact that English and Chinese are typologically very dissimilar languages. English is an Indo-European language whereas Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family (Comrie 2009, p. 12; Lewis et al. 2016; Matthews and Yip 2011). As we saw in Chap. 4, phonologically many of the English pronunciation features (RP) are alien to Chinese ears, including the dental fricatives, stress-timed rhythm (as opposed to syllable-timed rhythm in Chinese), and consonant clusters, the latter being uncommon or not found in Chinese varieties (Hung 2000, 2002; cf. Deterding et al. 2008). Still other pronunciation difficulties are due to the Chinese learner's ignorance of phonotactic constraints regarding which English consonants may occur in the syllable- or word-final position. This is a major source of difficulty for Chinese learners of English in general, which often combines with the problems created by consonant clusters (Bob Bauer, personal communication).

Grammatically, most of the subsystems in English such as tenses and articles are non-existent in Chinese. In terms of lexis, apart from a small subset of loanwords borrowed from English (e.g., Cantonese words for *taxi* and *bus*, *strawberry* and *counter* [of a bank/hospital]), the number of cognates in English is negligible. As for the way the two languages are written, English is alphabetic while Chinese is logographic (Chap. 3). As a result of salient typological differences, therefore, very little of Chinese learners' knowledge of their mother tongue is of any use in the process of learning English – unlike learners from other cognate language pairs such as English and German (Germanic), or Spanish and Italian (Romance). Tremendous typological distance between Chinese (spoken Cantonese and written Chinese) and English thus helps explain why, for the majority of Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers, English is so difficult to learn, let alone to master (see Chap. 4 for more details).

[3] For a discussion of the extent to which English in Hong Kong may be characterized as a 'new variety' with regard to Susan Butler's (1997) five criteria, see Li (2008a, 2010).

What about Mandarin or Putonghua? Do Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers find it easy to acquire this national lingua franca of Greater China? As shown in Chap. 3, the answer is a qualified "yes". Since SWC is essentially based on Putonghua, learning to read logographic Chinese texts means that one naturally becomes more or less familiar with a large number of vocabulary words in the national language, albeit pronounced in their vernacular, Cantonese. This is the background against which Cantonese and Putonghua have evolved many cognates (Luke 2005). Thanks to the policy of mother tongue education (i.e., vernacular instruction in Cantonese) in the SAR, while knowledge of Putonghua is not a prerequisite for Chinese literacy development (H.-M Lee 2004, pp. 121–123; S.-L. Tang 2003; Tse 2001, 2014), there exists a diglossic gap between Mandarin- or Putonghua-based SWC and formal, (H) Cantonese at the lexico-grammatical and stylistic levels (cf. Snow 2004, 2008, 2010, 2013). In other words, many Putonghua expressions are pronounceable in Cantonese because, through vernacular instruction, learners in Hong Kong are taught to pronounce them in Cantonese rather than in Putonghua, as is different from mainland Chinese schools. As S.-K. Tse and his colleagues have argued (see, e.g., Lee et al. 2011; Tse 2001, 2014; Tse et al. 2007), however, precisely because SWC texts are taught and learned in Cantonese, Cantonese-dominant students' level of Chinese literacy attainment is in principle independent of their knowledge or grasp of Putonghua. This point is made even more clearly by Tang (2003), who states that:

> On the learning of written Chinese, the distinction between L1 and L2 is a non-issue. For Hong Kong students, Standard Written Chinese is the target language. This is not unlike [their peers in] the whole of Mainland China and Taiwan. (Tang 2003, p. 49, my translation)[4]

In terms of the actual give-and-take in a Chinese Language class, Poon (2010) gives a succinct description of a typical Chinese Language lesson before the curriculum reform was implemented in 2001:

> The teacher read out a text written in classical Chinese (if the text was written in Modern Standard Chinese [i.e., baihua or vernacular-based Chinese], the teacher would ask students to read once on their own), and then explain to students the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and the whole text, followed by asking students to do some exercises. (...) The only way to learn to write and pronounce Chinese characters is through rote learning; therefore, dictation of Chinese words and phrases is a compulsory component in Chinese language learning. (Poon 2010, p. 29)

Accordingly, students were expected to master the Chinese texts – forms and meanings – through rote-learning, a learning mode which has been deemphasized after the Chinese Language curriculum reform in 2001 (for typical pedagogic problems associated with the teaching of English, see Poon 2010 for details).

As far as writing Standard Chinese is concerned, in accordance with the Hong Kong (SAR) Basic Law, Chinese characters in Hong Kong SAR continue to be written in traditional forms, as opposed to simplified forms in mainland China (Snow

[4]「書面語的學習,根本不存在第一語言、第二語言的問題。香港學生學習書面語,完全以現代漢語爲目的語。這跟整個大陸以至台灣沒有兩樣。」(Tang 2003, p. 49)

2004, 2008; cf. see Li 2006, 2015a). In addition to the linguistic challenges arising from contrastive differences between the phonological systems in Cantonese and Putonghua (Chap. 3), learners’ exposure to Putonghua tends to be restricted to the language classroom, for, like in English, there are not many natural opportunities for meaningful practice beyond school premises (except for transactional communication purposes such as responding to Putonghua-speaking tourists’ questions in the street or traveling in non-Cantonese-speaking parts of China).

6.3 Toward Biliteracy and Trilingualism: Challenges and Dilemmas in the MoI Debate

The language-in-education policy in Hong Kong has been a source of tremendous social tension in the last two decades (Lin and Man 2009; Poon 2010; see Chap. 5). Few would dispute the usefulness of English in the white-collar workplace. Given that English is seldom used for intraethnic communication, however, for the majority of Hongkongers school is almost the only domain in which they get exposure in English, which is taught and learned from kindergarten to tertiary level. Until the end of primary education (Primary 6/Grade 6, age 11–12), with few exceptions the teaching medium is mainly Cantonese. At the onset of secondary education (roughly Grade 7), however, since September 1998 the ‘mother tongue education’ policy stipulates that schools must teach in Chinese (spoken Cantonese, and traditional as opposed to simplified Chinese characters), unless they can demonstrate that a critical mass of no less than 85% of the students in the Secondary One intake have the ability to learn through the medium of English effectively (Education Department, April 1997, Annexes I & II, pp. 8–9). As a rule, more stringent threshold standards and qualifications were set for in-service and pre-service teachers of English in EMI schools. As of 2000, there were about 30% of over 400 secondary schools which met this EMI requirement.

A review of the compulsory Chinese medium-of-instruction policy was conducted in 2005. In the Report on *Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation* published in December 2005 (Education Commission 2005), such requirements continued to be upheld. The rationale for these requirements is to ensure that students opting for EMI must have the aptitude and ability to study through the medium of English, as determined by the Medium-of-Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) results. Bowing to severe criticisms and societal pressure amplified by mass media, in 2005 the Education Bureau undertook to introduce a mechanism whereby existing CMI schools could become EMI, while EMI schools would be obliged to switch (back) to CMI if the stringent requirements were not met. Such a mechanism came to be known as the ‘Changing Train’ policy, which however had to be shelved after the resignation of the EDB Director in June 2007 due to a prolonged and widely publicized scandal involving allegations of interference of academic freedom (see Poon 2010, pp. 41–42 for details). In place of the 'Changing Train' policy, a fine-tuning policy was announced in May 2009 under Secretary for Education Michael Suen, and subsequently implemented from September 2010 (Education Bureau 2009, 2010, 2012a, b; cf. Poon et al. 2013).

In sum, the language situation became more complicated after the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China in July 1997. Being the national language taught and learned by practically all Chinese nationals across mainland China, Putonghua is an important symbol of national unity, and so there seems no reason why Hong Kong Chinese should be exempted from learning to understand and speak Putonghua. English has evolved into an international or global lingua franca (Jenkins 2003; Seidlhofer 2004; Kirkpatrick 2007). While Putonghua is as yet nowhere near being a contender for that position, it is fast becoming a regional lingua franca in Greater China among ethnic Chinese, witness the growing number of Confucius Institutes worldwide. In their mission and objectives, Confucius Institutes are comparable to other more established national counterparts like British Council (English), Alliance Française (French), Goethe Institut (German) and Instituto Cervantes (Spanish). The increasing demand for the Chinese language worldwide is indicative of China's expanding political and economic influence internationally, suggesting that in the not-too-distant future a knowledge of Putonghua and Chinese literacy has great potential for making the bilingual speaker more competitive in the global job market. In short, being able to speak English *and* Putonghua fluently will be an important asset for anyone preparing for a professional career in the multilingual workplace. This is one major reason why English and Putonghua figure so prominently in the SAR's language-in-education policy of 'biliteracy and trilingualism'.

The rationale behind the needs-driven 'biliteracy and trilingualism' policy is hardly disputable. What remains controversial is the right and reasonable target level of attainment. To my knowledge, no attempt has been made to define exactly what level of 'biliteracy and trilingualism' is intended. For example, is it '*balanced* biliteracy and trilingualism' or '*functional* biliteracy and trilingualism'? And, once the goalpost is agreed, how do we get from where we are to where we want to be? Informed by fine-grained analysis of Hong Kong's language problems from multiple angles, notably historical, sociopolitical and economic, Poon (2010, 2013) makes a cogent argument that, from the colonial to the postcolonial era, successive Hong Kong governments' lack-luster performance in harnessing the city's language problems is due largely to the absence of language planning (especially status planning) that guides the implementation of an ad hoc language-in-education policy. Regarding the choice between balanced vs. functional biliteracy and trilingualism, given "the domain-specific distribution of languages in the communicative environment of multilinguals, preferred [language] choice, ease of access, etc.," balanced bilingualism is unlikely to be a realistic goalpost (Meisel 2004, p. 94). As Meisel further observes after reviewing research on linguistic development in a multilingual setting for 25 years:

> The question of whether a bilingual person can achieve (...) 'balanced bilingualism' has led to controversy, and it has, indeed, been argued repeatedly that such balanced bilingualism might not be possible. (...) [balanced bilingualism] clearly refers to language proficiency

> and to performance in both languages. (...) Mainly because most bilinguals do not use both languages equally frequently in all domains, they tend not to be 'balanced' in their proficiency for each of the languages. (Meisel 2004, p. 94)

In the public discourse of the SAR in the past 20 years, however, the language-in-education policy of biliteracy and trilingualism is implicitly understood as native-speaker-based standards in terms of the four skills (hence 'balanced' rather than 'functional'), as evidenced in the 'complaint tradition' and frequent reference to Cantonese-L1 learners/users' 'common errors' in English (and in Putonghua occasionally). It should be clear that *functional* biliteracy and trilingualism, understood as Cantonese-L1 learners/users' ability to use the two written and three spoken languages to varying degrees of proficiency and for different purposes, is a more realistic goalpost (cf. 'truncated repertoire', Blommaert 2010).

Since explicit instruction through classroom teaching tends to be the only means by which the majority of Hongkongers can gain access to English and Putonghua, for nearly two decades there has been an ongoing debate regarding the most productive way(s) of teaching these two important languages (for English, see e.g., Chan 2015; Johnson 1997; Johnson and Swain 1997; Lin 1996, 1997a, b, 1999, 2015a, b; Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Lo and Lin 2015; Tavares 2015; for Putonghua, see Tong and Mok 2000; Tong et al. 2000, 2006).

Lin and Man (2009) offer a timely, detailed account of the key issues involved in the medium-of-instruction debate. Various bilingual education models and experiences which have been implemented in other countries like Canada, Singapore and Malaysia are discussed and their relevance to Hong Kong carefully analyzed. The 'mother tongue education' policy, introduced in September 1998, consists of streaming primary school leavers to English-medium (EMI) and Chinese-medium (CMI) Secondary schools depending on their relative academic performance in Chinese and English as shown in their MIGA results. This 'late immersion' policy, effective for three years till the end of Junior High School (Secondary 3, Grade 9, aged around 15) under the 9-year compulsory education arrangement, is premised on the theoretical assumption that teachers and learners ought to stick to the same language of classroom interaction, be it English or Cantonese. Any form of 'code-mixing' is seen as undesirable and detrimental to the development of the target language (Chap. 5). At the same time, 'code-mixing', especially in the EMI classroom, is often viewed as a result of students' low proficiency in English (Poon 2010), even though the factors leading to 'code-mixing' in society or in the education sector are considerably more complex. For instance, there is empirical evidence of 'code-mixing' among Cantonese-L1 students being triggered by a 'medium-of-learning effect', that is, English-L2 learners' psycholinguistic dependence on English terminologies as a direct result of studying through the medium of English (Li 2011; see Chap. 2).

After being implemented for over a decade, the late immersion policy did not seem to be as effective as hoped, as shown in the English language attainment of students' public examination results across the board.[5] What is even more disappointing are the empirical findings of three longitudinal studies (Tsang 2002, 2006, 2008), showing CMI students' early advantage in academic performance over their EMI peers from Secondary 1 (Grade 7) being gradually narrowed, while their chances for entering university were only half compared with those who had studied through the medium of English from lower secondary onwards. All this has sparked criticisms and triggered debates regarding alternative modes of bilingual education. One alternative mode was mixed-mode teaching, whereby less language-dependent subjects such as Music, Art and Mathematics are taught in English, while more language-dependent subjects such as History and Geography are taught in the students' mother tongue (see Lin and Man 2009 for more details). There is increasing consensus that, far from being a symptom of unsuccessful or low-quality learning, classroom code-switching (at the inter-sentential level) or 'code-mixing' (at the intra-sentential level), if done judiciously, has good potential for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in content subject classes.

Towards the beginning of the second decade of the new millennium, in recognition of the pedagogic value and facilitative role of students' first language(s) in the process of acquiring a second or foreign language like English, more and more critical applied linguists and experts in bilingual education prefer more neutral terms such as 'translanguaging' (García 2009; García and Li 2014), 'translingual practice' (Canagarajah 2013a, b), and 'flexible education' (Weber 2014). First used by Welsh researchers to refer to the pedagogic practice where the input (reading and listening) is in language A and the output in language B (speaking and writing, Williams 1996), the term translanguaging has been extended to refer to all situations involving social interactions between bilinguals, in the classroom and beyond (Lewis et al. 2012a, b; García and Lin in press). With regard to the relationship between classroom language choice and learning outcomes in content subjects, what is needed is methodologically well-conceived empirical studies of translanguaging, showing how learning with a content subject focus is facilitated and made more effective through the deployment of pedagogically productive translanguaging strategies and practices along the lines of empirical studies conducted by Angel Lin and her research team in the Special Issue on 'Designing multilingual and multimodal CLIL frameworks for EFL students', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (Chan 2015; Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Lo and Lin 2015; Tavares 2015; see also Cenoz 2015; Li 2015b).

The MoI debate is further compounded by the introduction of Putonghua as a compulsory core subject in primary school from 1998 (and as an elective subject in secondary schools). Putonghua has also been used as the medium of instruction (PMI) for teaching the Chinese Language subject (**普教中**, *pou^{35}gaau^{33}zung^{55}* in common parlance) in some schools under the aegis of the SAR government (for details, see Chap. 7). The government has made it clear that teaching Chinese in

[5] Before September 2012: Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE); after September 2012: Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE).

Putonghua is a long-term goal. Opponents are concerned about the continued vitality of the community's (now) dominant vernacular – once school children are no longer taught to pronounce Chinese characters in Cantonese (see, e.g., Bauer 2000). And, in terms of facilitating learning and teaching, there is no doubt that using the students' (and teachers') most familiar vernacular – Cantonese for the majority – as the medium of instruction will remove unwanted language barriers in the give-and-take between teachers and students. One way out of the quagmire, according to some advocates of a radical position, is to implement real 'mother-tongue education' by officially declaring Cantonese to be the primary (i.e., unmarked) language of instruction in secondary education across the board (e.g., Bauer 2000). It remains unclear, however, how such a position would be received by stakeholders – notably the government, parents and educationalists – and whether the outcome of English-learning would be compromised.

In the rest of this chapter, I will briefly outline the main concerns of the SAR government and various groups of stakeholders vis-à-vis the vicissitudes or "frequent governmental policy changes" with regard to English as the medium of instruction (Poon 2013, p. 35): employers, parents, school principals, teachers and educationalists, and students. The purpose is to help disentangle the complexity of the picture viewed from their respective vantage points (cf. Tung et al. 1997).

6.4 The MoI Debate: Key Stakeholders' Concerns

Hong Kong (SAR) Government It is almost a cliché today to say that Hong Kong is the meeting place between East and West. Her success story, one that features a remarkable transformation from a sleepy fishing village in the 1840s to an international metropolis cum global financial center rivaling New York, London and Tokyo in the twenty-first century, is arguably *sui generis*. For all this to happen, it can hardly be denied that English has played an instrumental role, albeit with the key players being members of the English-educated elite. Like the central government in Beijing, the SAR government is acutely aware of the significance of English to the continued well-being of Hong Kong, and so English figures prominently in the curricula of the local education system. Every year, a significant percentage of the SAR's GDP amounting to billions of (HK) dollars is budgeted for education-related expenses, with a view to improving the quality of English language teaching and learning (Miller and Li 2008), but the overall returns are disproportionate and disappointing by any standards. The two main factors discussed above – a lack of a conducive English-learning and English-using environment on one hand, and tremendous typological differences between the two languages Chinese and English on the other – represent two main obstacles which militate against the government's efforts to upgrade Hongkongers' general proficiency and standards of English. The promotion of Putonghua through classroom teaching is no easy task either. Apart from considerable phonological differences between Cantonese and Putonghua, a lack of opportunities for meaningful practice outside the classroom is another real obstacle. A further thorny issue is the limited number of qualified teachers of Putonghua, who are needed in the thousands given the size of the schooling population at primary level (over 50,000 at Primary 1) each year. These obstacles notwithstanding, there are two recent trends which seem to provide some room for optimism. First, in the 'fine-tuning policy' the government seems to have adopted a more tolerant stance toward the 'mixing' of languages in the school curriculum which, as Lin and Man (2009) have observed, could be an effective bilingual education strategy if done properly (cf. Lin 1996, 1999). This is especially welcome because, regardless of students' English proficiency, classroom code-switching cannot be entirely avoided (Lo 2015). Second, as a correlate of the last point, if classroom code-switching ceases to be a taboo, bilingual teachers may use it as a possible situated response to low-proficiency students' problems in their EMI learning of content subjects (e.g., Biology, Geography and History) where appropriate. Legitimating the use of students' L1 in EMI lessons, however, is not to encourage an 'anything goes' teaching philosophy, but to acknowledge that its judicious use should be recognized as an important and integral part of the teacher's bilingual instruction skills set (Lo 2015). Once the 'no mixed code allowed' shackles are lifted, bilingual teachers may focus on pedagogically sound alternatives to classroom code-switching to students' L1, as the resourceful teachers' teaching strategies in Lo's (2015) study have demonstrated. Lo's (2015) alternative teaching strategies are summarized by Li (2015b, p. 338) as follows:

(a) recasting or paraphrasing the student's Cantonese response in English with a view to providing the English expression needed for that meaning;
(b) using the strategy of think-pair-share to encourage peer learning and boost students' confidence before asking them to respond to teacher-led questions;
(c) Socratic questioning to provide clues and modify questions to scaffold and facilitate students' uptake of the target L2 expressions; and
(d) consolidating students' understanding by reiterating or illustrating the key concepts in English.

Such exemplary teaching strategies, which are in line with the premises of content-and-language integrated learning (CLIL), are promising, in that they point to pedagogically sound bilingual instruction practices that have been shown to be conducive to students' learning in the target language (Lin 2015a, b).

Employers Opening the job advertisement pages of any local newspapers on any day, including e-dailies, one will notice that virtually all of the job adverts – from managers to messengers – require applicants to have at least some knowledge of English, in addition to Cantonese. Where interaction with non-Cantonese-speaking business representatives in mainland China is an important part of the job specification, an additional working knowledge of Putonghua is a must. Today, the business environment in Hong Kong, like elsewhere in Greater China, clearly favors plurilingual workers. Those who are conversant in more than one Chinese 'dialect' (e.g., Shanghainese or Chiu Chow, the latter being the home dialect of Mr. Li Ka-Shing, a well-known philanthropist and the richest person in Hong Kong) will have an advantage – if their wider linguistic repertoire could be put to meaningful use on the job. Indeed, plurilingualism is increasingly valued by multinational consortiums as an important asset and a key to business success (Li 2007). No wonder employers from the business sector are among the most vocal critics, whose voices deploring Hong Kong students' 'declining English proficiency' are often amplified in mass media, print and electronic (cf. the 'complaint tradition', Bolton 2003; see also Chap. 4). While similar criticisms have not yet been extended to Hongkongers' non-standard Putonghua, such criticisms are conceivable the more widespread Putonghua becomes in the local business sector. It is therefore understandable why some business enterprises are among the staunchest supporters of various language enhancement schemes (e.g., HSBC's support for workplace English), typically in addition to boosting their staff's language skills through in-house, on-the-job corporate training, which tends to include some elements of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and, increasingly, Putonghua as well.

Parents Where possible, most Hong Kong parents would opt for English-medium education for their children (So 1992). To those who can afford it, apart from the obvious choice of hiring an English-speaking domestic helper, typically from the Philippines, to create opportunities for using English at home, resources are set aside to provide their children with additional exposure to and support for their English proficiency development. Common practices include: cultivating children's sensitivity to and interest in English through all kinds of language games (e.g., Disney English); engaging an English-L1 private tutor after school; sending children to playgroups or classes where interaction with native English-speaking instructors is a selling point; attending English immersion programs overseas in summer, and the like. Cantonese-L1 parents who are fluent in English are often seen teaching or testing English to their children, a social practice that is commonly observed in public spaces such as Mass Transit Railway (MTR) compartments, play areas in the park, and elevators. In some cases, the quality of Cantonese-L1 parents' spoken English makes one wonder whether the child would get enlightened or end up being more confused. And, to outsmart the school allocation system whereby primary school-leavers are assigned to CMI and EMI secondary schools, some parents would reportedly move into neighborhoods with a heavier concentration of English-medium schools, so as to maximize the chance of their children being allocated to one of those Band 1 schools. Resources permitting, Cantonese-L1 parents would do any or all of the above, just to ensure that their children would 'not lose out at the starting line'[6] when it comes to beating that long, highly competitive selection process up the education hierarchy from preschool to tertiary, where one's life chances are bound up with how much progress in English they have made at every stage along the way. In terms of learning outcomes, the means tends to justify the end, for those children who get extra home support for English often outperform those whose exposure is limited within school premises (Lin 1997a).

[6] Popular saying in Chinese: 不要輸在起跑線上 (*bú yào shū zài qǐpǎoxiàn shàng*/*bat*^{55} *jiu*^{33} *syu*^{55} *zoi*^{22} *hei*^{35}*paau*^{35}*sin*^{33} *soeng*^{22}).

Such a parental craving for English has been variously analyzed as a form of passive, uncritical submission to the global hegemony of English ('English linguistic imperialism' being a form of 'linguicism', Phillipson 1992), as opposed to an active, conscious wish to embrace and partake of the linguistic capital of the de facto global language (Li 2002; cf. So 1992). In any case, it cannot be denied that many Hong Kong parents tend to be unaware of the kinds of support or preconditions needed – if the placement of their child in an EMI school is to be an educationally sound decision. Crucial to this decision are two key factors: the amount of home support for English (e.g., one or more English-speaking parent, access to a private tutor, availability of learning resources such as language games, etc.), and their child's aptitude to learn through the medium of English. Research in SLA has shown that some children/learners are more gifted at foreign language learning than others (see, e.g., Skehan 1989; Dörnyei 2005). In the absence of either condition – or worse, both conditions – then requiring non-English-speaking children to learn content subjects through English is not at all a wise decision. Indeed, in whichever direction the MoI policy may be further developing, there is clearly a need for the government to step up the efforts to 'educate' parents in order to bring home this important message. This could be done, for example, by producing publicity materials and pointing the way to useful resources, including those on the Internet, so that parents could be alerted to various factors which are conducive to effective language learning. This type of information may be useful for helping at least some parents to arrive at their own informed decisions.

School Principals School principals have the responsibility of ensuring the survival of their school, which hinges on how successful it is in attracting academically high-performing students. Given Hong Kong parents' preference for English-medium education, being able to claim 'EMI status' would naturally work to the advantage of the school. The government is clearly aware of this, and so a lot of efforts have been made to monitor the qualifications and actual EMI-teaching capabilities of the teaching staff in self-proclaimed EMI schools. One critical issue arising from the mother tongue education policy is stigmatization: other things being equal, a CMI school/student is generally perceived as lower in standard compared with an EMI school/student. This has been a major point of contention between supporters and opponents of this policy; it is also ostensibly the main reason for the 'fine-tuning' initiative introduced in 2009 (Poon 2013), which according to government officials is intended to deliberately blur the distinction between CMI and EMI schools as part of an attempt to counteract social stigmas engendered by the labeling effect of the dual MoI streaming policy (Chap. 5).

Teachers and Educationalists Stigmatization as a direct consequence of the dual MoI streaming policy is one of the most serious concerns among conscientious teachers and educationalists. Another main concern of frontline teachers is the government's stance toward (Cantonese-English) 'code-mixing', which is commonplace in those EMI lessons (including English lessons in CMI schools) where keeping to English often makes it difficult for students to follow. As we saw earlier, until recently the government was rather intolerant of 'code-mixing', largely out of a concern that 'mixing' the languages would deprive students of precious exposure to good English (Chap. 5). This concern is well taken; yet one lingering problem remains: by sticking to a language which is less familiar to some students and unfamiliar to others, the immediate and arguably higher-order objective of learning and critical thinking is being sacrificed (P.-K. Choi 2003; W.-Y. Tang 2004). In this regard, Angel Lin and her colleagues have identified a variety of pedagogical concerns leading EMI teachers of various content-subjects (e.g., Geography, History, Science and Mathematics) to switch to their students' L1, Cantonese (Chan 2015; Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Lo and Lin 2015; Tavares 2015; see also Cenoz 2015 and Li 2015b). For Cantonese-dominant students whose English proficiency prevents them from coping with the learning of EMI subjects effectively, translanguaging to their L1 should clearly be an option in the bilingual teacher's inventory of teaching strategies, provided this is done judiciously.

Students Hong Kong students are clearly aware of the linguistic capital associated with the successful acquisition of English and, to a lesser extent, Putonghua. Owing to the above-mentioned obstacles, however, the majority tend to find it a very difficult if not an impossible task to master both languages effectively (see Chaps. 3 and 4). For primary students, as a selection process the dual MoI streaming policy is a source of anxiety. Once the results are announced, both EMI and CMI students have their respective worries. EMI students would worry about, among other things, having to learn – typically by rote – a seemingly endless list of English vocabulary words in the textbook of practically every school subject (except Chinese Language and Chinese History). The teachers' input is often difficult to follow if not downright incomprehensible. Whether the EMI student is able to cope depends to a large extent on the availability of home support and/or access to additional private tuition. CMI students, on the other hand, may have the 'luxury' of learning through their mother tongue, but they will have to put up with a lingering concern that in the long run, they may be worse off as they do not have a body of English vocabulary for academic purposes, especially field-specific terminologies, which is crucial for gaining access to higher education, in particular securing a place in a local university. In the past decade, there is ample evidence, including longitudinal research and news reports, showing how CMI Secondary school leavers are disadvantaged by a lack of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) knowledge in high-stake public exams such as HKCEE and HKALE (e.g., research conducted by Tsang Wing Kwong and associates, CUHK 2008; see also Clem 2008) and/or after they have successfully entered an EMI university. The research question – when is the most opportune time for effecting a transition from CMI to EMI education (i.e., Secondary 4, 5 or 6) – remains a tricky one. Finally, it should be remembered that CMI students, who make up the majority (ca. 70%) of all secondary school-leavers, are the most vulnerable of various stakeholder groups, for they are the ones who bear the brunt of stigmatization. Many have to cope really hard to overcome the psychological barrier of being socially labeled 'second rate'.

6.5 Conclusion

There is no doubt that Hong Kong SAR, the most cosmopolitan and internationalized of all Chinese metropolises, has evolved into and depends for its survival on how well it fares as a knowledge-based economy. Most of the economic activities require a workforce with a reasonably high level of proficiency in English and Putonghua. Given the significance of these two languages to Hong Kong's socio-economic vitality, continued prosperity and sustainable development, it comes as no surprise that English and Putonghua should figure so prominently in the Hong Kong SAR government's language-in-education policy. In terms of teaching and learning effectiveness, Poon (2010, p. 47) laments that "[w]hile billions of dollars have been invested to promote biliteracy and trilingualism since the handover in 1997, ironically, language standards of students in Hong Kong – particularly those of students of English – have declined still further".

There are two rather serious problems as the government and citizens of "Asia's World City" alike grapple with the task of becoming biliterate in Chinese and English, and trilingual in Cantonese, English and Putonghua. The first problem is concerned with a lack of a conducive language environment for using and practising English and Putonghua in authentic situations. Another way of putting it would be to say that being more like foreign languages, English and Putonghua are hardly used for authentic meaning-making purposes among Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers. The use of only English or Putonghua when conversing with fellow (Cantonese-speaking) Chinese Hongkongers is so highly marked that one is burdened with some sort of justification if one initiates, and seeks to maintain, an English-only or Putonghua-only conversation. Conversely, one could say that the widely perceived unmarked language choice for intraethnic communication is Cantonese, a fact that may be explained by the demographic or ethnolinguistic pattern of Hong Kong, which for a long time has been a predominantly Cantonese-speaking Chinese society (So 1992). Indeed, as Bolton (2003) has observed, in earlier sociolinguistic research on Hongkongers' language use patterns, it was not uncommon to find commentaries that Hong Kong was ethnically a (relatively) homogenous society.

Another major problem concerns the high degree of linguistic dissimilarity between Cantonese, Standard Chinese, and English (Chaps. 3 and 4). Typologically, Chinese and English belong to different language families with diverse linguistic characteristics from phonology to lexico-grammar, from varying information sequencing norms to learner-unfriendly orthographies. In terms of the relative (un) ease of acquisition, one consequence for Hong Kong Chinese learners of English – more like a foreign than a second language – is that linguistically very little of what they know about their mother tongue (Cantonese) has any reference value in the strenuous process of learning English. While the same cannot be said of the learning of Putonghua, which shares many cognates with Cantonese lexico-grammatically and which adopts the same orthography, it is no easy task for Cantonese-speaking

Hongkongers to master the pronunciation system in Putonghua.[7] The considerable discrepancy between the vernacular and SWC suggests that the term 'mother tongue education' is in one sense a misnomer, for Hong Kong Chinese school children do not write the way they speak (Li 2000, 2006, 2015a; cf. Snow 2004, 2008, 2010, 2013).

In short, for Chinese Hongkongers the road toward biliteracy and trilingualism is a bumpy one and those on board are riddled with plenty of dilemmas. Everyone knows that the continued well-being of Hong Kong SAR depends crucially on a biliterate and trilingual workforce. However, the collective ethnolinguistic identity of Chinese Hongkongers is so strong that initiating or maintaining a conversation in a language other than Cantonese is generally perceived as highly marked and in need of some sort of justification (sometimes implicitly, e.g., to avoid excluding a non-Cantonese-speaker in social interaction). This results in an odd situation commonly found in foreign language learning settings: many eager learners of English are ready to pay an exorbitant fee to some tutorial center, typically charged by the hour, just to be given the opportunity to practice using the target language with other like-minded learners, often under the guidance of a native English-speaking tutor. This consumer demand is probably what the writer of the following advertising slogan for a learning center had in mind (english town, May, 2009): "It is wrong to study English!",[8] with a subtext in Chinese that may be glossed as 'you can't master English by studying it, for practice is the key, which is our teaching philosophy'. The same may be said of the learning of Putonghua: many are aware that a high level of proficiency in the national language is a key that helps open more doors in the workplace, and yet outside the classroom it is very difficult to find natural opportunities for meaningful practice.

In short, the learning of English and Putonghua is very much confined to classroom teaching as a school subject. The limitations of this teaching and learning approach are well known, and so for nearly two decades, the Hong Kong (SAR) government has sought to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness by providing EMI education to those students who have demonstrated a certain level of ability to learn through English. In particular, before 2010/11, students were selected through a scoring mechanism known as MIGA, or Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (Poon 2010, p. 33; see also Lin and Man 2009). From September 2010 onwards, MIGA was replaced with a new version of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism for streaming all primary-school leavers to CMI/EMI schools. Nearly two decades after the 'mother tongue education' policy has been implemented, the language learning outcomes leave much to be desired. Worse, as briefly discussed above, the policy has also antagonized various groups of

[7] Similar learning difficulties may be expected of those learning Cantonese as an additional language, but research has shown that speakers of English can get by with little or no knowledge of Cantonese (Tinker Sachs and Li 2007; Li et al. 2016), while the Putonghua speakers often assume that Hongkongers will make an effort to speak to them in Putonghua (e.g., mainland tourists shopping in Hong Kong).

[8] 「學英語是錯的!」 (*hok*^{22}*jing*^{55}*jyu*^{23}*si*^{22}*co*^{33}*dik*^{55}/*xué yīngyǔ shì cuò de*).

stakeholders, who are displeased with that policy in one way or another. Some of their more salient concerns are summarized as follows:

- Employers find it difficult to recruit employees with a high-enough level of English and Putonghua skills needed for the workplace;
- Parents resent dwindling opportunities for their children to gain access to English-medium education;
- Principals of CMI schools are weary of adverse consequences brought about by the public's perception that their teachers and students "lack the competence" to teach and learn in English; falling student numbers would pose a threat to the school's survival;
- Teachers – of CMI and EMI schools alike – find it difficult to abide by an EDB guideline against any form of classroom code-switching (CCS) or translanguaging; and
- Students of CMI students have to put up with being stigmatized and socially labeled as 'second rate', while many EMI students have to cope with varying degrees of cognitive problems in the process of learning through a language that they are unfamiliar or less familiar with.

The rationale behind the 'biliteracy and trilingualism' policy is beyond dispute, which to a large extent may be regarded as a linguistic reality thrust upon Hongkongers as the former British colony gradually evolved into a knowledge-based economy toward the end of the last century. In the absence of a conducive language-learning environment, and given the considerable linguistic differences between Cantonese/Chinese and English on one hand, and Cantonese and Putonghua on the other, it does not seem obvious how the many dilemmas of various stakeholder groups outlined above may be resolved. The 'fine-tuning policy', implemented since September 2010, has given schools more flexibility in terms of language choice for a particular class or subject (subject to specific EDB guidelines). Insofar as it aims to minimize social divisiveness by blurring the CMI/EMI divide, it is worthy of support. Learning through an unfamiliar language, like fighting an uphill battle, can be very tiring and frustrating. To inform ongoing policy adjustments, what is needed is sound empirical research in locally based bilingual teaching strategies, as well as methodologically well-conceived experimentation with different modes of immersion and models of bilingual education along the pedagogic principle of Content-and-language integrated learning (CLIL), as Angel Lin and her research team have been exploring (Chan 2015; Lin 2015a; Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Lo and Lin 2015; Tavares 2015; cf. Cenoz 2015; Li 2015b).

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Chapter 7
Medium-of-Instruction Debate II: Teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP)?

> *We are in a nascent stage of understanding the brain mechanisms underlying infants' early flexibility with regard to the acquisition of language – their ability to acquire language by eye or by ear, and acquire one or multiple languages – and also the reduction in this initial flexibility that occurs with age, which dramatically decreases our capacity to acquire a new language as adults (…). The infant brain is exquisitely poised to "crack the speech code" in a way that the adult brain cannot.* (Kuhl 2010, p. 715)

7.1 Introduction

Hong Kong being a Special Administrative Region of China, there is a natural expectation for younger generations of Hongkongers to be conversant in Putonghua, the national lingua franca, when communicating with Chinese Mainlanders. Accordingly, Putonghua has a special place in the postcolonial language-in-education policy of biliteracy and trilingualism:[1] in writing, being able to read and write Chinese and English, and, in speech, to interact with others in Putonghua, in addition to Cantonese and English (cf. Wang and Kirkpatrick 2015). It was against this background that various options for including Putonghua in the local curriculum were explored before the handover. For instance, three alternative models of teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP)[2] curriculum design were considered (see Ho et al. 2005, pp. 68–88):

(a) TCP without Putonghua being taught as a separate subject;
(b) TCP with Putonghua being taught as a separate subject; and
(c) TCP with Putonghua being taught as a separate subject, Putonghua elements (esp. pronunciation features) being infused into the TCP curriculum.

Since 1998, Putonghua has become a compulsory core subject in primary school and elective subject in secondary school. From 2000, Putonghua has been included

[1] 兩文三語 (*loeng*[23]*man*[21]*saam*[55]*jyu*[23]/*liǎng wén sān yǔ*).

[2] 普教中 (*pou*[35]*gaau*[33]*zung*[55]/*pǔ jiào zhōng*) in common parlance.

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as an optional subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), which was abolished and replaced with the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) in 2012/13. Apart from teaching Putonghua as a subject (typically up to two hours per week, Chau 2004, p. 132), another move was the piloting of using Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject at primary level. Before this move, the Chinese Language subject, like all other subjects (except English) in most primary schools and Chinese-medium secondary schools (including Chinese in English-medium schools), had always been taught in Cantonese. When first introduced in the first few years of the new millennium, the government-funded TCP initiative was taken up by only a small number of primary schools and an even smaller number of secondary schools. Limited curriculum space has been one major challenge. As the primary curriculum is already quite packed, it is not obvious how Putonghua could be conveniently incorporated without disrupting the teaching and key learning outcomes of other subjects. For Cantonese-L1 students, Putonghua medium of instruction (PMI) for learning content subjects is clearly not an option. This is why in most of the primary schools Putonghua was taught as a subject for two or three 35–40-min lessons per week, with or without Putonghua being used as the MoI for teaching the Chinese Language subject. By mid-2016, according to media reports, about 70% of the 400+ primary schools have experimented with teaching Chinese in Putonghua in one way or another (i-Cable report 2016; Sing Tao Daily 2016).

In the last two decades since the 1990s, various issues related to the teaching of Putonghua, including TCP, received greater attention in Hong Kong and generated a sizable body of research, including small-scale studies on the effectiveness and assessment of Putonghua teaching, often explorative in nature. Much of this body of research appears in specialized monographs written in Chinese, some of which carrying a clear focus on the teaching and learning of Putonghua. A wide range of topics are covered: from a collection of articles by experienced teachers and researchers on various pedagogical issues in the teaching of Putonghua (e.g., Education Department 1997; Tian 1997) to more theoretical deliberations (e.g., Ho et al. 2005; Kwok 2005; Lai 2010), and from issues more specifically related to curriculum design and teaching methods (e.g., Tong et al. 2000, 2006) to one local secondary school's sharing of TCP experience[3] (Cho 2005; cf. Cho and Kwo 2005). In anticipation of wider interests among teachers and educationists, and commonly heard queries regarding the feasibility and methods of TCP, Ho (2002a) adopts a trouble-shooting style by structuring the book in the form of experts' response to a list of frequently asked questions. The quality and level of Chinese teachers' Putonghua pronunciation is evidently a matter of concern to the Education Department (1997), which is probably why in that (1997) monograph, several

[3] Wai Kiu College [惠僑英文中學] was one of the 49 participating secondary schools sponsored by the Education Department in experimenting with the teaching of Chinese in Putonghua (see Preface, Cho 2005). Some 10 years after that 2005 monograph was published, the College continues to use Putonghua to teach the Chinese Language subject at Secondary 1 and 2 (http://www.wkc.edu.hk/w3/k2.html).

articles are devoted to the teaching of Putonghua using pinyin, focusing on Cantonese speakers' Putonghua pronunciation problems and how teachers may cope with them (Ching 1997a, b; Hui 1997; Wu 1997). Below is an overview of some of the recurrent topics and views expressed.

Ho (1999), whose detailed analysis of Putonghua pronunciation errors was reviewed in Chap. 3, is to my knowledge the most comprehensive Cantonese-Putonghua contrastive study to date (see also Chan and Zhu 2010, 2015; Ho 2002b, 2005; Lee-Wong 2013; Ng 2001; Tsang 1991, 2002, 2003, 2014; P.-K. Wong 1997).[4] In 23 chapters, Si et al. (1997) review the current and future status of Putonghua teaching and learning in Hong Kong, and give a comprehensive coverage and discussion of relevant theories and practices in five sections: Overview, curriculum design, teaching methods, compilation of teaching materials, and teacher training.

Yiu (2010) discusses the status of Putonghua as L1 or L2 and its implications for TCP teacher training (cf. Yiu 2013). Yu (2012) compares one teacher's teaching of separate classes in PMI (Putonghua medium of instruction) and CMI (Cantonese medium of instruction), and points to the urgency of TCP teacher training (cf. S.-M. Tse 2012; Yu 2013). Leung and Fan (2010) draw attention to common pedagogic problems in TCP classes. For instance, reading aloud is by far the most popular teaching strategy, partly because many teachers have no confidence elucidating meanings clearly in fluent Putonghua,[5] and so they tend to use reading aloud as a strategy to help students appreciate the meaning of the text.[6] This led Leung and Fan to appeal for using conversation-enriched texts to drive students' Putonghua practice. Y.-N. Wong (2012) evaluates the impact of Putonghua textbooks on students' learning outcomes. Lau (2012) discusses important pedagogic principles in the assessment of different types of Putonghua listening competence, while Kau and Lee (2012) underscore the usefulness of various task-based learning activities (e.g., information gap, jigsaw activities, task-completion, information-gathering, opinion-sharing) in facilitating the scaffolding of students' classroom interaction in Putonghua.

In terms of learning effectiveness, Huang and Yang's (2000) quasi-experimental study is particularly instructive. They compared two groups of Cantonese-L1 Primary 1 pupils (age 6) learning Putonghua from scratch, one group under school-based immersion conditions (n = 13), the other as a subject two 35-min lessons per week in a regular Cantonese-medium school over a 10-month period (n = 33). The Putonghua-immersion group followed their normal curriculum, while special curriculum materials were designed for the separate-subject group. Apart from class observation, audio-recorded reading-aloud data were also collected from the pupils for analysis. The findings showed that by the eighth month, the immersion group

[4] Tsang (2014) offers an updated inventory of translation equivalents between Cantonese and Putonghua; on lexical and morphological contrasts between Cantonese and Putonghua, see Tsang (1991, 2002, 2003).

[5] Especially syllables involving missing medial sounds like [i], [u] and [y], Liu (2012); cf. Ng (2001, pp. 191–192).

[6] That is, 「以讀悟文」(*ji*[23] *duk*[22] *ng*[22] *man*[21]/*yǐ dú wù wén*, Leung and Fan 2010, p. 24).

gradually reached a spontaneous-use stage in Putonghua after going through a silent stage (two months), a 'Cantonese-Putonghua mixing' stage (two months), and a semi-spontaneous-use stage (three months). As for the separate-subject group, while their level of attainment was clearly not as high, their gain or achievement in Putonghua was also quite remarkable. This was attributed to two main design features of the specially prepared teaching materials, namely (a) the recycling of keywords already introduced in two subjects, Chinese Language and Arithmetic; and (b) the use of interesting short, rhyming texts intended to be memorized in preparation for reading aloud classroom practice (individual or group) or performing in front of the class. As a teaching strategy, the conscious use of competition was especially productive and welcomed by the pupils. Marked progress took place over two five-month stages: an 'initial contact with Putonghua' stage, followed by a 'Putonghua beginner' stage. In terms of the types of learning difficulties as reflected in the two groups' non-standard Putonghua features at both the segmental and suprasegmental levels, both the immersion group and the separate-subject group appeared to be going through very similar interlanguage processes. These encouraging findings led Huang and Yang (2000) to conclude that, provided interesting, pedagogically sound and interactive teaching materials are in place, Cantonese-L1 schoolchildren at P1 level can achieve a lot in Putonghua. For one thing, the 'language across the curriculum' principle helps reinforce the learning of content subjects while minimizing vocabulary problems (cf. 'mental lexicon', S.-K. Tse 2001, 2014; S.-K. Tse et al. 2007; Lee et al. 2011). As for rote-learning, rather than being something to avoid, Huang and Yang (2000) demonstrate that the use of short rhyming texts intended to be chanted out loud or performed (e.g., in a class competition) can be pedagogically a productive teaching and learning method.

Similar empirical studies have also been conducted with a view to identifying factors that impact on Putonghua teaching and learning effectiveness. According to classroom-based TCP data collected at 20 participating schools (11 primary, 9 secondary) in 2004, six factors were identified as having an impact on the learning outcomes of TCP (SCOLAR 2008). They are listed in descending order of relative significance as follows (for an informative discussion and review, see S.-F. Tang 2008; cf. Chau 2004):

(a) qualified teachers (師資)
(b) school management's attitudes and strategies (學校管理層的態度及策略)
(c) language environment (語言環境)
(d) students' aptitude and learning ability (學生的學習能力)
(e) curriculum, pedagogy and teaching materials (課程教學及教材安排)
(f) support for teaching and learning (教與學的支援)

In general, research shows that while there was some indication of improvement in students' Putonghua, there was little evidence of improvement in students' Chinese-language learning outcomes – the main objective of the Chinese Language subject (SCOLAR 2008; cf. Tong et al. 2000, 2006, p. 343). Quite the contrary, in a few news stories on the teaching effectiveness of TCP classes, it was reported that students' performance in the Chinese Language subject had actually deteriorated (S.-F. Tang 2008, p. 2). Among the main pedagogical problems identified were:

(a) TCP teachers' Putonghua was non-standard
(b) Too much time was spent teaching Putonghua and offering corrective feedback to students' pronunciation
(c) TCP teachers' neglect of students' learning outcomes in Putonghua
(d) The quality of teaching was compromised as many TCP teachers did not have confidence using teaching strategies that they would normally use when teaching Chinese in Cantonese
(e) There was no evidence of improvement in students' Chinese-language output, e.g., use of grade-relevant vocabulary and the quality of their prose in creative writing

The brief review of the TCP-focused literature above suggests that much more basic research is needed, both with regard to TCP curriculum design at the policy level, as well as the provision of logistical support at the level of implementation.

In Chap. 3, we saw that linguistically, the learning of SWC and Putonghua by Cantonese-L1 learners is riddled with plenty of cross-linguistic and literacy-related challenges. At the same time, our discussion in Chap. 6 suggests that sociolinguistically, for mainly identity-related reasons, natural exposure to and opportunities for using Putonghua spontaneously for intra-ethnic communication are hard to come by. Coupled with the perennial problem of a lack of professionally trained teachers who are confident and proficient in teaching Chinese in Putonghua, our students' poor Putonghua learning outcomes – as shown in the majority of experimental TCP studies – are hardly surprising. To counteract the linguistic hurdles and unfavorable sociolinguistic learning conditions, our best bet would seem to be a re-examination of the timing of Putonghua input as well as its curriculum design. For the requisite evidence and support, we will review a number of empirical studies: (i) psycholinguistic research in reading and literacy development in Chinese and/or English (as L1 or L2), and (ii) neuroscience research in the acquisition of one or more languages in early life, with a view to elucidating facilitative factors that are likely to be conducive to students' Putonghua development. Then, based on insights extrapolated from these two research areas, we will draw policy implications by recommending a number of changes in the curricular arrangements, in the hope that the teaching and learning of Putonghua in Hong Kong could take place more effectively and productively.

7.2 Psycholinguistic Research in Reading and Literacy Development in L1 and L2

There is no shortage of empirical, especially experimental studies researching how reading and literacy in Chinese develops vis-à-vis other languages such as English. Based on empirical findings from their 9-month longitudinal study of phonological processing skills and early reading abilities of Hong Kong Chinese kindergarteners (mean age 4.88 years; range 3.80–6.20 years) learning to read English as a second language, Chow et al. (2005) found that:

> phonological awareness is not only important for learning alphabetical languages but also for Chinese reading acquisition (…), representing the ability to manipulate sound units and mapping sound units to written symbols, seems to be an essential element of reading across orthographies. Using phonological elements to process written languages may be a universal process of reading development no matter how limited the presentation of phonological cues are in written form. (Chow et al. 2005, p. 85)

Of greater interest are Chow et al.'s (2005) two further closely related findings. The first one concerns the bi-directional relationship between phonological awareness and Chinese reading, which is consonant with earlier empirical findings regarding a similarly reciprocal, mutually supportive role of phonemic awareness and learning to read not only in English (cf. Perfetti 1985; Perfetti et al. 1982, Perfetti et al. 1987), but also in Chinese (e.g., Hu and Catts 1998):

> the development of phonological awareness and Chinese reading abilities proceeds hand in hand. Thus, phonological awareness skills aid in reading acquisition in Chinese and they are also the by-products of learning to read at the same time. (...) In Chinese, the basic phonological unit is the syllable. Every character represents a single syllable. Thus, for beginning readers, experience with print may sensitize children to syllable-level units, just as learning to read English sensitizes children to phoneme-level units. (Chow et al. 2005, p. 85)

A second finding in Chow et al.'s (2005) study involving Cantonese-L1 kindergarteners points to 'phonological transfer' between written Chinese and English, in that

> phonological awareness in Chinese [here Cantonese] can aid concurrent and subsequent English language acquisition. (...) This finding highlights the importance of certain phonological processing skills in Chinese for learning to decode English. (...) Phonological transfer is not restricted to languages with similar structures. Phonological processing skills in a nonalphabetic language can aid in the acquisition of an alphabetic language, and it appears that some phonological processing skills are intrinsic to children's language acquisition across orthographies. (Chow et al. 2005, pp. 85–86; cf. Perfetti et al. 1992)

In Chow et al.'s (2005) study, the participating kindergarteners did not receive any explicit training in phonological coding, such as activities guiding them to manipulate sound segments in English through the teaching of phonics, or the segmentation of Cantonese syllables through a romanization system like JyutPing (粵拼, Tang et al. 2002). Does the explicit training in phonological coding, such as the teaching of pinyin, have any impact on young learners' Chinese literacy development, for example, character recognition and reading performance in general? This was one of the research questions in Shu et al.'s (2008) study.

Previous research has shown a strong correlation between syllable awareness and literacy development such as character recognition in Chinese among early readers (e.g., Chow et al. 2005; McBride-Chang and Ho 2000, 2005; cf. McBride 2016). In addition to syllable awareness, phonemic awareness (the onset, coda of a syllable) also helps explain variance in Korean students' reading performance in

Table 7.1 Participants' grade level, age range and gender distribution in Shu et al.'s (2008) 'Study 1' and 'Study 2'

Grade level	Pinyin instruction	Age range (months)	Female (no.)	Male (no.)	Total (no.)
K1	No	39–47	17	21	38
K2	No	48–59	17	22	39
K3	No	60–71	18	21	39
P1	Yes	72–0	15	15	30

Hangul (McBride-Chang and Kail 2002; cf. Cho and McBride-Chang 2005). On the basis of empirical evidence to date, Shu et al. (2008) hypothesized that two aspects of phonological awareness – syllable awareness and rhyme awareness – are developmentally influenced by age changes and experience with language through exposure and use. They further hypothesized that formal literacy instruction, that is, teaching children explicitly how Putonghua speech sounds at the phonemic level are coded in pinyin, would enhance their phonological awareness, including tone awareness, which in turn would impact positively on their literacy development. With these premises and hypotheses in mind, Shu et al. (2008) investigated the development and interrelations of four aspects of phonological sensitivity among 3- to 6-year-old children. They administered a series of psycholinguistic experiments – syllable deletion, rime detection, onset detection, and tone detection – to a total of 146 children in Beijing. Their grade levels, age ranges and gender distribution are listed in Table 7.1.

Shu et al.'s (2008) hypotheses were largely confirmed in both Study 1 and Study 2 reported in the same paper. In Study 1, the focus was on the development of four levels of phonological awareness and how it relates to age and pinyin instruction. The results indicated that, whereas syllable and rhyme awareness gradually became more mature with age developmentally, phonological coding instruction and training in pinyin appeared to boost children's phonemic awareness (onset) and tonal awareness dramatically. More specifically, K1–K3 (aged 3–5) pupils' awareness of phoneme onset and tone showed little variation (i.e., comparable "chance-level success"). By contrast, the first-graders, who had received formal training in pinyin, demonstrated much greater sensitivity to onsets and rimes of Chinese morpho-syllables, and their accuracy in phoneme onset and tone (both over 70% accurate) exceeded that of K1–K3 pupils by a wide margin. According to Shu et al. (2008, p. 173), this is probably because learning pinyin helps "make implicitly learned lexical tones explicit and, thus, highlight the salience of tone for young children", which is especially useful when children are confronted with homophones.

In Study 2, Shu et al. (2008) examined whether different levels of phonological awareness may help account for variance in (mono- and bi-syllabic) Chinese word recognition among children with no prior reading instruction. Shu et al. (2008) administered six tests to 202 K1–K3 pupils in Beijing: syllable deletion (16 items, half real, half nonsense words), rime detection, tone detection, rapid naming, vocabulary, and Chinese character recognition. The results showed that "both tone detection and syllable deletion skills independently explained variance in early Chinese character recognition" (Shu et al. 2008, p. 178).

Drawing implications from both Study 1 and Study 2, Shu et al. (2008, p. 171) conclude that their findings "underscore the unique importance of both tone and syllable for early character acquisition in Chinese children". This is consonant with earlier findings. For instance, in Huang and Hanley's (1994) comparative study of Hong Kong and Taiwanese students' ability to delete phonemes from Chinese syllables, Taiwanese children who had received instruction in *Zhuyin fuhao*,[7] the phonological coding system in Taiwan, significantly outperformed their Hong Kong counterparts who had not received any phonological instruction and training (cf. Huang and Hanley's 1997). There is thus strong evidence that "children who receive reading instruction that makes phoneme awareness explicit typically learn to identify phonemes earlier than do those who do not" (McBride-Chang et al. 2003, p. 746; cf. McBride 2016). Hence, apart from phonemic and tonal awareness being a natural developmental, maturational outcome, as evidenced in Ciocca and Lui's (2003) study involving Cantonese-L1 children, formal instruction and training in a phonological coding system like pinyin or *Zhuyin fuhao* has been shown to have good potential for enhancing preschoolers' sensitivity to the onsets, rimes, and tones of Chinese characters.

In a separate study on cross-language and writing system transfer in students' Chinese-English biliteracy acquisition, Wang et al. (2005, p. 72) predicted that "sensitivity in English and in Chinese to onset and rime, common linguistic units in both languages, will be correlated" and that "pinyin reading skills will correlate with English word reading, since the two systems share the alphabetic principle". The subjects were 46 weekend Chinese school students in Washington, D.C. with the mean age of 8 years and 2 months (Grade 2 or 3). Both of these predictions were borne out in their findings. More specifically:

> The finding that Pinyin naming skill was highly correlated with English phoneme deletion and pseudoword naming suggests that reading skills in two alphabetic systems are related. It is interesting that when children are learning Chinese characters and Pinyin simultaneously, the Pinyin naming and English reading skills facilitate each other, but the Chinese character naming and English reading skills do not. It is interpretable given the sharp distinction between the two writing systems. (Wang et al. 2005, p. 83)

These empirical findings suggest that knowledge of pinyin not only facilitates the learning of Putonghua, but it is also conducive to developing reading skills in English as well.

The relative ease with which preschoolers aged 4–6 are able to develop a certain level of phonological awareness in Chinese and English to facilitate literacy development – word/character reading and recognition – as found in psycholinguistic experiments discussed above, is in sharp contrast with the difficulties encountered by many of our TCP teachers, who often feel frustrated and exhausted attending to their students' Putonghua pronunciation (e.g., Leung and Fan 2010). On the other hand, research in the psycholinguistics of emergent reading in Chinese and English

[7] 注音符號 (*Zhùyīn fúhào*/*zyu*^{33}*jam*^{55} *fu*^{21}*hou*^{35}).

suggests that those Primary 1 students who have already developed a certain level of sensitivity to Putonghua tend to perform better in reading, probably because deeper knowledge of Putonghua and character recognition allow them to better concentrate on Chinese literacy-focused activities.

The empirical insights discussed above suggest that, with regard to the goal of sharpening young learners' sensitivity to Putonghua, the age range 4–6, corresponding to K1–K3, seems to be the ideal or optimal biological stage at which exposure to Putonghua is acquisitionally more fruitful and productive than delaying it till early primary. Compared with the current policy and practice, this would mean bringing the onset time of Putonghua in the curriculum forward by two to three years, from P1 to K1.[8] Of course, certain conditions must be met if this policy is to be implemented Hong Kong-wide: the kindergarten teachers must have attained the required standards in Putonghua (ideally PSC level 2A or above) and are thoroughly trained in teaching Chinese in Putonghua. In terms of the percentage of Putonghua in the kindergarten curriculum, it may be anywhere between one-third to half of the curriculum space. To the extent that young children aged 4–6 have the ability to distinguish between discrete languages, translanguaging between Cantonese and Putonghua (or even English) should not present any major problem, acquisitionally or otherwise (cf. Huang and Yang 2000).

While the putative benefits of earlier exposure in terms of relative acquisitional ease of Putonghua have yet to be tested out, awaiting confirmation in rigorous empirical research, anecdotal evidence suggests that earlier exposure to Putonghua tends to yield positive results. In a documentary on TCP (ATV Home 2014), a primary school principal who adopted a whole-school approach to TCP shared the key findings of a 5-year longitudinal study, in which the same teacher taught two Primary 2 classes, one in Cantonese, the other in Putonghua. The results showed that about 33% of all TCP pupils, including the weakest ones, had made progress in the Chinese Language subject. According to that principal, the schoolchildren's success could be attributed to their deeper knowledge of Putonghua. In a separate interview with the teacher of Chinese involved in that study, she observed a general tendency for TCP students to be more adept and resourceful in using four-character or four-syllable idioms[9] derived from historical allusions such as**胸有成竹**[10] and **成竹在胸**,[11] both meaning 'confident' or 'have a well-thought-out plan'. By contrast, those students in Cantonese-medium classes would tend to render that meaning using the SWC or Cantonese equivalent **有把握** ('confident').[12] Further anecdotal evidence may be found in Susane Wong, a trilingual student who attained outstanding HKDSE performance in Chinese, English and Spanish in 2014, and who started

[8] As is well-known, this is already common if not standard practice in some 'international' kindergartens in Hong Kong.

[9] Generally known as四字詞 (*sei*^{33}*zi*^{22}*ci*^{21}/*sì zì cí*) or 四字格成語詞 (*sei*^{33}*zi*^{22}*gaak*^{33}*sing*^{21}*jyu*^{23}*ci*^{21}/*sì zì gé chéng yǔ cí*).

[10] 胸有成竹: *Hung*^{55}*jau*^{23}*sing*^{21}*zuk*^{55}/*xiōng yǒu chéng zhū*.

[11] 成竹在胸: *Sing*^{21}*zuk*^{55}*zoi*^{22}*hung*^{55}/*chéng zhū zài xiōng*.

[12] 有把握: *Jau*^{23} *baa*^{35}*aak*^{55}/*yǒu bǎ wò*.

learning Putonghua in kindergarten. What is particularly noteworthy in her case is that she "grew up to be a voracious reader", relishing, at age 11, a martial arts novel like 'The Legend of the Condor Heroes'[13] (918,093 characters) written by the celebrated 'swordplay'[14] novelist Jin Yong (Chik Wiseman 2014).[15] Anecdotal these exemplary cases of Chinese literacy acquisition may be, there seems a missing link that merits closer scrutiny through careful research: to what extent does progress in Putonghua learning facilitate Chinese literacy-focused activities such as leisure reading and free, creative writing?

7.3 Critical Period and Neurobiological Window of Language Acquisition: Insights from Neuroscience Research

As is well-known, language is a species-specific faculty that tells humans and other animals apart. Except for extreme circumstances such as the deprivation of contact with the social world, no known infants or young children have failed to master a language, regardless of skin color, ethnicity, level of IQ or socioeconomic status. In all societies, big or small, with rare exceptions all children 'pick up' one or more languages of the locality effortlessly as they grow up, so long as the patterns of language learning and use approximate those of first-language acquisition. Consider, for example, the large number of French-German bilinguals in the border regions between France, Germany and Switzerland, often in addition to the local vernacular such as Swiss German in Switzerland and Alsatian in Alsace, a German dialect in France. In an increasingly globalized world characterized by ease of mobility and massive people movement, simultaneous acquisition of two or more first languages is no longer rare, the only constraint being regular exposure to input of the language(s) in question. Where a target language is learned and used not as a first language (L1), but a second (L2) or foreign language (FL), however, there is a limit as to how successful that language is acquired. There is ample empirical evidence showing that, regardless of languages and cultures, adults tend to fare worse in the learning of an additional language compared with teenagers, while teenagers are no match for children in terms of the extent to which the target additional language is mastered up to a native-like level of competence, even though teenagers may perform better than young children at initial stages, for example, in the learning of morphology and syntax (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978, p. 1115). Language being a classic example of a 'critical' or 'sensitive' period in neurobiology (Kuhl 2010, p. 716), the onset age of learning is thus a fairly robust factor that predicts the ultimate level of language learning attainment under normal language learning

[13] 射雕英雄傳: *Se*^{22}*diu*^{55}*jing*^{55}*hung*^{21}*zyun*^{35}/*Shè diāo yīngxióng zhuàn*.

[14] 武俠小說: *Mou*^{23}*hap*^{22}*siu*^{35}*syut*^{33}/*wŭxía xiăoshuō*, 'martial arts novels'.

[15] 金庸: *Gam*^{55}*jung*^{21}/*Jin Yong*.

conditions. That this is the case may be gauged by the title of the monograph, *The scientist in the crib: What early learning tells us about the mind* (Gopnik et al. 2000). Such a research insight is not lost to laypeople. In Hong Kong, many – parents in particular – are convinced that 'earlier is better' when it comes to their children's learning of a prestige language such as English, and their action (e.g., choice of kindergarten and school for their children) is often guided by a widely shared Chinese adage:

> **不要讓小孩輸在起跑線上**[16]
> 'Don't let the child(ren) lose at the starting line.'

This is why English-medium (pre)schools are so popular for those parents who can afford it. But how far backwards, on the age scale, can onset age be stretched as an advantage that predicts language learning success? In other words, if children tend to outperform teenagers and adults in language learning, do they fare any better compared with their even younger peers, infants or even newborns? According to insights adduced from cutting-edge neuroscience research in the last two decades, the answer is a resounding 'yes', albeit with a caveat: newborns are indeed expert language learners, but with maturation setting in from childhood to later biological stages in life, such an advantage is progressively lost. This phenomenon, generally referred to as the 'critical period', has been rigorously researched and hotly debated since the 1960s.

Compared with infants and young children, adults may be cognitively more developed and mature, but their performance in learning the pronunciation patterns, morphology and syntax, and the finite set of grammatical rules of an additional language tends to be disappointing compared with younger learners learning that same language as their L1. None of these pose any difficulty to infants and young children, so long as the target language in question is learned under L1 learning conditions. For decades, scholars in several neighboring disciplines, notably psychology, psycholinguistics, neuroscience and brain science, have tried to explain why infants the world over are gifted with "incredible abilities to learn once exposed to natural language" (Kuhl 2010, p. 713), an amazing feat that no known computers have been able to replicate, however powerful they may be.

The puzzle surrounding the critical period has preoccupied many psychologists and psycholinguists from the 1950s – barely four decades after modern linguistics, the scientific study of language, was founded and recognized as a new academic discipline since the publication of Ferdinand de Saussure's influential work *Cours de linguistique générale* ('Course in General Linguistics') in 1916. Various theories have been advanced by scholars from different persuasions and disciplines to explain the relative ease in L1 acquisition by young children regardless of the typological status of their first language(s), ethnicity, intelligence quotient (IQ), or socioeconomic background. An early attempt was made in the 1950s by B. F. Skinner (1957), a Harvard psychologist, who postulated that language was not unlike other

[16] *Bat*^{55}*jiu*^{33} *joeng*^{22} *siu*^{35}*haai*^{21} *syu*^{55} *zoi*^{22} *hei*^{35}*paau*^{35}*sin*^{33} *soeng*^{22}*/bùyào ràng xiǎoháir shū zài qǐpǎoxiàn shàng*.

forms of human behavior. Behaviorists believe that learning by humans or non-humans alike results from association. For instance, after being presented with food and the sounding of a bell several times, a dog would salivate in response to the sounding of a bell (conditioned stimulus) without any food being presented (unconditioned stimulus). Such a process is known as 'classical conditioning'. Language learning, Skinner argued, is not unlike other forms of human behavior in that it develops along the principle of 'operant conditioning': those behaviors that receive positive reinforcement will be imitated and gradually become an automatized response to the stimulus, while those that meet with negative reinforcement will be withdrawn over time. In the 1950s, such a view to language learning was highly influential in second or foreign language teaching methodologies known as audio-lingualism. Accordingly, language teachers were advised to help learners approximate target language norms through imitation, repetition and drilling.

The behaviorist view to language learning was challenged by Noam Chomsky (1959), who argued that language output by humans is first and foremost creative, in that no amount of imitation or drilling could explain, for example, an English speaker's ability to produce a semantically nonsensical but grammatically well-formed sentence like 'colorless green ideas sleep furiously'. If humans are able to utter grammatically well-formed sentences (in any language) that they have never heard or seen before, attributing such a universal ability to stimulus–response or imitation is hardly convincing. Underlying this grammatical competence is a finite set of grammatical rules that allow for the generation of any and all sentences that conform to the grammatical norms of the language in question (here, English, e.g., subject-verb agreement; the fronting of *wh-* words in *wh-* questions like 'Who are you?'). What is particularly amazing is that all children appear to acquire a high level of grammatical competence in their first language(s) effortlessly by the age of four or five in the absence of any explicit instruction. Quite the contrary, much of the interactional input children are exposed to is linguistically imperfect (e.g., sentences that are incomplete, often with structural anomalies such as false starts, or characterized by caretaker features like 'motherese'). Accordingly, it is generally believed that the missing piece in the puzzle lies not so much in first-language learners' and users' observable behaviors as brain mechanisms when infants are engaged in language learning and use. It follows that all humans are born with some built-in 'language acquisition device' (LAD) which, short of access to how the LAD actually functions in the human brain, came to be known as the 'black box' (Chomsky 1959).

Chomsky's 'generativist' account outlined above is clearly more convincing in terms of explanatory adequacy, which is why for decades since the 1960s, it has attracted a lot of followers in the research agenda and endeavors championed by him toward a coherent theory of Universal Grammar (UG). The ongoing debate concerning an optimal UG model led advocates to advance highly abstract underlying principles or parameters in order that the innate linguistic structures of any and all languages could be accounted for despite overt typological differences (e.g., basic word order SVO/SOV/VSO; the obligatory presence of a grammaticalized subject in English like *It's raining* as opposed to the 'pro-drop' feature in Chinese such as 落雨啦 (*lok*^{22} *jyu*^{23} *laa*^{33}) and 下雨了 (*xià yǔ le*), both meaning 'it's raining'.

One may or may not subscribe to UG as the theoretically most promising research direction for explaining young children's innate language learning abilities. Meanwhile, thanks to exciting breakthrough in brain science since the 1970s, there is some indication that it would not take long for the Chomskyan black box to see the light. Today, there is increasing consensus that, how the electronically traceable and measurable pathways in the language-active parts (e.g., Broca's area, Wernicke's area) of the human brain operate, and the neural mechanisms thus identified, hold the key to the puzzle, why and how in terms of language learning performance, cognitively more mature adults (under L2 or FL learning conditions) tend to be no match for babbling infants or toddlers (under L1 learning conditions). In this regard, Lenneberg's (1967) 'Critical Period Hypothesis' (CPH) is probably the best-known explanatory model to date (cf. Penfield and Roberts 1959). Lenneberg postulates that L1 acquisition relies on neuroplasticity in the brain, which declines with age due to maturation, resulting in progressive loss of neural sensitivity to fine nuances at all linguistic levels. Lenneberg further postulates that the loss of neuroplasticity and the resultant cerebral lateralization generally culminates at puberty (about age 10–16, de Boysson-Bardies 1999, p. 31), which helps explain why those who start learning a language at teenage or later would find it more difficult to attain native-like proficiency in that language. This is especially true with regard to accent. Since the 1970s, CPH has inspired a lot of empirical research, but the findings are far from being convergent (see, e.g., Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978). One of the limitations is methodological design; in principle, data obtained from longitudinal studies have greater potential for generating robust and hard evidence, but longitudinal studies are methodologically more challenging to organize compared with cross-sectional studies.

Already in the 1970s, a number of studies showed that infants are able to hear or perceive the fine differences between discrete speech sounds (especially vowels and consonants, the building blocks of words) or phonetic units that belong to different languages (Eimas 1975; Eimas et al. 1971; Lasky et al. 1975; Werker and Lalonde 1988). In the 1980s, it was further discovered that infants' universal ability to perceive all possible phonetic units peaks at around 6 months of age, and progressively becomes more and more language-specific by 1-year-old (Werker and Tees 1984). Similar results were later obtained in Kuhl (1993) and Kuhl et al.'s (1992) studies. A succinct summary of this consolidated research finding is presented by de Boysson-Bardies (1999) as follows:

> According to Kuhl, the initial sound space is divided by universal psychoacoustic boundaries. By six months, as a result of contact with the language spoken around them, babies have reorganized and simplified this space: they have made it pertinent to their particular language. Thus nonpertinent categories in the native language disappear (…). In a matter of weeks, then, infants have selected the elements compatible with their linguistic environments. They begin to fail to hear those elements that are generally absent from the phonetic structures that they perceive in their usual experience of language. (de Boysson-Bardies 1999, p. 42)

On the basis of this psychoacoustic development in infants at 6 months of age, Kuhl (1993) puts forward the 'native language magnet theory'. More recently, based on an analysis of brain measurements of perceptions of the /r–l/ contrast in American English collected from infants who were 6- to 8-month-old and 10- to 12-month-old in the United States and Japan, Kuhl et al. (2006) found evidence of "directional asymmetry" in infants' developmental change in phonetic perception during their first year of life. That is, over the same biological stage during the period 6–12 months of age, whereas the performance of native language perception of the AmEng /r–l/ contrast increased significantly (US group), the performance of the non-native language perception of the same contrast declined (Japanese group). What this means is that, by the first year of age, infants' brain architecture as reflected in their perception of discrete phonetic units progressively becomes more specialized or neurally committed to the phonetic properties of their native language. As infants' abilities to perceive and process native-language phonetic units are progressively enhanced, their abilities to perceive and process non-native-language phonetic units will undergo a gradual decline correspondingly. Similar findings have also been obtained using the Spanish /b–p/ contrast (e.g., *bano* versus *pano*) as the focus of investigation in the perception performance of American and Spanish infants who were controlled for age: whereas the Spanish infants perceived /b/ and /p/ as discrete phonemes differentiating word meanings, their American counterparts ignored the overt difference in these two phonetic units, which are non-phonemic in English (i.e., they manifest as allophones appearing in complementary distribution, witness, e.g., the pronunciation of /p/ in Eng. *pain*, [p^h], akin to Span. *pano*, as opposed to Eng. *Spain*, [p], akin to Span. *bano*). This led Kuhl et al. (2006, p. F13) to conclude that "neural commitment to native-language phonetic properties explains the pattern of developmental change in the first year". This finding, termed 'native language neural commitment' (NLNC), has subsequently been shown to be supported among L2 learners or users from different languages and cultures in a migrant context like the US, for example, Korean and Chinese users of English (Johnson and Newport 1989); Korean-L1 and/or Korean-L2 speakers of English in the US (Flege et al. 1999; Yeni-Komshian et al. 2000); and Spanish-L1 speakers of English (Birdsong and Molis 2001). In general, age on arrival is a fairly good predictor of native-like pronunciation of the language in the host country (e.g., English in the US). Yeni-Komshian et al. (2000), for instance, found that Korean participants who arrived in the US before the age of 9 tended to have better pronunciation in English than Korean, while the opposite was true of Korean participants arriving at the age of 12–23 (i.e., better Korean pronunciation than English). This finding is consistent with one observation in empirical L1 acquisition studies that suggests "in normally developing children, complete mastery of phonology, productive control of most of syntactic structures, and early literacy are achieved by about age eight" (Yeni-Komshian et al. 2000, p. 146).

One particularly instructive study was conducted by Mayberry and Lock (2003), who used two tasks as instruments – timed grammatical judgement and untimed sentence to picture matching – to measure the English grammatical abilities of deaf and hearing adults (two groups each, n = 54). The purpose was to examine the impact of the participants' linguistic experiences, spoken or signed, during early childhood on their English grammatical abilities. Thirteen of the 14 normal hearing adults (7 men, 6 women, aged from 17 to 57, mean age 32.46) were native users of English who had acquired another language as their L1 from birth: Urdu (8), French (2), German (1), Italian (1) and Greek (1). Their English-medium schooling started at different ages, from 6 to 13 (mean starting age = 9). By contrast, the 13 profoundly deaf participants were born to English-speaking parents. Due to deafness, they received negligible speech input either in the family or preschool from age 3 to 6.[17] The twelve deaf participants were subsequently switched to schools where sign language was used when they were aged 6 to 13 (mean age at which the switch took place = 9.4). Unlike the normal hearing participants who made up the 'Early Language' group, the group of profoundly deaf participants was characterized as 'No Early Language', although one group received some speech (English) input at preschool between the age of 3 and 5, while the other 'Early Sign' group's input at that same age range was primarily restricted to sign language. Data analysis was controlled for age of English exposure and length of English use. No discernible differences were found with regard to the degree of hearing loss (the 'No Early Language' group), non-verbal IQ, age of preschool entry, method of English instruction, or non-language cognitive test performance (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 374). The English grammaticality task tested adult participants on five different sentence structures: simple sentences, dative sentences, conjoined sentences, passive sentences, and relative clause sentences. The results showed that:

> adults who acquired a language in early life performed at near-native levels on a second language [here, English] regardless of whether they were hearing or deaf or whether the early language was spoken or signed. By contrast, deaf adults who experienced little or no accessible language in early life performed poorly. These results indicate that the onset of language acquisition in early human development dramatically alters the capacity to learn language throughout life, independent of the sensory-motor form of the early experience. (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 369)

These findings led Mayberry and Lock (2003) to conclude that:

> Instead of being a phenomenon of diminishing ability to learn language caused by increasing brain growth, the critical period for language would instead be a *time-delimited window in early life* where the degree and complexity of neurocortical development underlying the language system is governed, in part, by linguistic stimulation from the environment which together with neurocortical development creates the capacity to learn language. (...) early language experience helps create the ability to learn language throughout life, independent of sensory-motor modality. Conversely, a lack of language experience in early life seriously compromises development of the ability to learn any language throughout life. These findings mean that timely first-language acquisition is necessary, but not sufficient, for the successful outcome of second language learning. (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382; emphasis added)

Tomasello (2003) reaches a similar conclusion after reviewing a number of empirical studies designed to assess the validity of the critical period. He compares

[17] One deaf participant did not attend preschool and only started with a 'sign language' school at age 7.

the negative impact of missing exposure to a target language in early life with the low level of performance in various sports activities or skills (e.g., playing the piano) by adult learners and remarks that:

> It is usually very easy to identify in a group of skiers or tennis players or piano players those who began learning their skill in early childhood and those who are adult learners – and language is no exception. This final consideration is especially important in explaining the relative lack of fluency of deaf persons who are not exposed to their first language (sign language) until late childhood or adulthood. (Tomasello 2003, p. 287)

There is thus some evidence showing a "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003) being crucial for infants' developmental brain architecture, subject to the only constraint of regular exposure to one or more natural languages. Within that window, children will progressively get attuned to fine phonemic contrasts that hold between dissimilar phonetic units in their native language, while non-phonemic contrasts (e.g., allophones) are ignored (Kuhl 2007, 2010). Beyond phonology, there is also some indication that, without the needed exposure to language at infancy and early childhood, subsequent language learning efficiency and performance in the development of grammatical competence would also be adversely affected (Mayberry and Lock 2003).

The intricate, interlocking neuro-pathways and mechanisms of the human brain remained scientifically inaccessible until recently. However, armed with technological advances and increasingly sophisticated tools of investigation in the last two decades, including Electroencephalography (EEG), Event-related Potentials (ERPs), functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), Magnetoencephalography (MEG), and Near-Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS), neuroscience is on the verge of some exciting breakthroughs in infants' NLNC beyond their phonetic perceptions up to the first year of age. Neuroscientists like Kuhl (2010) have high hopes that with further research in the 2010s and beyond, at least part of the Chomskyan black box will soon see the light, making it possible for us to envision if not visualize the nuts and bolts of that hitherto mysterious Language Acquisition Device. It remains unclear, as predicted by the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg 1967), whether puberty (around age 10–16) is the absolute cut-off biological stage beyond which native-like proficiency in the learning of a new language is virtually unattainable. One thing is certain, however: the human brain is predisposed to NLNC following regular exposure to one or more dominant first languages, in that "neural circuitry and overall architecture develops early in infancy to detect the phonetic and prosodic patterns of speech" (Kuhl 2010, p. 716; cf. Kuhl 2004; Y. Zhang et al. 2005, 2009). At the same time, through "statistical learning" in computational terms, as the human brain gets increasingly specialized or attuned to the linguistic subsystems in the infant's first language(s), its ability to process fine linguistic nuances in subsequent languages (e.g., encountered or studied from around age 10 onwards) is neuro-biologically pre-programmed to decline progressively over time:

> This architecture is designed to maximize the efficiency of processing for the language(s) experienced by the infant. Once established, the neural architecture arising from French or Tagalog, for example, impedes learning of new patterns that do not conform. (Kuhl 2010, p. 716)

A significant breakthrough has thus been achieved in infants' perception of phonetic units in their first-language(s). What about other linguistic subsystems such as morphology, syntax and vocabulary? While more neuroscience research is being conducted to probe into these areas, there is some indication that the "temporally defined critical 'windows'" are asymmetric (Kuhl 2010, p. 716):

> The developmental timing of critical periods for learning phonetic, lexical, and syntactic levels of language vary, though studies cannot yet document the precise timing at each individual level. Studies indicate, for example, that the critical period for phonetic learning occurs prior to the end of the first year, whereas syntactic learning flourishes between 18 and 36 months of age. Vocabulary development 'explodes' at 18 months of age, but does not appear to be as restricted by age as other aspects of language learning—one can learn new vocabulary items at any age. (Kuhl 2010, p. 716)

More work in neuroscience research is underway, with the objective of unlocking the respective onset and closing critical periods of other linguistic levels beyond phonetic perception and acquisition of L1 phonology, and better understanding the ways they function.

The findings outlined above were obtained under laboratory conditions. Can such findings be replicated when infants and young children are engaged in social interaction with others, for example, their parents or caretakers who tend to use 'infant-directed speech' or 'motherese'?[18] Kuhl and her colleagues have conducted a number of studies probing into the possible effects of social interaction on infants' brain mechanisms, and found that interaction with a live person (e.g., parent, caretaker or tutor), as opposed to an inanimate source such as video-recorded TV programs, creates a social context which has fundamental, positive influence on the infant's quality and quantity of language learning (Kuhl et al. 2003). In a number of studies in which infants living in an English-speaking environment were exposed to words in a non-local language such as Spanish, the results show that:

> The degree of infants' social engagement during sessions predicted both phonetic and word learning—infants who were more socially engaged showed greater learning as reflected by ERP [Event-related Potential] brain measures of both phonetic and word learning. (...) Taken as a whole, the data are consistent with the notion that cognitive skills [e.g., executive control of attention] are strongly linked to phonetic learning at the initial stage of phonetic development (Kuhl 2010, p. 721)

A number of social or interactional factors conducive to the quantity and quality of language acquisition have been identified in subsequent analysis: (1) attention and/or arousal, (2) information, (3) a sense of relationship, and (4) activation of brain mechanisms linking perception and action (Kuhl 2010, p. 720). Some of the key findings are as follows (cf. Conboy and Kuhl 2010; cf. Conboy et al. 2008):

(a) the amount of attention, in terms of 'infant looking time' measures, correlates positively with vocalization performance ('low attenders' are outperformed by 'high attenders');

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[18] That is, "the linguistically simplified and acoustically exaggerated speech that adults universally use when speaking to infants" (Kuhl 2010, p. 717; cf. de Boer and Kuhl 2003).

(b) the amount of the infant's visual gaze at objects of reference to which the speaker's gaze is directed correlates positively with vocalization performance;
(c) the infant appears to interpret the speaker's gaze as a social cue and follows it; it is likely that such social interactions activate brain mechanisms that lead to a growing awareness of the self and the other – the cognitive basis of a social relationship; and
(d) infants' periodical exposure to a non-local language leads to "an early coupling of sensory-motor learning in speech" (Kuhl 2010, p. 722), which is conducive to the vocalization of words in that language.

Based on empirical findings outlined above, Kuhl (2010) concludes that "early mastery of the phonetic units of language requires learning in a social context" (p. 713), without which language acquisition would be adversely affected. For a comparison, Kuhl (2010) points to children diagnosed with autism, who tend to face problems in social cognition as well as language learning and use. All this led Kuhl to the 'Social Gating Hypothesis' (2007, 2010), whereby the computational mechanisms underlying statistical [language] learning of the brain require that the 'social brain network' be activated, metaphorically like an opened gate. If not (i.e., with the gate in a state of being closed), the hypothesis predicts that statistical learning of the infant could not proceed, in which case language acquisition would be seriously impeded.

Important insights of recent neuroscience research outlined above clearly have implications for the language-in-education policy of a multilingual context like Hong Kong. In particular, the earlier infants are exposed to regular, high-quality input in the target language(s), the stronger is the likelihood for them to develop native-like proficiency in those languages. Compared with the current policy provisions, however, the current policy appears to be lopsided, in that resources and funding support for language learning are heavily tilted toward secondary and tertiary (as opposed to pre-primary and primary) levels for students aged 12 or above, whose language learning efficiency or acquisitional ease has generally become more sluggish to say the least. By comparison, government funding for pre-primary education is insignificant. At a biological stage when preschoolers' sensitivity to language inputs and language learning tasks is much higher, government support is meager relative to the goal of optimizing schoolchildren's learning outcomes in the target languages, English and Putonghua. We will further explore the policy implications in the last chapter.

7.4 Learning Putonghua as an Additional Language: A Sequential Approach to Developing Additive Bilingualism

Cantonese being the regional lingua franca in the Pearl River Delta, plus the fact that it has been actively used in the domains of government, media (broadcast and print, cf. 'written Cantonese', see Chap. 3), education, business, films and other lingua-cultural consumables such as karaoke video discs in Hong Kong since the 1990s, there is as yet no evidence that it is under any threat of language shift or loss (compare Bauer 2000; Li 2000). At the same time, curriculum space being limited, it is imperative for the education authorities to identify efficient and effective means to help younger generations of Hongkongers to develop a high level of communicative competence in Putonghua, in keeping with the national language policy of 'dialect bilingualism' or 'bidialectalism' (Erbaugh 1995; Li 2006), but also to facilitate communication with Chinese Mainlanders from non-Cantonese-speaking areas. The key to success to promoting Putonghua in the SAR is to ensure that any advancement in its community-wide promotion does not take place at the expense of the majority's first language, Cantonese. In other words, rather than the much dreaded scenario of subtractive bilingualism, additive bilingualism should be the target model, to be supported by empirically sound learning outcomes.

Nearly two decades have elapsed since Putonghua was made an integral part of the primary (and, to a lesser extent, secondary) school curriculum. Despite some encouraging signs that the early introduction of Putonghua in the lower primary curriculum since the year 2000 has yielded some positive results, as reflected in the Putonghua competence of secondary and tertiary students today (Zhu et al. 2012), the progress attained by studying Putonghua for 2–3 hours per week is slow. There is general consensus among scholars, school principals and teachers of Chinese that on its own, teaching Putonghua as a separate subject is unlikely to bring about any major impact relative to developing students' Putonghua competence. Given the closer lexico-grammatical affinity between Putonghua and SWC, embedding Putonghua into the teaching of the Chinese Language subject (i.e., TCP) would seem to be a reasonable alternative and goal. Provided a pedagogically sound curriculum design is in place to overcome the contrastive phonological differences between Cantonese and Putonghua (Chap. 3) with demonstrably attainable goals, setting TCP as a long-term objective (SCOLAR 2003) is entirely worth supporting.

Critical voices and dissenting views among scholars and educators, in public as well as social media on the internet, are not rare. For example, some short essays critiquing TCP as an ideology and practice may be found on the Internet.[19] Dispreference of using Putonghua to teach Chinese may also be found in more neutral reports. For instance, the trilingual student Susane Wong Yui-Hin cited above, who at age 17 achieved outstanding HKDSE[20] results – 5** in Chinese language, Chinese History, Chinese Literature, English, Mathematics, Economics and Liberal

[19] See, e.g., '普教中政策與粵語地位' ['The Teaching Chinese in Putonghua policy and the status of Cantonese'] at 香港獨立媒體網 http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1020963, which has attracted 88 Likes on Facebook as of mid-May, 2016. See also feature articles, e.g., Cho (2015); Si (2015); and P.-W. Wong (2015) in *Ming Pao*; Kwan (2015) in the *South China Morning Post* (in Chinese, on *nanzao.com*).

[20] HKDSE standards are "divided into five levels (levels 1 to 5), with 5 being the highest. Candidates with the best performance in level 5 are awarded a 5**, and the next top group is awarded a 5*. Attainment below level 1 is designated as 'Unclassified'" (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/introduction/, retrieved 1 Jun 2016).

Studies, plus grade ‘A’ in Spanish – chose Chinese as the major for her undergraduate degree program at CUHK (Chik Wiseman 2014). Of particular interest here is the fact that the formative stage of her Chinese literacy acquisition, from kindergarten to Form 3 (Grade 9), took place in Putonghua:

> Wong spent her primary years at C. & M.A. Chui Chak Lam Memorial School in Yuen Long, where Chinese classes were taught in Putonghua, but she had already started learning it in kindergarten. The language skill made it easy for her to transition to the secondary school, as the lower forms also use Putonghua to teach Chinese. In the last three years leading up to the DSE, however, the subject was once again taught in Cantonese. (Chik Wiseman 2014)

Despite being fluent in Putonghua, Susane reportedly felt unsure about using Putonghua to study Chinese. When asked which medium of instruction she would recommend for studying Chinese, she was quoted as saying “I think that Cantonese is still a better option for teaching the Chinese subject as it will serve most people” (Chik Wiseman 2014).

Apart from pedagogical concerns such as the availability of fluent and professionally trained TCP teachers and the attitudes of the school management, on purely curricular grounds strong reservation against TCP may be broadly accounted for by two main concerns: (a) a lack of empirical evidence that TCP students’ performance in the Chinese Language subject is at least on par with, if not better than, their peers’ performance in Cantonese-medium Chinese Language classes; and (b) a fear of subtractive bilingualism being the learning outcome, as expressed in a concern that TCP students would lose the ability to articulate their ideas and thoughts in colloquial, idiomatic Cantonese (see, e.g., parents’ views, ATV Home 2014).

In light of the scientific insights extrapolated from psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research above, I will recommend a few strategies that in my view would help enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Putonghua teaching and learning among Cantonese-L1 young learners.

7.5 Teaching Putonghua to Cantonese-L1 Learners: Proposed Strategies

In light of the review of the relevant literature in reading and literacy development in L1 and L2, plus instructive insights obtained from neuroscience research above, I will recommend three strategies to enhance the quality of Putonghua teaching and learning: (i) early exposure to Putonghua, K1–K3; (ii) teaching pinyin at Primary 1; and (iii) teaching Chinese in Putonghua, P1–P3.

Recommended Strategy 1: Early Exposure to Putonghua, K1–K3 Research in reading development has shown that literacy, in any language, is mediated by speech (Chap. 3). This insight has received strong empirical support in numerous psycholinguistic word reading and recognition experiments in English and Chinese, suggesting that effective language acquisition, be it an alphabetic language like English or a logographic language like Chinese, is premised on the learner's phonological awareness of the target language(s). Phonological awareness refers to:

> being aware of the fact that a speech stream can be segmented into small discrete units such as syllables and phonemes, which can be counted, deleted, and manipulated in other ways. One such discrete unit is represented in each graph of a writing system: A phoneme in an alphabetic letter; a syllable in a syllable graph; and a tone syllable in a Chinese character. (Taylor and Taylor 2014, p. 143)

Phonological awareness is absolutely crucial for Chinese children's reading acquisition and literacy development, as Tseng (2002) puts it:

> We cannot understand a writing system without considering the spoken language it attempts to transcribe (...). In fact, a major task in learning to read is for the reader to come to an understanding of the nature of the correspondence between the written script and the spoken language. (Tseng 2002, p. 5)

The intimate link and inter-dependency between spoken and written language as an important key to literacy development is also clearly evidenced in Gudschinsky's (1976, p. 3) definition of a literate person:

> That person is literate who, in a language s/he speaks, can read with understanding anything s/he would have understood if it had been spoken to him [or her]; and can write, so that it can be read, anything s/he can say. (Cited in Stubbs 1980, p. 13)

Particularly worth highlighting in this "single quotable statement" is "the critical element of reciprocity between oral and written competence together with scrupulous neutrality in respect of the area to which the skills of literacy are applied" (Carrington 1997, p. 82). As Stubbs (1980, p. 13) observes, this "useful and careful definition" of functional literacy is grounded in Gudschinsky's lifelong involvement and experience in organizing literacy programs for people from different language backgrounds in various developing countries. One significant implication for literacy training, in any language, is the need to equip learners with speech associated with that language. During the colonial era, before Putonghua came into the language-in-education policy matrix, Cantonese was the only Chinese variety used for bridging the link between the vernacular and written Chinese in Hong Kong. With Putonghua and written Chinese added in the postcolonial language policy goal of biliteracy and trilingualism, such a link may be strategically extended from Cantonese to include Putonghua within part of its primary curriculum, in keeping with the principle and goal of developing additive bilingualism. The question is: 'How?'

In Hong Kong, one of the targets of literacy development is Standard Written Chinese (SWC), which adopts a logographic writing system and, in the two Special Administrative Regions Hong Kong and Macao, is written in the traditional rather than the simplified script. This makes the acquisition of Chinese literacy a relatively more cumbersome task for Hong Kong Chinese students compared with their peers in Mainland China (Chap. 3). Further, given that SWC is more closely aligned with Putonghua than Cantonese, to capitalize on the lexico-grammatical affinity between Putonghua and SWC, Cantonese-L1 students should ideally be exposed to Putonghua as early as possible, preferably through such multi-modal resources as songs, nursery rhymes, games, riddles, poems, and extracts of verses adapted from primers such as the ‘Three Character Classic’[21] and ‘The Book of Family Names’.[22] Far from being a chore, rote learning or committing words to memory – in any language – is what preschoolers are good at, provided the right kinds and amounts of interesting input in the target language are assured. Such a practice has been a trialed-and-tested, age-old method in traditional Chinese literacy training for young children in China (Tao and Qian 2012a, b; cf. ZHANG Zhigong 1992). Hao (2001b) also echoes Zhang’s (1992) suggestion that selected extracts from traditional primers be incorporated into the contemporary primary curriculum, with a view to speeding up children’s grasp of basic Chinese literacy and reading skills development:

> The ‘Three Character Classic’ is easy at the beginning, with few characters that are difficult to write, recognize and read. ‘The Book of Family Names’ contains four characters per phrase, with a focus on written forms rather than meaning, which is conducive to enhancing [children’s receptive] knowledge of Chinese characters (...). (Hao 2001b, p. 104, my translation; cf. ZHANG Zhigong 1992)[23]

In addition to exposing children to everyday, general knowledge in Putonghua, a traditional primer like the ‘Three Character Classic’ also teaches about Chinese ethics, and so content-wise it lends itself very well to meeting young children’s needs for basic literacy and general education (Hao 2001b, p. 104; cf. ZHANG Zhigong 1992). That rote learning in an L2 could be handled by preschoolers relatively effortlessly is partly evidenced by Cantonese-L1 kindergarteners performing linguistically sophisticated tasks at choral speaking competitions and recital contests, in English or Putonghua, individually or in groups. Such challenging tasks could not have been accomplished without preschoolers first memorizing the poems or verses in accordance with the norms of pronunciation required. News stories on such preschoolers’ marvelous performance in English and Putonghua are reported from time to time; for instance, one news story in March 2015 features three adjudicators giving a thumbs-up overall appraisal of the performance of 14 K1–K3 finalists at the Second Hong Kong Kindergarten Choral Speaking Contest.[24]

In terms of learning goal, however, it is crucial that the pedagogical priority at pre-primary and early primary levels be focused on developing young children’s receptive competence in recognizing and reading (aloud) Chinese characters in their home language (Cantonese) and Putonghua, rather than developing productive competence in writing them correctly. That is, nurturing young children’s ability to

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21 三字經 (*Sān zì jīng/Saam*^{55}*zi*^{22}*ging*^{55}).

22 百家姓 (*Bǎi jiā xìng/Baak*^{33}*gaa*^{55}*sing*^{33}).

23『我國古代識字的課本有«三字經»､«百家姓» 及 «日用雜字» 等｡張志公 [1992] 認爲,«三字經» 開頭簡單,難寫､難認､難讀的字少｡«百家姓»,四字一句,有字無義,無需追究字義和句義,對集中識字有益無害。「三書」既合「日用」又增長「見聞」,還教給兒童一些「義理」。 識字的目的突出,沒有不適當的內容,又不忽視兒童的要求和進行知識思想教育的需要｡』(Hao 2001b, p. 104; cf. ZHANG Zhigong 1992).

24「幼園英語朗誦賽精彩極具水準」, ‘English Speech Competition among kindergarteners reaching marvelously high standard’ (*Ta Kung Pao*, 30 Mar 2015).

recite, sing or read (aloud) texts composed in various poetic genres and recognize the characters thus memorized is far more important than their ability to produce them in writing following the mandatory sequence of strokes. This is so because physiologically, young children's hands are not yet fully developed to handle the writing of characters repeatedly, especially those that involve a large number of strokes (S.-K. Tse 2001). S.-K. Tse and his colleagues made a very good point that in Hong Kong, children are often required to memorize and dictate a large number of high-frequency characters that are judged to be important almost exclusively from adults' point of view (Lee et al. 2011, p. 667; cf. S.-K. Tse et al. 2007; S.-K. Tse 2001, 2014). This is what makes the learning of Chinese characters in literacy-focused activities such a tedious, boring and demotivating chore. Guided by the phenomenographic theory of learning, through the 'integrative perceptual approach' to teaching and learning Chinese characters, S.-K. Tse et al. (2007) and Lee et al. (2011) have demonstrated how the learning of Chinese characters can be made more enjoyable. The key is for kindergarten teachers to accommodate young pupils' mental lexicon[25] (Aitchison 2003) when planning their literacy-focused activities, such that lexical items that children bring to the classroom by virtue of their frequent occurrence in everyday life (e.g., kinship terms; food items like rice, pork, beef, fish, hamburger and sundry vegetables; names of the children's neighborhood; TV cartoon figures, and so forth) may be exploited and used as a stepping stone for raising their awareness of various orthographic principles of character formation, for example, introducing characters formed similarly by phonetic compounding with the same phonetic component or semantic radical[26] (S.-K. Tse et al. 2001; cf. Hao 2001a, 2001b; S.-K. Tse 2001, 2014). In addition to exploiting preschoolers' mental lexicon in their home language Cantonese, however, I would suggest extending this teaching strategy to Putonghua on a trial basis, and monitor the preschoolers' performance.

Drawing on extensive bilingual acquisition data involving six children bilingual in Cantonese and English growing up in Hong Kong,[27] Yip and Matthews (2007) have demonstrated convincingly how these children developed bilinguality naturally. They also found a variety of linguistic evidence showing:

> how a dominant language influences the development of a weaker language and vice versa in a number of grammatical domains, resulting in bidirectional cross-linguistic influence; and how bilingual children may take strikingly different paths from monolingual children to reach the target grammar. (Yip and Matthews 2007, p. 256)

[25] 心理詞彙 (*sam*^{55}*lei*^{35} *ci*^{21}*wui*^{22}/*xīn lǐ cí huì*).

[26] This method is known as 基本字帶字 (*gei*^{55}*bun*^{35}*zi*^{22}*dai*^{33}*zi*^{22}/*jī běn zì dài zì*); see Tse et al. (2008, pp. 37–38).

[27] The six bilingual children grew up in different households featuring parents who were bilingual in Cantonese and English. In five of the families the mother's L1 was Cantonese, the father's L1 was English. In the sixth family, the mother was a native speaker of English, while the father a native speaker of Cantonese. The age spans of the children over which data were collected from them varied, from the earliest onset age of 1;03;10 (Alicia) to 4;06;07 (Kathryn) (Yip and Matthews 2007, p. 64).

Hong Kong-based bilingual acquisition research is therefore not at all a tabula rasa. There is much that we can learn from exemplary studies towards establishing a theoretically informed research agenda concerning the feasibility and desirability of Teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP) in multilingual Hong Kong. In my view, Yip and Matthews's (2007) carefully conducted longitudinal research, and the data-driven groundwork that they have laid in children's bilingual acquisition of Cantonese and English, may serve as a useful model or starting point for conceptualizing and extending children's bilingual acquisition research to include the acquisition of Putonghua (cf. Yip 2006).

Recommended Strategy 2: Teaching Pinyin at Primary 1 Provided preschoolers have developed a certain level of sensitivity to Putonghua before entering primary school, it will be opportune time, at Primary 1, to consolidate their phonological awareness in Putonghua by teaching them pinyin systematically. In general, local schools' current practice still adheres to the SAR's curriculum guidelines devised in 1997, whereby pinyin is taught over a 6-year curriculum: teaching tones in P1–P3, vowels and consonants from P4, and revision in P5–P6 to consolidate students' pinyin knowledge. S.-M. Tse (2010, 2013) reviews the role of pinyin in the TCP policy and rightly points out that such a pace is too slow; instead, she recommends that pinyin should be introduced thoroughly and much earlier, at P1–P2. In a small-scale study she conducted (S.-M. Tse 2013) involving the teaching of pinyin to P1–P2 students within 3 to 6 months, including revision and consolidation, encouraging results were obtained. She then draws implications by comparing her pilot scheme with the policies and practices in Mainland China, Taiwan and Singapore, where the phonetic transcription system – pinyin in Mainland China and Singapore, *Zhuyin Fuhao* in Taiwan – is taught in early primary (S.-M. Tse 2013, pp. 222–223; see Table on p. 225; cf. Cheung and Lo 2006). In Taiwan, *Zhuyin Fuhao* is taught over 10 weeks, while in Singapore the teaching of pinyin is embedded in other teaching objectives, including conversational skills and the reading and writing of Chinese characters over a 14-week period.

In mainland China, depending on the schoolchildren's 'dialect' background, the teaching of pinyin may be completed within 6–8 weeks in Mandarin-speaking areas but up to 12 weeks in 'dialect' areas (cf. Ingulsrud and Allen 1999, 2003). Dai (2001, p. 150) outlines the typical curricular arrangement widely followed by Han-Chinese primary schools in mainland China, whereby pinyin is introduced in the first term at Primary 1, but will gradually phase out in a 3-year transitional process until the second term of Primary 3, as follows:

- Primary 1, 1st term: focus on reading pinyin texts; gradual transition to *hanzi* texts by beginning of P2;
- Primary 2, 2nd term: principally *hanzi* texts, supplemented with pinyin for difficult *hanzi*;
- Primary 3, 2nd term: only difficult characters are supplemented with pinyin – children should be able to pronounce them.

The auxiliary role of pinyin in this curriculum design, according to Dai (2001), is to facilitate and promote schoolchildren's reading development through independent learning.[28] One important merit of earlier introduction of pinyin at P1–P2 is for pupils to master this important tool to facilitate self-learning of Chinese characters, in particular to look up vocabulary words in dictionaries using pinyin where necessary. It should be emphasized that for the teaching of pinyin to work at early primary level, that is, for P1–P2 students to discover its patterned phonological features – segmental or suprasegmental – in Putonghua, preschoolers must have developed a fairly high level of sensitivity to its speech sounds, preferably through exposure to multi-modal, visuals-enriched resources (Chap. 9). In other words, recommended strategy 1 is a pre-condition for recommended strategy 2.[29]

One argument that mitigates against the early introduction of the Roman-alphabet based phonological coding system pinyin is possible confusion with the pronunciation of alphabetically based English words. This is understandable given that in some cases, the same letter combination in pinyin and English are associated with very different normative pronunciations (compare, e.g., pinyin *bān*, 班: /pɑːn/, which is rather different from its English near-homograph *ban*: /bæn/). However, provided the sound-spelling patterns in both target languages are supported by unambiguous pronunciation and illustrated with ample examples in context (e.g., by different teachers in English versus Putonghua classes) – assuming quality classroom input – such confusion should gradually give way to metalinguistic awareness of language-specific pronunciations among young learners over time.

Recommended Strategy 3: Teaching Chinese in Putonghua, P1–P3 Relative to the goal of extending Cantonese-L1 students' linguistic sensitivity to Putonghua and consolidating their grasp of its phonological system and rules such as tone sandhi, using Putonghua to teach Chinese is probably the most productive at lower primary level, P1–P3. Following the practice in Mainland China, all Chinese characters in the main texts of the course books should have pinyin clearly indicated to facilitate the learning of their pronunciation. Care should be taken to ensure that all pinyin marks are reader-friendly, in that their legibility would not be unduly affected by the choice of a poor color scheme (e.g., legibility problems will likely arise if the characters are printed in black, pinyin in blue, and stress marks in red, see, e.g., Y.-N. Wong 2012, p. 114). In addition, to fully capitalize on the linguistic affinity between Putonghua and written Chinese texts, it is advisable to avoid teaching classical texts with *wenyan* elements such as poems in Putonghua; rather, where necessary, poetic genres are more appropriately taught in Cantonese. In other words,

[28] 『創造「無師自通」的有利條件』, Dai (2001, p. 150). See also Appendix 2, pinyin-related learning outcomes at early primary level in mainland China, Dai (2001, pp. 241–248).

[29] This is consistent with K.-C. Ho's (2002, p. 280) view, echoing the Cantonese pronunciation expert M.-W. Ho's [何文匯] (1996) recommendation mentioned in passing at a keynote conference presentation, that the romanization systems of all three languages – Putonghua, English and Cantonese – could be infused into the early primary curriculum. In fact, K.-C. Ho (2002) himself suggests that kindergarteners be exposed to Putonghua, although the systematic introduction and teaching of pinyin could start at early primary level.

Putonghua would be more productively taught if the texts in question contain interactional features in conversation (Leung and Fan 2010; cf. Tong et al. 2006).

In terms of pedagogical support for teachers, in addition to traditional methods such as reading aloud (Lo 2000a, b), a number of teaching strategies or practices may be helpful. First, it is suggested that all character texts in the P1–P3 curriculum should be made available and accessible in standard Putonghua (e.g., online) to facilitate imitation and practice. Second, it would be a good idea to develop appropriate teaching materials such as nursery rhymes to help raise students' phonological awareness and rhythm, for example, through teaching aloud (朗讀, *long*[23]*duk*[22]/ *lǎng dú*):

大熊貓,//不是貓,	*dà xióng māo, // bú shì māo,*
	'big pandas are not cats'
黑色//白色//全身毛,	*hēi se // bái se // quán shēn máo,*
	'black and white, whole body covered in hair'
愛吃竹葉//不吃肉,	*aì chī zhú yè // bú chī ròu,*
	'like to eat bamboo leaves but not meat'
孩子見了//個個笑。	*hái zi jiàn le // ge ge xiào.*
	'children [who] see them will all laugh'
	(Tong and Mok 2000, p. 107, pausing at '//')

Apart from interesting short rhyming texts like this one, S.-M. Tse (2010, p. 179) offers a few instructive illustrations of a productive teaching strategy for raising students' phonological awareness:

(a)	meaning-focused mnemonic (here, targeting the consonant in the last syllable), e.g.:
收聽廣播 *bō bō bō*	*shōu tīng guǎng bō // bō bō bō*
	'listen to [radio] broadcast'
爬上山坡 *pō pō pō*	*pá shàng shān pō // pō pō pō*
	'climb up [hill] slope'
(b)	rhyming verses / couplets, e.g.:
小獅子,過生日,	*xiǎo shī zi, guò shēng rì,*
	'little lion, have birthday'
好朋友,全到齊。	*hǎo péng yǒu, quán dào qí.*
	'good friends, all arrived'
吃蛋糕,喝果汁,	*chī dàn gāo, hē guǒ zhī,*
	'eat cake, drink juice'
慶生日,真歡喜。	*qìng shēng rì, zhēn huān xǐ.*
	'celebrate birthday, really happy'

Third, being good at rote-learning, students aged 6–8 may be tasked periodically with memorizing rhyming short texts, which may be reinforced through unseen dictation (individually) or recitation (individually or in groups). Inter-class or interschool competitions in Putonghua, in the form of games and riddles, may also be held to stimulate students' interest and motivation (Huang and Yang 2000, pp. 219–220). All this takes place in tandem with the teaching of the target number of Chinese characters set for P1–P3 (cf. S.-K. Tse 2014).

Expected learning outcomes in Putonghua and the Chinese Language subject by the end of Primary 3, age 8–9. Following the recommended strategies 1–3 above, I believe there is good potential for students to have acquired Putonghua up to a fairly high level (cf. Huang and Yang 2000). At the same time, being familiar with pinyin as a learning aid or tool, they will stand a better chance of being able to look up unfamiliar characters independently for their meanings or normative pronunciation in Putonghua. Together, these two learning outcomes will hopefully lay a solid foundation for P4 students to become life-long learners as they move up the education ladder from primary to tertiary in preparation for their work life.

The status of Putonghua in Cantonese-dominant Hong Kong, whether it is more like a second or foreign language, or a 'half first, half second language' (i.e., L1.5, Lai-Au Yeung 1997), depends essentially on the learner's onset age and how it is taught and learned. If it is introduced early at K1–K3 (age 4–6) more or less along the lines outlined above, thanks to the "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382), the condition of Putonghua learning may well be comparable to L1 acquisition, even though its support in the home may be inadequate or lacking. On the other hand, delaying the teaching of Putonghua and pinyin as a learning tool in the curriculum till late primary level (i.e., P4–P6, age 9–11, cf. late immersion) would make the learning of it more like an L2. Those students who learn Putonghua from scratch at secondary level (age 13 and beyond), with or without also learning pinyin, would be learning it like a foreign language.

Apart from being psycholinguistically and neurolinguistically informed – age 4–6 being a neurobiological time-delimited window for effective language acquisition – the three recommended strategies above are premised on two policy assumptions if they are to bear fruit as hoped:

(a) Cantonese will continue to be widely used in society and in school, as MoI in other subjects, so that TCP from P1 to P3 would pose no risk to the vitality of Cantonese in society; and
(b) Education authorities should make it very clear that the proposed strategies for teaching Putonghua above, if implemented, are guided by the principle of additive, rather than subtractive bilingualism.

In addition, the following support measures may raise the odds of success of the proposed strategies:

(a) Education authorities should step up the training of qualified Putonghua teachers to take up the teaching of Putonghua (as a subject or TCP) from preschool and kindergarten K1–K3 to lower primary P1–P3;
(b) The quality of Putonghua teaching materials (e.g., TCP textbooks) should be monitored closely, while support for their development should be strengthened considerably;

(c) Scholars with expertise in Putonghua teaching and Putonghua teacher training should be engaged to monitor the learning outcomes of Putonghua and to tackle any problems arising, be they policy-driven or pedagogy-related;
(d) A user-friendly website, bilingual in Chinese and English, where Putonghua teachers' problems can be posted should be set up and serve as a platform for addressing queries and exchanging views regarding how best to resolve them, much like the online forum, expert advice and support provided to front-line mother-tongue education teachers by CECLER (2004);[30] and
(e) Advice and assistance should be provided to teachers of Putonghua at kindergartens and schools, with a view to creating an environment which is conducive to using and learning Putonghua.

The approach to TCP proposed here may be characterized as a 'sequential additive plurilingualism' model: Putonghua is introduced at a linguistically sensitive neurobiological stage to capitalize on the "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382) from K1–P3 (age 4–8). Apart from familiarizing schoolchildren with a subset of the Chinese characters in Putonghua by the end of lower primary level, they will also be equipped with an important tool for independent learning (e.g., checking the Putonghua pronunciation of unfamiliar characters by applying their knowledge of pinyin, or vice versa; using their knowledge of pinyin to check the written forms of known characters). Above all, provided the MoI is switched back to Cantonese at Primary 4 (age 8–9), and given that most of the P1–P3 Chinese vocabulary taught in Putonghua will be recycled from Primary 4 onwards, there is little risk of Cantonese-L1 pupils' mother tongue being lost or compromised. For one thing, poetic genres and texts with classical elements will continue to be read and accessible in Cantonese, while pupils at upper primary level or above should be able to work out the corresponding Putonghua version if they so wish. These are among the most obvious advantages of the proposed 'sequential additive plurilingualism' model of TCP which, incidentally, is comparable to the "remedial action" proposed by Lord and T'sou (1985) some 30 years earlier, which consists of introducing:

> a sound Chinese curriculum into the schools, based on Modern Chinese usage, and supported by a carefully phased introduction of Putonghua [such that effective bilingualism] will rest on the twin pillars of Modern Standard Chinese/Putonghua and English. If that happens the problem of literacy in standard Chinese will largely take care of itself. But there is no point in pretending all this can be achieved by the aid of a magic wand. We need a very careful and properly piloted planned and phased curriculum development, from kindergarten right through to tertiary level and beyond."
>
> (Lord and T'sou 1985, p. 7; also cited in Lord 1987, p. 10)

In their comparative study of the learning of Putonghua by Cantonese-L1 pupils at Primary 1 under school-based immersion conditions versus as a separate subject, Huang and Yang (2000) conclude that the teaching of Putonghua at secondary level

[30] 母語教學教師支援中心 (*mou*^{23}*jyu*^{23}*gaau*^{33}*hok*^{22} *gaau*^{33}*si*^{55} *zi*^{55}*wun*^{21} *zung*^{55}*sam*^{55}/*Mŭyŭ jiàoxué jiàoshī zhīyuán zhōngxīn*), The Center for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research, CECLER, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong.

could be obviated provided a solid foundation has been laid at primary level (p. 215). The quality of input at early primary level is therefore absolutely crucial. To ensure success at early primary level, a carefully planned Putonghua curriculum at pre-school level is needed to take full advantage of the "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382). In terms of curriculum design, as Huang and Yang (2000), among others, have demonstrated, the 'language across the curriculum' (LAC) approach, and the more recent 'content-and-language integrated learning' (CLIL) paradigm, would seem to be an important pedagogic principle that has good potential for guiding both language and content teachers to work fruitfully together, with a view to making tangible contributions to the extension of our future pillars' biliteracy and trilingual skills development to include a high level of attainment in Putonghua.

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Chapter 8
Meeting South Asian Hongkongers' Needs for Chinese Literacy

8.1 Introduction

> A literate person can read and write, whereas an illiterate person cannot. Even limited literacy is an asset in developing nations, where birth rates and infant mortality are substantially reduced when mothers have rudimentary schooling to read simple instructions for hygiene and birth control, and to help children with their early lessons. (Taylor and Taylor 2014, p. 15)

While we live in an era where space ventures to the moon or Mars are no longer science fiction or the dreamer's fantasy, it is sad that illiteracy continues to be a concern in many countries. Illiterate people are often unaware of and vulnerable to many pitfalls around them in their daily life, some of which with adverse social or legal consequences. For instance, according to a news bite entitled 'Illiterate smoker fined', a villager traveling by high-speed train from Nanning (Guangxi province) to Guiyang (Guizhou province) in the southwestern part of China was fined 500 yuan (ca. US$80) – half his monthly salary – apparently because he could neither understand the broadcast in Putonghua (Mandarin) nor read the warning sign in the toilet (*South China Morning Post*, 23 January 2015, A7). In another news story, 'Humaira Bachal is giving many Pakistani children the gift of education' (*Time magazine* 2015), illiteracy literally kills. Humaira, a self-educated Pakistani woman, was reportedly determined to defy the local Islamic restriction forbidding females to receive education by setting up a modest teaching center to teach school-age children basic literacy and numeracy regardless of their gender. One reason why she was so adamant that women should be empowered to read and write through education was reportedly an unfortunate incident, whereby a one-year-old in her extended family was inadvertently killed by out-of-date medicine because the baby's mother could not read the expiry date on the bottle. How many similar illiteracy-related violations of the law and human tragedies are happening in the age of space travel may be gauged by some unsettling UNESCO statistics: in 1990, about 1000 million people, or nearly one-third of the adult population in the world were illiterate (Le Page 1997, p. 1); in 2010, some 790 million adults were

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classified as illiterate – more than the entire population of the European Union (Coulmas 2013, p. 1).

In any modern society, effective governance can hardly take place without a citizenry being literate in the language(s) of public administration. In Hong Kong, where biliteracy is set as an important goal of the post-1997 language policy, all citizens regardless of their first-language background are expected to be able to read and write both Chinese and English.[1] Given Hong Kong's geopolitical position after 1997 as the most international city of the People's Republic, such a biliteracy goalpost is necessary for meeting the SAR's manpower needs (Li 2009; see also Chaps. 5 and 6). Like other 'dialect' speakers roughly south of the Yangtze River (except the southwest), Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers who make up the overwhelming majority do not write the way they speak; instead, they have to learn a separate set of vocabulary specific to Putonghua (Mandarin), on which Standard Written Chinese (SWC) is based (Lee and Leung 2012; Wang and Tsai 2015; see also Chap. 3). Formal education is looked upon as the means for ensuring that all primary school-leavers (age 11–12) would be able to read over 3000 morpho-syllables or characters and about 10,000 polysyllabic words (Education Bureau 2008), a literacy level needed for reading Chinese newspapers. Even though Cantonese is not part of school literacy (Snow 2004), the majority of Hong Kong students are by and large able to adapt their written Chinese to accommodate Putonghua-based norms (Lin and Li 2015). The same cannot be said of their South Asian (SA) peers, however. This chapter outlines the adverse impact of the SAR government's language policy on a number of SA minority groups.

Of the 6.4% of non-Chinese residents (2011 census), the ethnic minorities of South(east) Asian descent top the list: Indonesians and Filipinos each account for 1.9%, followed by Indians (0.4%), Pakistanis (0.3%) and Nepalese (0.2%). Some of them are recent arrivals, but quite a few, notably those who originated from the Indian subcontinent, were born in Hong Kong because their forefathers were brought to the colony by the British colonial government to serve in the army, police and security sector, or as seamen recruited by the East India Company engaged in burgeoning maritime trade with China (Erni and Leung 2014).[2] Since the new millennium, it gradually became clear that these ethnic groups are linguistically disadvantaged by the SAR's new language policy, and that their needs for Cantonese and written Chinese are not being met. In the media discourse intermittently produced by concerned NGO workers, journalists and scholars, the ethnicity of these minority groups is collectively referred to as *naam^{21}aa^{33}jeoi^{22}* (南亞裔, 'South Asian ethnicity'). Whereas 'South Asian' usually refers to nationals of the Indian subcontinent,

[1] Unlike the alphabetic writing system in English, Chinese (中文, *zung^{55}man^{21}*/*zhōngwén*) is written with a logographic, non-alphabetic script, which means that the relationship between the written form of a morpho-syllable and its pronunciation is more opaque (Wang and Tsai 2015; see Chap. 3).

[2] Burgeoning maritime trade with China also attracted some entrepreneurial South Asians to settle in colonial Hong Kong, notably the Parsees and Bohra Muslim traders (Erni and Leung 2014, p. 21).

including Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Nepalese, Filipinos, Indonesians and Thais are generally classified as Southeast Asians. For convenience, however, we will follow the convention in local media and use the term 'South Asian' (SA) to refer to members of these six ethnic groups (cf. Erni and Leung 2014, p. 2).

From 1998 onwards, a good knowledge of Chinese – spoken Cantonese and written Chinese – became a requirement for civil service jobs at all ranks. The most obvious means through which non-Chinese residents can acquire a sound knowledge of Chinese is schooling, and yet the post-1997 language policy makes no distinction between Chinese and non-Chinese when it comes to learning through the medium of Cantonese (EOC 2012).[3] With hardly any home support, most SA students find it difficult to learn written Chinese, which in turn makes it impossible for them to cope with Chinese-medium instruction (i.e., spoken Cantonese and SWC). Statistics in the census and by-census figures in 2001, 2006 and 2011 indicate that of 100 SA children who begin their schooling from primary school, barely one or two could make it to tertiary education (Erni and Leung 2014, pp. 119–122). This is why to those who were born to socioeconomically modest SA parents, social mobility through education is virtually beyond their reach, resulting in the perpetuation of their social exclusion in a socioeconomically stratified society (Ku et al. 2005). Among the main problems are access to SWC, adaptation to school life and the mainstream curriculum, and limited options and opportunities for school choices,[4] further education and career paths (Pérez-Milans to appear; for critical issues pertaining to the Hong Kong language-in-education policy since the colonial era, see Kan and Adamson 2010; Tollefson and Tsui 2014). According to a study commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC 2012), social inequality is also evidenced in ethnic minorities' lack of access to various government funding schemes due to language barriers in Chinese, as Siu (2015, p. 7) reported:

> Ethnic minorities often encounter difficulties in paperwork due to language barriers [in Chinese] and so lose out in government funding schemes. (...) some ethnic minority entrepreneurs attempted to apply for government or non-governmental organization subsidies yet their efforts were thwarted by lengthy Chinese documents or requirements to submit written forms.

[3] There were originally 15 designated schools that admitted NCS schoolchildren. NCS parents were allowed to apply for local school places after the SAR government heeded their appeal for equal opportunity in education – at least in terms of more choice of schools. The government was somehow caught in a dilemma. Continued segregation would limit NCS children's choice of schools, making the government vulnerable to allegations of unequal treatment; allowing them to join local schools would address the issue of 'equal opportunity', but it would aggravate pedagogical problems faced by front-line teachers in Cantonese-medium schools. A similar dilemma may be found in the government's policy of mingling SEN children (those with special education needs) with mainstream schoolchildren (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

[4] In principle, NCS parents have free choice of schools since 2004 when the Central Allocation System was made accessible to them, a measure that honors the principle of equal education opportunity. It then turns out that increasingly more NCS students are being admitted to schools comprising mainly local children, resulting in mixed classes in which NCS and mainstream children would learn Chinese together either as L1 or L2 (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

A similar handicap in Chinese literacy also featured prominently in two separate news stories appearing on the same day in the *South China Morning Post* (18 April 2016). First, Shehzad Mamood Khan, a 39-year-old, locally-born Pakistani fluent in Cantonese, braved the odds by passing a tough qualifying exam for taxi drivers – in English – something unusual that had not been done before as such training courses and the exams are usually conducted in Chinese (i.e., training in Cantonese; teaching materials and exam questions only in written Chinese). Of the eight non-Chinese testees sitting that exam, Khan was the only one who succeeded and thus became the SAR's first-ever South Asian taxi driver. According to the bylined journalist (Zhao 2016), it took the head of a taxi radio association well over a year to convince the director of a motor training school to provide teaching materials in English for aspiring non-Chinese taxi drivers like Khan. In the second news story, Dr. Naubahar Sharif, an Associate Professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, was reportedly "forced to learn" Cantonese during his formative years as an undergraduate student at HKUST in the early 1990s. Probably because – or rather as a result – of his lack of Cantonese, he attended international primary and secondary schools. To ensure that their children would not go through the same educational ordeal rooted in a lack of knowledge of written Chinese, Sharif and his wife "had to go to great lengths" that "their children had the opportunity to read and write traditional Chinese" (Ngo 2016). A lack of information in languages other than Chinese may well be the main reason why government "funding schemes especially catering to ethnic entrepreneurs, or relevant information about possible government assistance (financial, legal or administrative) is not readily available" (Erni and Leung 2014, p. 175). Such a state of inequality led Erni and Leung (2014) to deplore:

> How can an entire education system fail to develop, on a basis of equality, EM students' intellect, talents, and creativity because the system allows the problem of language barrier to go unresolved for years? When the system leads to unfairly narrow employment outlets as well as dim life opportunities for EM youth, there is only one conclusion to be drawn: Hong Kong's education system has failed our South Asian youth. (Erni and Leung 2014, p. 137)

Erni and Leung's critique is well taken, but it would be unfair to accuse the government of inaction. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the EDB has injected huge amounts of resources to help NCS children learn Chinese. The NCS issue has been handled at a very high level. Special meetings were arranged by the Central Policy Unit on how to help NCS children learn Chinese. The Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has been tasked with developing curriculum and pedagogical support to schools and teachers. The issues are complex; the main problem is a lack of expertise and pedagogically sound knowledge in the literature, which is why most front-line teachers feel so helpless. According to S.-D. Chan, Chinese language experts specializing in teaching Chinese to non-Chinese learners have been engaged to share their experiences, while a lot of empirical ground work (e.g., class observation and school-based support) commissioned by EDB is being conducted.

In this chapter, we will report on empirical findings collected from 15 SA students studying towards a Bachelor of Education in English Language (BEd(EL)) degree at a local tertiary institution. Our main research questions are (i) What sorts of difficulties are encountered by SA students when learning written Chinese? (ii) What support measures are in place, and how effective are they? Since the development of literacy skills in a language is premised on and mediated by the learner's competence in speech (DeFrancis 1984, 1989, 2002; Erbaugh 2002; Perfetti and Dunlap 2008), the chapter will also address a related question, (iii) What difficulties are encountered by local school-age SA students when learning Cantonese?

8.2 This Study

Being among academically the best-performing SA students who made it to a government-funded undergraduate program, the 15 participants in this study were identified by their names in the BEd(EL) class lists from Year One (2012/13 cohort) to Year Four (2009/10 cohort), and recruited through convenience sampling. They were invited by email to take part in a focus group (FG) interview. Attached to that email was a semi-structured questionnaire in English (Appendix), to be used as stimulus material for the FG. The email contained details of the background, objectives and data collection procedures. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part 1 collects personal information from respondents needed for constructing their individual language profiles, focusing on their language learning and literacy acquisition experiences from childhood, including their self-rated competency levels in their home language(s) and community language(s), as well as their experiences of learning Cantonese, written Chinese and English. Part 2 includes questions that would tap into their opinions on issues pertaining to the languages in their lifeworld, language policies, and teaching and learning practices. In sum, two instruments were used to collect qualitative data – a semi-structured questionnaire, and focus group (FG) interview.

More than an aside, it is important to note that our invitation to participate in this study was accepted by *all* 15 SA students. As it later transpired at several FGs, most of them saw their participation as an opportunity (a) to find out what academic initiative was being made to address their personal concerns and social grievances related to the research objectives as stated in the questionnaire, and (b) to provide personal views from their respective vantage points regarding how and in what ways the SA ethnolinguistic groups they stood for were unfairly disadvantaged by an unjust language policy. In other words, practically all of the SA participants volunteered to take part in this project largely because they had something to say about the critical issues pertaining to language and identity. In a sense, therefore, what is reported in this chapter serves to amplify their voices, with the researchers (Li and Chuk 2015) acting as animators of their stories, in a manner reminiscent of Luigi Pirandello's classic dramatic masterpiece *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

Before attending the FG (2–3 per group), all participants completed Part 1 of the questionnaire and returned it to the two researchers by email. No one raised any objection to our request for audio-recording. Conducted in English, the FGs lasted for up to two hours. All except one were moderated by the two co-researchers. To ensure maximal reliability of the data and for the purpose of triangulation, the co-researchers took field notes during the FGs, which were consolidated and word-processed before being sent per email attachment to the FG participants in question for accuracy check within 48 h. This step proved to be very productive as commonalities in shared/diverse experiences were gradually identified, allowing us to raise (dis)similar viewpoints and critical issues in subsequent FGs for comparison. There were altogether seven FG interviews, which were all transcribed and proofread with the help of student assistants. Recurrent themes were tagged for content analysis, which was triangulated by comparing the 15 participants' inputs in their completed questionnaires and the draft field notes taken during the FGs.

Aged from 18 to 22, the participants represented a mix of ethnicities or homeland heritages, including Indian (5), Pakistani (5), Philippine (4) and Nepalese (1). For convenient referencing, their gender (M/F) and homeland heritages (In, Pa, Ph, and Ne) are symbolically reflected in their coded names (e.g., 'In3F' refers to 'the third female participant in the Indian group'). For an overview of their personal details, see Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Participants' gender, ethnicity, age, onset age in Hong Kong, home language, and community language(s)

Participant	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Onset age in HK	Religion	Home language	Community language(s)
In1M	Indian	M	18	2	Catholic	ENG	Hindi
In2F	Indian	F	18	Born in HK	Sikh	Punjabi	Punjabi
In3F	Indian	F	20	Born in HK	Sikh	ENG	Punjabi
In4F	Indian	F	18	Born in HK	Sikh	Punjabi	Hindi
In5F	Indian	F	21	8	Hindu	ENG/Hindi	Bengali/ Hindi
Pa1F	Pakistani	F	19	1.5	Islam	Urdu/Hindko	Urdu
Pa2F	Pakistani	F	18	Born in HK	Islam	Hindku	Urdu
Pa3F	Pakistani	F	19	Born in HK	Islam	Punjabi	Urdu
Pa4F	Pakistani	F	22	6	Islam	Urdu (ENG)	Urdu
Pa5F	Pakistani	F	19	0.5	Islam	Urdu/ENG	Urdu/Punjabi
Ph1M	Philippine	M	23	10	None	ENG	Tagalog
Ph2F	Philippine	F	20	15	Christian	ENG	Tagalog
Ph3F	Philippine	F	22	Born in HK	Catholic	Tagalog/ ENG	Tagalog (ENG)
Ph4F	Philippine	F	22	1	Christian	ENG	Tagalog
Ne1F	Nepalese	F	19	4	Buddhist/ Hindu	Nepali	Nepali (Magar)

8.3 Results: South Asian Students' Chinese Literacy Gap

The 15 SA participants were requested to self-assess their reading-writing (R–W) abilities in Chinese and listening-speaking (L–S) competence in Cantonese on a 7-point scale, and to indicate their perceived levels of difficulty learning written Chinese and Cantonese on a 5-point scale (Table 8.2). It can be seen that Chinese literacy activities, both in terms of learning and use, was perceived as rather challenging. The mean score and median of perceived difficulty reading and writing Chinese are 4 (5 being the most difficult), with six participants giving it a rating of 5. In terms of the participants' self-assessed abilities to read and write Chinese, only two gave a higher-than-mean rating (Pa3F: 5–5; Ph2F: 4–3), one slightly below the mean (Pa2F: 3–2) while four self-rated their R–W abilities as 0–0 (In3F, In5F, Ph3F, Ph4F), even though the lowest level in the questionnaire was 1 (7 being the highest). The other ratings are 1–1 (In1M, In4F, Pa4F), 2–1 (In2F, Ne1F), and 2–2 (Pa1F, Pa5F, Ph1M).

When asked what exactly they found so difficult, practically all participants – including Ph2F whose father is a native speaker of Cantonese and who rated her R–W abilities as 4–3 – shared the same view that the non-alphabetic nature of the Chinese script was the main culprit. Compared with learning written Chinese, all participants remarked that English was a lot easier, as noted by In3F:

Table 8.2 Self-assessed abilities in reading-writing Chinese and listening-speaking Cantonese, and perceived levels of difficulty learning written Chinese and Cantonese

Participant	Self-assessed ability in Reading–Writing Chinese	Perceived difficulty Reading–Writing Chinese	Self-assessed ability in Listening–Speaking Cantonese	Perceived difficulty Listening–Speaking Cantonese
(13 female, 2 male)	(7-point scale)	(5-point scale)	(7-point scale)	(5-point scale)
In1M	1–1	5	1–1	3
In2F	2–1	2	2–2	2
In3F	0–0	4	6–5	4
In4F	1–1	5	5–2	3
In5F	0–0	5	0–0	5
Pa1F	2–2	3	6–5	2
Pa2F	3–2	5	6–5	3.5
Pa3F	5–5	2	7–7	1
Pa4F	1–1	5	4–3	3
Pa5F	2–2	4	3–2	3
Ph1M	2–2	4	3–2	3
Ph2F	4–3	4	5–4	5
Ph3F	0–0	3	2–2	3
Ph4F	0–0	5	1.5–1.5	4
Ne1F	2–1	4	4–3	2
Mean	1.6–1.3	4	3.7–3.0	3.1

> Because the difficult part about learning to write Chinese characters, because they make no particular sense, like, as in English, you know how the signs, you know sounds combine to make words, but you can't do that in Chinese. It's very very random how they are put together for people like us because we can't make sense of how to write them. (In3F)

Being all English majors, the participants should have reached a high level of competence in English across the four skills. This is clearly borne out in the focus groups which were all conducted in English (except on a few occasions when for one reason or the other, language choice was briefly switched to Cantonese or Putonghua). Not only were their responses to questions unequivocal and their inputs often insightful (e.g., when asked to recommend policy measures to the government), but the majority was also able to substantiate their viewpoints with situated examples, some of which will be reported below. The question 'What is it that you found written Chinese so difficult?' is all the more intriguing given that our SA participants were experienced language learners. In addition to being fluent in English, 12 participants reported having learned French before, with six indicating being 'quite fluent' (4 or above on a 7-point scale) in at least one of the four skills. The majority had learned two or more languages in addition to English: five had learned three other languages; three of them had been exposed to four.[5] One participant, Ph1M, who came to Hong Kong at the age of 10, took pride in being conversant in six languages including English: Tagalog (L1: 7–7–4–3), French (5–5–5–4), Japanese (5–4–4–3), Spanish (4–5–5–2), and Arabic (5–4–2–0) (Table 8.3). With his flair in foreign language learning, it is not surprising that Ph1M should express frustration about not being able to overcome his Chinese literacy gap, even though prior knowledge of Japanese kanji did sometimes allow him to experience positive transfer when making sense of unfamiliar Chinese characters (cf. his self-rating of 2–2 for Chinese R–W). Evidently, the participants' Chinese learning experiences are closely related to the types of schools they attended, from kindergarten to secondary.

Most of the complaints about learning difficulties are related to the non-alphabetic nature of the Chinese writing system. Pa4F noted that given a new Chinese word consisting of one or more characters, after the teacher had demonstrated its pronunciation through choral practice, and the sequence of strokes once or twice on the board, the only method or instruction that the teacher would give to learn it was to memorize it by copying it 10 times. Pa5F similarly pointed out that the only method her teacher would advise was to copy 10–20 times until the word was literally imprinted in her mind. In2F recalled the mind-boggling task of having to memorize the forms and meanings of unfamiliar Chinese characters by scribbling them in copybooks, an ineffective and useless strategy in her view. Likewise, In3F reconstructed her teacher's advice in accordance with the adage 'practice makes perfect':

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[5] The plurilinguality of Hong Kong SA students as exemplified in Table 8.3 is not at all uncommon. For instance, in Pannu's (1998) language diary study of the language choice and identity of Hong Kong Indian adolescents, all of her eight subjects (4 male, 4 female), Secondary 5 (Grade 11) students aged 16–17, were "native speakers of Punjabi with high proficiency in English and Cantonese" (p. 224).

Table 8.3 Participants' language awareness and language profile: Ethnic community language(s) and other languages

Participant	Home lang(s) (L–S–R–W)	Community lang (L–S–R–W)	Other lang 1 (L–S–R–W)	Other lang 2 (L–S–R–W)	Other lang 3 (L–S–R–W)
In1M	ENG (L1) 6–6–6–6	Hindi (L2) 1–1–1–1	French (FL) 3–4–4–3	–	–
In2F	Punjabi (L1) 7–7–1–1	Hindi (L2) 5–5–0–0	French (FL) 2–2–3–2	–	–
In3F	ENG (L1) 7–7–7–6	Punjabi (L2) 5–5–1–1	French (FL) 5–3–3–3	Hindi (FL) 7–7–5–4	Spanish (FL) 1–1–1–1
In4F	Punjabi (L1) 7–7–1–1	Hindi (L1) 7–7–1–1	French (FL) 6–6–7–6	–	–
In5F	ENG (L1) 7–7–7–6	Hindi (L1) 6–5–4–3	French (FL) 6–4–6–4.5	Bengali (FL) 5–4–1–1	Bihari (L2) 6–6–1–1
Pa1F	Urdu (L1) & Hindko (L2) 6–6–2–2	Urdu (L1) 6–6–2–2	French (FL) 2–2–2–1	–	–
Pa2F	Hindku (L1) 7–7----	Urdu (L1) 6–5–3–1	–	–	–
Pa3F	Punjabi (L1) 7–7–1–1	Urdu (L2) 6–6–1–1	French (FL) 5–5–5–5	–	–
Pa4F	Urdu (L1) 7–7–3–2	Urdu (L1) 7–7–3–2	French (FL) –	–	–
Pa5F	Urdu (L1) 6–5---- ENG (L1) 6.5-6.5–6.5–6.5	Punjabi (L1) 6–6----	French (FL) 3–1–1–1	–	–
Ph1M	ENG (L1) 7–7–7–6	Tagalog (L1) 7–7–4–3	French (FL) 5–5–5–4	Japanese (FL) 5–4–4–3	Spanish (FL) 4–5–5–2
Ph2F	ENG (L1) 7–7–7–6	Tagalog (L1) 7–7–6–5	–	–	–
Ph3F	Tagalog (L1/L2) 7–7–7–7	Tagalog (L1/L2) 7–7–7–7	French (FL) 1–2–2–2	--	--
Ph4F	ENG (L1) 7–7–7–7	Tagalog (L2) 3–3–2–2	French (FL) 1–1–1–1	Spanish (FL) 2–1–2–1	Czech (FL) 1–1–1–1
Ne1F	Nepali (L1) 5–4–1–1	Nepalese (Magar) (FL) 1–1–1–1	–	–	–

Note: 'L1' first language, 'L2' second language, 'FL' foreign language try to repeat writing newly learned characters until she could dictate them at will, and then practice using them in her Chinese compositions. In4F found the above-mentioned 'pedagogies' familiar, and added that to help her and her SA peers to make preparation for high-stake public exams like GCSE Chinese, her teacher would advise them to work on past exam papers. Web resources for facilitating the learning of written Chinese,[6] while useful to some extent, were not yet as popular and user-friendly when our students were young students at secondary level. In short, as there was no effective method or pedagogy to help students remember the pronunciation and written forms of Chinese vocabulary, students would quickly forget, making their learning efforts a waste of time. A few participants compared elusive Chinese characters with drawing. Ph2F, who had ample home support for written Chinese and Cantonese in the Philippines until age 15, said:

> For me writing Chinese is like visual arts (...) the characters are more like drawings than letters. So it's hard to remember. (...) the Chinese characters are just like drawing, but the English alphabet is just ABC. You can memorize these 26 [letters], it will be fine, but for Chinese, for each word, there is a different character, and, yeah, writing is like visual arts. (Ph2F)

In4F similarly remarked that:

> My teacher when she taught us Chinese characters, she actually mentioned that in other characters it was like drawing, so you can, basically it's all about memorizing. (In4F)

For SA students, therefore, the absence of any perceptible link between written form and pronunciation is thus a major source of frustration and the main cause for low learning achievement in written Chinese.

Our findings are thus consistent with one robust research insight: far from conveying ideas directly in the visual mode – the ideographic myth which has been debunked by DeFrancis (1984, 1989, 2002, cf. Erbaugh, 2002) – learning Chinese characters is no different from learning other languages, in that speech plays a fundamental mediating role. Research has shown that regardless of the writing system of the target language, most of the words rely on phonetic cues for effective decoding. Despite its pictographic origin, written Chinese is phonetic to a large extent. Most of the Chinese characters – no less than 90% – are composed of two components, one semantic, the other phonetic (Lee 1989, pp. 1–3). Being the most productive of six principles of character formation, 'phonetic compound' is usually taught in primary school to ease pupils' burden of learning a large number of characters. Thus, whereas 同 (*tung*^{21}) is a morpho-syllable with the meaning 'same', it functions as a phonetic in many other characters (e.g., 洞, *dung*^{22}, with the semantic radical 'water' on the left, means 'hole'; 銅, *tung*^{21}, with the radical 'gold', means 'copper'). This metalinguistic awareness may be looked upon as a hallmark of a person's mastery of written Chinese. No wonder it is shared by only a few of the SA participants. Pa2F, when asked to elaborate on her self-rating of Chinese reading-

[6] See, e.g., the CDI (Curriculum Development Institute) website on Chinese language education: http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/chi-edu/curriculum-documents.html.

writing abilities (3–2), proudly provided one instructive illustration of the phonetic-compound formation: the character 恩 (*jan*^{55}, 'grace') is composed of the homophone 因 (meaning 'because', 'cause') and the radical 'heart' 心 (*sam*^{55}) at the bottom. For learners to benefit from such meta-awareness, however, they must have acquired a good number of Chinese characters. As Erbaugh (2002, p. 47) remarks:

> Understanding phonetics in characters is difficult. If you don't speak Chinese, the phonetics are invisible. (...) For students, phonetic cues are little help until one has already memorized hundreds of characters.

Without a working level of the requisite procedural knowledge, independent learning could hardly proceed (e.g., looking up the pronunciation and/or meaning of an unfamiliar character), not to mention incidental learning, which would be virtually impossible.

That the acquisition of literacy is primarily mediated by speech is bad news indeed for SA students in Hong Kong, who often must put up with various problems when making meaning in Cantonese. In addition to the problems discussed in Chap. 3 that SWC is lexico-grammatically based on Putonghua, and lack of support after school, at home or in the community, there is one linguistic factor which makes Cantonese a learner-unfriendly language: the tone system. One of the key findings of Li and Chuk (2015) is that those SA participants who missed the chance of early immersion in Cantonese (roughly before the age of 6) and opportunities to mingle and interact with peers at kindergarten and early primary school years tended to find Cantonese tones an insurmountable stumbling block.

Cantonese is a tone language with six distinctive tonemes: three level, two rising, and one falling. A morpho-syllable consists of a segmental and a tone contour, both being part and parcel of its pronunciation. There is some evidence that learners of Cantonese as a foreign language tend to find tones elusive and a major source of frustration (Li and Chuk 2015; Li et al. 2016; cf. Tinker Sachs and Li 2007). For instance, at the focus group interview, both Ph3F and Pa4F identified the tone system in Cantonese as very challenging:

DL:	What is it that you find Cantonese so challenging, difficult to learn?
Ph3F:	Because there are so many tones.
Pa4F:	Tones.
DL:	Tones.
Pa4F:	Some day, if I say something, they will not understand [me] because I say it in a wrong tone.

Interestingly, Pa4F, who had learned Putonghua for three years from Secondary 1 (Grade 7) to Secondary 3 (Grade 9), found Putonghua easier to learn than Cantonese. This she attributed to two main factors: fewer tones (four distinctive tonemes in Putonghua), and the availability of a standardized Roman script *Hanyu pinyin* (漢語拼音) as learning aid. We will briefly discuss the facilitative role of pinyin in the teaching and learning of Putonghua below.

Short of early immersion and lacking support in the home and neighborhood, SA students can hardly develop their phonemic sensitivity to tonal nuances, both receptively and productively, and interact with Cantonese-dominant speakers confidently and smoothly. Worse, inaccuracies in the tone contours of the target morpho-syllables are often heard as saying something else, sometimes with funny meanings or unwanted associations, triggering laughter on the part of the Cantonese-dominant interlocutor(s), typically without clarification or explanation (Li et al. 2016). Ph1M and Ph2F reported having encountered such humiliating experience:

Ph1M:	The only way that I can get to test what I learn in [Cantonese self-study course] books is to test it out with your friends. Whoever you can choose not to laugh at you at least.
DL:	Interesting, you mentioned laughing. That happens to you a lot?
Ph1M:	It happens to me a lot. In fact, I get insulted by it. Yeah.
JC:	You mean when people laughed, you felt insulted.
Ph1M:	No. No. No. Sometimes they openly insult me like "Boy, your Cantonese do sucks" (...).
Ph2F:	Yeah, because of the accent I would say.
Ph1M:	Yeah.
Ph2F:	Some of my friends say that too.

Ph1M further commented that he would only use Cantonese with really close friends, especially if they need help from him (e.g., in exchange for his advice on their school work in English). There is thus some evidence of laughter in Cantonese-dominant speakers' response in social interaction having some dampening effect on SA students' readiness to communicate with others in Cantonese. Of the 12 participants who rated their Chinese reading-writing abilities between 0 and 2, seven rated their listening-speaking competence in Cantonese between 0 and 3 (two gave a rating of 4–3, one 5–2, and two 6–5).[7]

8.4 Discussion and Recommendations

In light of the findings above, there seems little doubt that a lack of proficiency in Cantonese makes it difficult for SA students to follow classroom instruction in Chinese literacy-focused lessons conducted in Cantonese. At the same time, without

[7] One notable exception is In3F, who rated her Cantonese as 6–5 but reported 0–0 abilities in Chinese reading-writing. For her, the key to success was active participation in volunteer community work when she was a secondary school student, which allowed her to make a lot of Cantonese-speaking friends. She also reportedly watched a lot of Cantonese TV programs, from news to drama series, to the point that she sometimes insisted on keeping to the Cantonese channel despite her family members' wish to switch to an English channel. Apart from strong determination, In3F also exhibited a highly positive attitude toward Cantonese. To the question "How would you feel if your teacher taught entirely in Cantonese?" she responded that she would not mind, and added: "pressure is helpful". More research is needed to investigate the correlation between such a high level of motivation and positive attitude toward the development of interactional competence in the target language.

a requisite grade-appropriate level of written Chinese, SA students will not be able to keep abreast with the mainstream Chinese curriculum, hence a vicious cycle. The strong link between Cantonese orality and Chinese literacy is further evidenced by the high achievers among the 15 SA participants. As shown in Li and Chuk's (2015) study, three of the four SA participants who gave the highest self-rating to their Cantonese (Pa1F, Pa2F and Pa3F) share two things in common: being born in Hong Kong, they attended CMI kindergarten and primary school, and during those years developed a network of Cantonese-speaking friends to whom they could turn to for assistance if they wished. Further evidence of after-school support was provided by Cantonese-speaking members in the home (In2F) and neighbors (Pa5F):

DL:	Is there anyone that you could turn to, I mean not just at home, when learning Cantonese or Chinese characters?
In2F:	Yeah, my auntie, she's been, she was born in Hong Kong, (...) their family is like second, third, second I think. So, their kids, they have grown up, speaking Chinese. So perhaps some things, I don't understand or… I would go, I used to go to them. Then, she will tell me like, how to say those things.

JC:	So if you have difficulties in learning Cantonese or Chinese characters, who would you turn to, like your dad is one of them?
Pa5F:	I can't turn to my [Cantonese-speaking] dad because I would have so many questions indeed but he just knows the basic grammar as well. I would turn to my neighbors because they are very nice because we have been living in that area for more than 10 years.

Regarding the impact of their fluency in Cantonese on their Chinese literacy development, all three high achievers indicated it had been a productive experience, although only Pa3F was able to maintain a sound knowledge of written Chinese (R–W self-rated as 7–7), but not Pa1F (2–2) and Pa2F (3–2).

As for the effectiveness of support for SA students' Chinese literacy development from within the local education system, what seems to be the problem, and in which direction improvement could be made? To appreciate the Chinese literacy gap that SA students in Hong Kong are confronted with, we may ask: How is literacy in Chinese characters taught and learned in China? What conditions – linguistic, social and pedagogical – are conducive to the efficient and effective promotion of Chinese literacy in an L1 setting, including in the so-called 'dialect' areas like Hong Kong? Below, we will draw on the ethnographic, qualitative studies of Ingulsrud and Allen (1999, 2003) to address these questions.

Based on their fieldwork data collected from two primary schools in Nanjing between 1990 and 1994, Ingulsrud and Allen (1999, 2003) provided a lot of rich details about "the school literacy process" (Ingulsrud and Allen 2003, p. 103), that is, how children growing up in the Mandarin-speaking area of Nanjing were taught to read and write Chinese characters. Even though their research was based at Nanjing, the same pedagogical principles are by and large still followed nation-wide.

Before Chinese characters were formally introduced to school children at Primary 1, teachers would take care to use *Hanyu pinyin* to teach them Putonghua, the national lingua franca. This observation is consonant with Hao's (2001) description of Chinese literacy curriculum for Primary 1 children.[8] With highly regular correspondences between phonemes and graphemes and built-in diacritics for marking tone contours, pinyin is the official standard Roman script for representing Putonghua (e.g., *Pǔtōnghuà pìnyīn* 普通話拼音). To enable children to connect Putonghua to pinyin, the teacher would teach them to recognize and produce individual Roman letters that make up the syllables (e.g., using mnemonics to remember the contrast between the letters *b* and *d, m* and *n*). After the children have developed a certain level of phonemic awareness, Putonghua vocabulary would be elicited and taught to the children with a view to reinforcing their knowledge of pinyin. This would take from five to 12 weeks, depending on the relative distance between Putonghua and the local vernacular used by the children (Ingulsrud and Allen 1999, p. 128). For instance, given that the Nanjing 'dialect' is a variety of Mandarin relatively close to Putonghua, the transition to introducing Chinese characters took only about 6 weeks. By contrast, in some parts of Guangdong province adjacent to Hong Kong, the transition could take up to 12 weeks, and so "The dialect group areas are at a disadvantage with this extra time spent on language instruction" (Ingulsrud and Allen 1999, p. 128).

Pinyin thus plays a crucial, if auxiliary or instrumental, role in facilitating mainland Chinese children' Chinese literacy development and consolidating their knowledge of Chinese characters. As Ingulsrud and Allen (1999, p. 129) observe:

> Once the Hanyu Pinyin system is learned, Chinese characters are taught with the assistance of Hanyu Pinyin. Although Chinese characters are presented in thematic groups, children do not know a sufficient number of them to read a continuous text. For that reason, there is an intertext stage where children read material written in both Hanyu Pinyin and Chinese characters. As more Chinese characters are learned, Hanyu Pinyin is used less and eventually its use for textual reading is discontinued. Its use, however, continues for various technical functions such as consulting reference material and word processing.

In sum, the teaching of Chinese literacy to one of the largest school-age populations in the world is firmly grounded in the teaching of speech, the national language Putonghua, with the Roman script pinyin playing an instrumental role in the teaching and learning process. 'Dialect' speakers may take longer to develop a phonemic awareness of the speech sounds in Putonghua, but "as soon as the [pinyin] system is covered in class, the teacher moves on rapidly to present Chinese characters" (Ingulsrud and Allen 1999, p. 129). Given that reading and writing is mediated

[8]「兒童入學用**7**週左右的時間教學漢語拼音,培養直呼音節和書寫音節的能力,使漢語拼音成爲提前讀寫的工具 **(...)** 從一年級起開設說話課,學好普通話,促進口語和思維的發展。」('Over a period of about seven weeks, [Primary One] school children are taught *Hanyu pinyin* to develop their ability to pronounce syllables out loud and write them down when heard. The purpose is to make pinyin serve as a tool to facilitate their reading development. Speaking lessons [in Putonghua] are taught from Primary 1; solid Putonghua promotes spoken language as well as cognitive development' (Hao 2001, p. 122, my translation).

primarily by speech (DeFrancis 1984, 1989, 2002; Erbaugh 2002; Perfetti and Dunlap 2008), knowledge of pinyin helps raise:

(a) learners' ***phonological awareness***: "the ability to reflect upon and manipulate phonological units in a language" (Kuo and Anderson 2008, p. 42), and
(b) learners' ***grapho-phonological awareness***: "insight into how [Roman] orthography encodes phonological information" (Kuo and Anderson 2008, p. 53)

Promoting such metalinguistic awareness is seen as pedagogically significant before logographic Chinese characters are formally introduced. Recent neurolinguistic research on reading and literacy development also shows that "the system for orthographic representations may support phonological processing as an auxiliary interactive processing network" and that "there might be a *bidirectional reciprocal influence between orthography and phonology*" (Peterson et al. 2009, p. 173, emphasis added).

Following the mainland Chinese model of literacy education outlined in broad strokes above, we may ask: What does that tell us about SA students' Chinese literacy gap in Hong Kong, and what implications does it have for more effective support measures? As a starting point, the reader may recall the frustrating experience of one SA participant discussed above. Born in the Philippines to a Chinese father who did not speak much Tagalog, Ph2F had plenty of opportunities to speak Cantonese at home, and yet she found Putonghua easier to learn, even though the only source of input was classroom instruction at a Filipino Chinese school from primary to secondary until the age of 15. Compared with the teaching of Putonghua as L1 or L2, which is supported and mediated by the Roman script pinyin, SA students in Hong Kong are expected to read, recognize and write Chinese characters with Cantonese as the medium of instruction. In the process, however, SA students' knowledge of and performance in Cantonese is seen as secondary and unrelated to their literacy development. There is little evidence of local teachers of Chinese being aware of the crucial mediating role of speech in their students' literacy development.

In this light, perhaps the clearest drawback is that little attempt is made to ground the teaching of Chinese characters in speech, the local vernacular Cantonese. Not only is there no standardized romanization system comparable to pinyin in the mainland for local teachers and students to fall back on as a means for checking accurate pronunciation and meaning, but there is no coordinated support, at the level of policy or practice, to help SA students improve and sustain their knowledge of and competence in Cantonese systematically. Without a sound knowledge of Cantonese, following the teacher's instruction in Chinese literacy-focused lessons will be virtually impossible. Worse, without a firm grasp of the tone contours which are intrinsic to individual characters or morpho-syllables, the learning task is made unduly complicated and the learning curve insurmountably steep. In terms of pedagogical design, therefore, a top priority should be to equip SA students with a solid foundation in Cantonese, regardless of their onset age. The following measures are thus recommended (cf. Tse et al. 2007, pp. 381–382; see also 'Strategies for Equitable and Anti-racist School Education', Erni and Leung 2014, p. 235):

(i) to encourage early immersion in Cantonese-medium kindergarten where possible (Li and Chuk 2015);
(ii) to foster peer support by strengthening the networking of Cantonese-speaking and SA students, e.g., by engaging them in group tasks or projects, especially those whose homes are in the same neighborhood;
(iii) to promote the use of a standardized, keyboard-friendly romanization system like JyutPing developed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (LSHK) among teachers and students: http://www.lshk.org/node/47;[9]
(iv) to develop basic curriculum material to equip SA students with a high level of phonemic and tonemic awareness using JyutPing;
(v) to use JyutPing to facilitate the teaching and learning of Chinese characters in class;
(vi) to develop online self-learning materials, with the tone contours of Cantonese morpho-syllables clearly indicated and their tone values indexed by JyutPing notations;
(vii) to explore different means and avenues to facilitate independent learning (e.g., compiling bilingual dictionaries, print and online, that include the option of searching for the pronunciation and/or meaning of Chinese characters using JyutPing; writing and distributing booklets in English outlining the basics in Cantonese/SWC grammar); and
(viii) to engage SA parents by empowering them with functional Cantonese (e.g., through after-school tuition provided by undergraduate students engaged in service learning) and, where possible, supporting the use of their ethnic home language(s) with children.

In this regard, some progress has been made in the teaching effectiveness of Chinese characters from preschool to secondary levels. For over a decade, guided by an integrated perceptual approach (IPA) to teaching Chinese characters, S.-K. Tse and his research associates have experimented with a phenomenographic method with promising results. Tse et al. (2007) outline the theoretical grounding and pedagogic principles (see pp. 393–394), which are supported by empirical results of

[9] Front-line teachers and students' receptiveness of a Romanization system like JyutPing cannot be taken for granted, partly because it is not commonly used in society. To ensure success, there is a need to take stock of similar initiatives that have been introduced, and to analyze the reasons why the response to such a scheme has been lukewarm (S.-D. Chan, personal communication). More proactive measures may include any or all of the following: (a) running workshops to equip teachers and students of Chinese with JyutPing; (b) creating a JyutPing-rich school environment by labeling prominent locations within the school premises with JyutPing; (c) challenging students by asking them to produce JyutPing Romanization for specific lexical items, e.g., in a game or competition; (d) engaging teaching assistants to produce multimodal online and class materials to enhance the quality of teaching and learning JyutPing; (e) providing online support for teachers; and (f) building knowledge of JyutPing into a subset of non-core assessed activities.

teaching Chinese characters to Cantonese-speaking Grade One students in four primary schools using this method. The integrated perceptual approach was later trialed and tested with kindergarteners and similarly positive results have been obtained (Lee et al. 2011). An important premise of this method consists of using the learners' mental lexicon (Aitchison 2003) of everyday vocabulary which they bring to class (e.g., nursery rhymes, food items, body parts) to design and structure the teaching of Chinese characters. Starting from meanings, texts, and contexts that are more or less familiar to students, this method introduces characters in a top-down and inductive manner, raising students' awareness of the semantic radicals or phonetic components that those characters have in common where possible, for example, using the superordinate 動物, *dung*^{22}*mat*^{22}, 'animals' to elicit hyponyms such as 狗 (*gau*^{35}, 'dog') and 貓 (*maau*^{55}, 'cat') that are familiar to kindergarteners (Lee et al. 2011, p. 670). Students' knowledge of semantic networks is also strengthened by fostering links to other characters written with similar radicals or components (e.g., characters used to write words for different body parts and animals). Students showed signs of enjoying the lessons; they were also able to apply that meta-knowledge to make meaningful links with other characters encountered in their daily lives. A similar method was later applied to introduce Chinese characters to SA students, and the results are similarly encouraging (Loh and Tse 2012). The main obstacle appears to be the SA learners' lack of familiarity with Cantonese, hence the emphasis to first develop their speaking and listening skills in order to enable them to follow the instruction and facilitate their interaction with peers in class. The phenomenographic method is still being refined; judging from the positive feedback obtained from various stakeholders, including students, teachers, principals, and parents, this method has great potential for helping young SA learners to overcome the linguistic challenge of acquiring and developing literacy in Chinese.

In longer terms, after SA students have made a head start with the learning of Chinese characters, other types of metalinguistic awareness involved in decoding logographic Chinese characters will have a better chance of being developed gradually, including:

(c) learners' ***morphological awareness***: "the ability to reflect upon and manipulate morphemes [i.e. Chinese morpho-syllables] and to control word formation processes" (Kuo and Anderson 2008, p. 47), and
(d) learners' ***grapho-morphological awareness***: "the ability to reflect upon how semantic information is encoded in the orthography [i.e. the semantic radical and phonetic component of a phonetic compound, if relevant] and how orthography provides cues to meaning" (Kuo and Anderson 2008, p. 54)

To sum up, SA students' huge Chinese literacy gap may be explained by a lack of various kinds of metalinguistic awareness to spoken Cantonese and written Chinese (Kuo and Anderson 2008). There is strong empirical evidence showing that, without first helping learners lay a solid foundation in the speech sounds of the target language, literacy-focused teaching and learning – in L1 or L2 – can hardly proceed. The above recommended measures, if implemented, would require different stakeholders to put in concerted efforts. It is my belief that these measures, some of which have been explored by S.-K. Tse and his research associates for well over a decade, will help bring about a major corrective of the traditional practice of presenting Chinese characters using a 'whole word' or 'look and say' method to SA students who have little or no working knowledge of Cantonese.

In their description of the school-literacy process in China, Ingulsrud and Allen (2003. p. 106) mention in passing that the transition from *Hanyu pinyin* to Chinese characters was perceived by the primary school pupils they observed as a "great shock", despite the fact that the characters introduced in the first lessons were rather simple, for example, the numbers from '1' to '10', characters involving no more than five strokes such as 日 (*rì*, 'sun'), 月 (*yuè*, 'moon'), 水 (*suǐ*, 'water'), 火 (*huǒ*, 'fire'), 山 (*sān*, 'mountain') and 田 (*tián*, 'paddy') (p. 116). Bearing in mind that the logographic script in mainland China is simplified, the traditional characters required of Hong Kong students are considerably more complex. To give an example, the meaning 'tulip' is rendered in Cantonese in three syllables as *wat*^{55}*gam*^{55}*hoeng*^{55} and written as 鬱金香; the first character 鬱, which is also found in polysyllabic words like 憂鬱 (*jau*^{55}*wat*^{55}, 'melancholy') and 抑鬱症 (*jik*^{55}*wat*^{55}*zing*^{33}, 'depression'), consists of 29 strokes (compare simplified 郁: 10 strokes).[10,11] Below are a few other examples of disyllabic words (nouns) involving rather complex written forms:

鑰匙	*joek*^{22}*si*^{21}	'key'	26 + 11 strokes
靈魂	*ling*^{21}*wan*^{21}	'soul'	24 + 14 strokes
禮儀	*lai*^{23}*ji*^{21}	'etiquette'	18 + 15 strokes
鞦韆	*cau*^{55}*cin*^{55}	'swing' (n.)	18 + 25 strokes
螃蟹	*pong*^{21}*haai*^{23}	'crab'	17 + 21 strokes

One of the pedagogical strategies of empowerment is to enable SA students to express their ethnolinguistic identities by referring to their ethnic languages in Cantonese and SWC (cf. learners' mental lexicon in their lifeworld, Tse et al. 2007). Such a task, however, is anything but straightforward. For instance, Urdu-speaking students, who already know how to say and spell 'Urdu' in English, would have to go through a rather steep learning curve before they could utter its equivalent in Cantonese (*wu*^{55}*ji*^{23}*dou*^{55}*jyu*^{23}, 'Urdu language'), and write the four characters accurately in SWC: 烏爾都語. Compared with the four-letter word *Urdu*, its equivalent in SWC requires its writers to compose four characters consisting of 11+15+11+14 strokes, each in their prescriptive order following general orthographic principles: from top to bottom, left to right, and outside to inside (Tse et al. 2007). Without any clue to their pronunciation, learning and retaining the phonetic shapes and written

[10] For an informative website about the sequence of the strokes in writing traditional Chinese characters that are shared in Japanese kanji, see http://jisho.org/kanji/details/%E9%AC%B1.

[11] There is some indication that characters written with 13 to 17 strokes are the easiest to learn. Those written with 13 or below are as difficult as those with 17 or above (S.-D. Chan, personal communication).

forms of traditional Chinese characters such as these is no simple feat. Short of effective pedagogies to sharpen up SA students' grasp of Cantonese, it is not clear how their Chinese literacy gap could be filled and their linguistic predicament alleviated. Having said that, it should be remembered that developing and sustaining SA students' knowledge of Cantonese is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for closing their Chinese literacy gap.

8.5 Hong Kong SAR Government's Support Measures and Their Effectiveness

Since the new millennium, the Hong Kong SAR government has progressively introduced a number of measures to help SA and other ethnic minorities cope with the arduous task of learning written Chinese. Upon the NGOs' untiring critique, notably by Unison, and recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), more and more supportive measures have been put in place to facilitate the integration of "unprivileged ethnic minorities" (Erni and Leung 2014) into mainstream society. For instance, a multilingual website containing useful information on 'Education services for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students' has been regularly expanded and updated for the information of various stakeholders, including NCS students, parents, school principals, teachers, NGOs and other voluntary social service providers (see, e.g., Education Department 10/2001; Education and Manpower Bureau 2005; Education Bureau 10/2015). Apart from English and Chinese, such information may also be accessed in a range of ethnic minority languages online, including Bahasa, Hindi, Nepali, Tagalog, Thai, and Urdu (Education Bureau 2016). In 2007, a Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) was introduced. Like Chinese parents, NCS parents can also use the "education voucher" to claim fee reduction for their children studying at eligible kindergartens (Education Bureau 10/2015, where detailed information about other support measures is listed). As for access to civil service positions, according to a response of the Civil Service Bureau to the Legislative Council's inquiry posted online (Civil Service Bureau 15/3/2015), the requirement for written Chinese in the Hong Kong Police Force, the Correctional Services Department and the Government Logistics Department was relaxed and has been implemented since January 2013.

An EOC-commissioned report (EOC 2012) was instrumental in bringing about a number of significant policy changes to counteract problems of discrimination, perceived or real. Based on 19 in-depth focus group (FG) interviews with a total of 107 Chinese and South Asian (Indian, Nepali and Pakistani) stakeholders in five groups – home-makers, retirees, employees, students, and NGO representatives – a lack of written Chinese competence has been found to be the root cause of a wide range of problems across the domains of employment, education, social interaction (with Chinese), and access to services (e.g., opening a bank account or applying for a credit card). In that 31-page report (including the Executive Summary but excluding the Table of Contents and cover page), the keywords '(language) barrier' and

'Chinese language' each occurs 12 times. The following excerpts are particularly instructive:

> Having difficulties in learning Chinese was a common issue mentioned by all focus group participants – young and old, employed and seeking employment, students and housewives. The majority of South Asians who were born or come [sic.] to Hong Kong at a very young age were able to converse in Cantonese, but their level of written Chinese was quite poor. It was rather common for South Asian students to attend designated or international schools in their secondary education because they fell behind in the Chinese subject. By studying in designated or international schools, South Asian students could drop Chinese language and switch to learn another language. However, this decision would later greatly limit this group of youngsters' chance of getting higher education and employability when they graduated. (EOC 2012, §3.12, p. 10)

> Lacking a common language was perceived to be the biggest barrier separating local Chinese from South Asians. (EOC 2012, Conclusion, §4.9, pp. 21–22)

The last-mentioned excerpt refers to one of the two factors preventing interaction between the two groups,[12] a situation that may be traced back to the British colonial policy and practices of racial and cultural segregation (Erni and Leung 2014, p. 24). This is why in the eyes of local Chinese, "the ethnic, dark-skinned, non-Chinese population" tends to be "invisible neighbors," their visible traits being rendered invisible in society by their 'minoritarian' status (Erni and Leung 2014, pp. 3–4). To break this inter-group communication gridlock, it is imperative to empower SA Hongkongers to develop Chinese literacy in addition to their ability to converse in Cantonese, and to equip Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers with the competence and confidence they need to converse in English. Both, however, remain tough challenges to overcome.

8.6 Conclusion

Unlike alphabetic languages such as English and other European languages, where speech sounds are mapped onto discrete graphic units or letters of the alphabet more or less systematically, written Chinese adopts a logographic, non-alphabetic script (*hanzi*, 漢字, literally 'Han-Chinese character'). Unless learners are already in command of hundreds of Chinese characters, the phonetic clues in the majority of them, constructed following the 'phonetic compound' principle of character formation, are hardly visible to them (Erbaugh 2002). In addition, learners tasked with writing standard Chinese through the medium of Cantonese face two dire pedagogical challenges. First, Cantonese is a tone language with six distinctive tonemes – three level tones, two rising, and one falling. Second, L ('low'), informal Cantonese morpho-syllables (e.g., 食嘢, *sik*^{22} *je*^{23}, 'to eat [something]') are excluded from school literacy (Li in press); in their stead, Putonghua-based morpho-syllables must be learned and used in formal contexts, albeit pronounced in H ('high'), formal Cantonese (e.g., 吃東西, *hek*^{33} *dung*^{55}*sai*^{55}, 'to eat [something]').

[12] The other factor identified is inadequate understanding of each other's culture (EOC 2012, Conclusion, §4.11, p. 22).

In the last decade, the Hong Kong SAR government has stepped up its support to help SA students cope with the learning of SWC. Various initiatives have been made, including providing after-class tuition at community centers, partnering with Chinese literacy scholars to create reader-friendly online learning resources, engaging experts in exploring the development of a school-based Chinese as a second language (CSL) curriculum, and abolishing the 'designated school' system with a view to facilitating the intermingling of SA and Cantonese-speaking students in the same class.[13] The effectiveness of measures such as these is being monitored. It remains to be seen whether they will be effective in facilitating SA students' Chinese literacy development and meeting their needs for written Chinese through education. Earlier policy measures shortly after the handover suffered from the problem of grossly underestimating the linguistic challenge faced by SA students as they grapple with a non-alphabetic, logographic writing system. An additional complication is that in the process of teaching and learning, the cultural values (e.g., religious and cultural practices) and ethnolinguistic identities of SA students are sometimes not respected (Chee 2012; Gao 2012a, b; Gu and Patkin 2013; Ku et al. 2005). Thanks to the indefatigable critique of NGOs and the vigilant monitoring of the EOC, the linguistic challenge is now better understood and informed solutions are in the pipeline. One encouraging development is that in April 2013, the EOC Director vowed to work with the Education Bureau (EDB) to rectify social inequalities rooted in a lack of effective supportive measures for helping SA students develop Chinese literacy.

Literacy acquisition, in monolingual or multilingual contexts, does not take place in a social vacuum (Coulmas 2013; Lin and Li 2015; Street 2003). Unlike during the colonial era, much greater significance is accorded to Chinese literacy in Hong Kong after 1997, thereby creating a drastic change in the forms of linguistic/symbolic capital in society (Gao 2011; cf. Bourdieu 1991). SA students are expected to become biliterate and trilingual like their age-relevant Cantonese-L1 peers, but their poor performance in written Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Cantonese defies such social expectations. A lack of Chinese literacy is thus a major stumbling block for them to gain access to educational and career opportunities. Following the Chief Executive's directive in his 2014 policy address, a separate Chinese as a second language (CSL) curriculum that takes into account SA students' specific language backgrounds, learning needs and modes of assessment is being explored (Kwan 2012, 2014). This development is reminiscent of the "home-grown [language policy] model of an inclusive Chinese nation with diversity" adopted by the mainland Chinese government toward ethnic minorities (Zhou 2012, p. 18). Based on empirical findings collected from the language learning experiences of 15 SA students, the recommendations presented above will hopefully go some way towards helping SA students close their Chinese literacy gap and, in so doing, correcting the sociolinguistic injustice thus arising in multilingual Hong Kong (Ku et al. 2005; Pérez-Milans to appear).

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[13] To cater for the special educational needs of ethnic minority students, 'designated schools' were self-nominated schools which admitted a greater number of EM students. They were intended "to raise the educational opportunities for non-Chinese speaking students" by providing them with "additional resources to support the enhancement of learning and teaching of NCS students" (Erni and Leung 2014, p. 132; for more details, see pp. 132–137).

Appendix

Questionnaire for Focus Group Interview with South Asian Student Participants

Section A: Personal Information

N.B.: All personal information will be kept in strictest confidence and will only be used for research purposes. Your personal identity will not be disclosed. Thank you for your cooperation.

Name (like to be known as): ________
Ethnicity: ______________ Sex: ______ Age: _______
Born in HK (please circle)? Yes / No At what age did you come to HK? _________
Religion (if any): _____________ Home district (e.g., Tsim Sha Tsui): _____________
Home language[14]: _______________ Ethnic community language[15]: _______________
Kindergarten medium of instruction (MoI): ________ Primary School (MoI):________
Secondary School medium of instruction (MoI): __________

Language profile (self-assessed): In each of the boxes below, which number is true of you?

1 _ _ _ _ 2 _ _ _ _ 3 _ _ _ _ 4 _ _ _ _ 5 _ _ _ _ 6 _ _ _ _ 7

Beginner———Basic———Quite fluent———Fluent———Native(-like)

	L1 / L2 / FL[16] (pls. circle)	**Listening**	**Speaking**	**Reading**	**Writing**
Home language:	**L1 / L2 / FL**				
Ethnic community language:	**L1 / L2 / FL**				
Cantonese	**L1 / L2 / FL**				
Mandarin/Putonghua	**L1 / L2 / FL**				
Written Chinese					
English	**L1 / L2 / FL**				
Others (please specify):					

[14] 'Home language' refers to the language of the home, typically between members of your family.

[15] 'Ethnic community language' refers to the language used by members of the same ethnic group as yours in HK.

[16] 'L1' = first language or mother tongue; 'L2' = second language; 'FL' = foreign language

1. What language/languages do you usually use in your interaction with the following people?

   Speaking (Informal):
   (a) Grandfather ____________________
   (b) Grandmother ____________________
   (c) Father ____________________
   (d) Mother ____________________
   (e) Brothers ____________________
   (f) Sisters ____________________
   (g) South Asian friends ____________________
   (h) Chinese friends ____________________
   (i) Others (please specify): ____________________

   Writing (Informal, e.g., Email/Texting)
   (a) Grandfather ____________________
   (b) Grandmother ____________________
   (c) Father ____________________
   (d) Mother ____________________
   (e) Brothers ____________________
   (f) Sisters ____________________
   (g) South Asian friends ____________________
   (h) Chinese friends ____________________
   (i) Others (please specify): ____________________

2. Is your **home language** the same as your **ethnic community language**? If not, did you find it difficult to learn your home language / ethnic community language? Please explain.

3. Have you learned how to <u>read and write</u> your home language/ethnic community language?

4. How important is **<u>your home language</u>** to your education and employment opportunities? (Please rank the 4 skills: '**4**' = Most important; '**1**' = Least important)

   ___ Listening ___ Speaking ___ Reading ___ Writing

5. **Beyond school activities**, how often do you… (Please circle.)

(a) interact with others in your home language?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(b) read or write your home language?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(c) interact with others in your ethnic community language (if ≠ home language)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(d) read or write your ethnic community language (if ≠ home language)?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(e) interact with others in English?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(f) read or write English?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(g) interact with others in Cantonese?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(h) interact with others in Mandarin/Putonghua?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

(i) read or write Chinese?

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

Section B: Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Have you made a lot of Cantonese friends? Why or why not?

2. Think of your best friends. Are they (local) Chinese or non-Chinese? Please explain.

3. Do you consider yourself a Hongkonger? Why or why not?

4. Do you think non-Chinese locals (like you) need to learn Cantonese? Why or why not?

5. Have you made a conscious attempt to learn Cantonese, either formally (e.g., studying a Cantonese course), or informally (e.g., practice with Cantonese friends)?

6. Do you find **written Chinese** easy to learn? How important is <u>written Chinese</u> to your education and employment opportunities?

1 …………… 2 …………… 3 …………… 4 …………… 5	
Very easy	Very difficult
1 …………… 2 …………… 3 …………… 4 …………… 5	
Not important	Very important

7. Do you find **English** easy to learn? How important is <u>English</u> to your education and employment opportunities?

1 …………… 2 …………… 3 …………… 4 …………… 5	
Very easy	Very difficult
1 …………… 2 …………… 3 …………… 4 …………… 5	
Not important	Very important

8. Approximately how many **Chinese characters/words** have you learned?

9. Approximately how many **Chinese characters/words** can you recognize/write?

Recognize: __________	Write: __________

10. What methods do/did <u>your teachers of Chinese recommend</u> for learning **Cantonese / Chinese characters**? How effective are those methods?

    Learning Cantonese: ____
    ____

    Learning Chinese characters: ____
    ____

11. What methods do/did <u>you actually use</u> to learn **Cantonese / Chinese characters**? How effective are those methods?

    Learning Cantonese: ____
    ____

    Learning Chinese characters: ____
    ____

12. If you have difficulties learning **Cantonese / Chinese characters**, was/is there anyone that you turn to for help (e.g., buddies)? If so, how effective was/is the assistance given to you?

13. For South Asian students like you, are there any effective **learning methods** that you would recommend when learning English / Cantonese / Chinese characters / Mandarin?

    Methods for learning <u>English</u>: ____
    ____
    ____

    Methods for learning <u>Cantonese</u>: ____________________________________
    ____
    ____

    Methods for learning <u>Chinese characters</u>: ___________________________
    ____
    ____

    Methods for learning <u>Mandarin/Putonghua</u>: __________________________
    ____
    ____

14. Based on your experience as a learner of English / Cantonese / Chinese characters / Mandarin/Putonghua, what kinds of **government support** do you think can help South Asian students to learn English / Cantonese / Chinese characters / Mandarin/Putonghua more effectively?

    Any other comments? ____
    ____

Thanks very much for your help! ☺ ☺

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Chapter 9
Issues in Language Policy and Planning: Summary and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

In Chap. 1, we set out to calibrate the effectiveness of the biliteracy and trilingualism language-in-education policy[1] by critically examining the relevant factors from multiple perspectives: linguistic, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, neuroscience, and pedagogic (including curricular). Our discussion in Chap. 2 shows that, as a result of prolonged and intensive language contact, what is conventionally referred to as code-switching (CS) or code-mixing (CM), involving Cantonese/Chinese and English, in speech as well as in writing, is indeed a commonplace social practice in informal communication among Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers. It reflects an age-old plurilingual practice of heteroglossia, in Hong Kong and elsewhere in other multilingual societies, whereby plurilinguals routinely deploy all linguistic resources from conventionally discrete languages or language varieties, speech styles, genres or registers to make meaning – so long as no overriding monolingual norm prevails in context. Recent research in plurilingual interaction has shown that CS and CM are ill-conceived metaphors that fail to do justice to plurilinguals' intricate and creative 'spur-of-the-moment' translanguaging (W. Li 2011; W. Li and Zhu 2013), the latter being increasingly accepted as a more appropriate term. One important reason why translanguaging between Cantonese/Chinese and English is so irresistible is English-medium instruction, or the medium-of-learning effect (MOLE). All this helps explain the ubiquity of translingual practice in multilingual Hong Kong (Canagarajah 2013a, b).

Our deliberation and illustrations in Chap. 3 have confirmed that neither Standard Written Chinese (SWC) nor Putonghua is learner-friendly. For 'dialect' speakers like native speakers of Cantonese, the task of developing basic literacy in SWC is riddled with two main problems: (i) a non-alphabetic, orthographically deep writing

[1] 兩文三語 (*loeng*^{35}*man*^{21}*saam*^{55}*jyu*^{23}/*liǎng wén sān yǔ*): two written languages, three spoken languages.

D. C. S. Li, *Multilingual Hong Kong: Languages, Literacies and Identities*,
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system, and (ii) considerable lexical (to a lesser extent, grammatical) discrepancy between SWC literacy norms and the majority of Hongkongers' vernacular, Cantonese. These two factors help explain why for Cantonese-L1 learners, Chinese literacy acquisition and development as well as cognitive development through reading takes considerably more time compared with their age-relevant peers learning an alphabetic language with a relatively shallow orthography (e.g., Finnish, Italian, or German, McBride 2016, p. 15). Phonologically, Putonghua diverges from Cantonese considerably, making it difficult for Cantonese-L1 learners to master despite the benefit of a shared lingua-cultural heritage and writing system. While there is some truth in the claim, that for Cantonese-L1 learners Putonghua is half way between a first and a second language (i.e., L1.5) from the linguistic point of view (Lai-Au Yeung 1997), the fact remains that many interlanguage features characterized by cross-linguistic influence or transference from Cantonese must be overcome before Putonghua could serve productively as a medium of instruction (MoI) for teaching and learning the Chinese Language subject (i.e., teaching Chinese in Putonghua, or TCP in short).

As we saw in Chap. 4, owing to tremendous typological differences, an L1 variety like British English presents a great deal of acquisitional problems to Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers, both in speaking (RP being the dominant pedagogic model for English pronunciation) and writing (lexico-grammatically and orthographically). In the process of learning English, EFL learners' knowledge of Cantonese/Chinese has hardly any reference value. On linguistic grounds alone, the contrastive differences in Chap. 4 help explain why for the majority of Cantonese-L1 EFL learners, native-like, idiomatic-sounding English, as measured against the norms of EAP, is so difficult to attain.

Such a linguistic challenge is further compounded by the sociolinguistic patterns of language use beyond school premises. As shown in our discussion in Chap. 6, largely for demographic reasons, the ethnolinguistic identity of Cantonese-L1 speakers, who make up about 90% of the local population, is closely bound up with Cantonese (So 1998). One consequence is that, in general, initiating and/or maintaining an English-only conversation in English for intra-ethnic communication is marked (more so in speech than in electronic communication). What this means is that opportunities for oral practice using English or Putonghua beyond the classroom are rare. How likely is it for EFL learners to reach native-like competence in a language, one that is largely restricted to and has little reality outside the classroom? Having to master one such language is no simple feat, what about the sociopolitically conditioned imperative of having to master two? There is thus a huge gap between the SAR government's biliteracy and trilingualism language-in-education policy goal and the actual patterns of language use in society: with the superimposed standard language varieties, English (spoken and written) and Chinese (SWC and Putonghua), it is as if the SAR government had set a lofty if not impossible goalpost for the majority of its citizenry, a recipe for mass failure so to speak. In sum, the sociolinguistic environment governing the use of English and Putonghua in multilingual Hong Kong are such that Cantonese-L1 learners' repertoires in these target languages tend to be truncated and belong to a lower order of indexicality

(Blommaert 2010) compared with the expected levels of repertoires set for NS-based Standard English, SWC and Putonghua. As shown in Chap. 5 and Chap. 6, much of the linguistic predicament was played out in the social tensions and competing interests among various groups of stakeholders in the MoI policy debate since the 1970s, which culminated in the first SAR government's official language-in-education policy of biliteracy and trilingualism shortly after the renationalization of Hong Kong on 1 July 1997.

Between English and Putonghua, there is no question that in general, the craving for 'good' English proficiency far exceeds that for native-like Putonghua in Hong Kong. In Chap. 6, we saw that there is as yet no consensus among scholars concerning the status of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL). A similar indeterminacy has been raised with regard to the status of Putonghua in Hong Kong (L1.5, L2 or FL, see Chaps. 3 and 7). Part of that indeterminacy may be accounted for in socioeconomic terms. The question, whether English or Putonghua in Hong Kong functions more like a second or foreign language, depends crucially on the quality and amount of support that (especially young) learners get in the home domain, and so indirectly on their social milieu or socioeconomic well-being (cf. Lin 1997). In general, with ample home support for the more prestigious languages English and Putonghua, students from well-off households tend to learn either or both of these languages under L2 conditions – when their use with intimate others is perceived as unmarked or natural. By contrast, for those students whose families cannot afford such home support for additional resources and exposure to these languages, the linguistic capital they represent will be less accessible, and so from both the points of view of learning and use, they will be more like foreign languages.[2] Such a local ESL/EFL divide, while far from being watertight, generally coincides with the amount of disposable income in the household. Those students who grow up in families broadly categorized as middle class or above tend to learn English under ESL conditions and have a higher level of attainment in English proficiency than their working class peers, who tend to learn English under EFL conditions. As one would expect, regarding the degree of relative acquisitional ease, compared with their ESL peers, EFL learners tend to find it more difficult to come to grips with idiomatic-sounding English in accordance with the norms in Standard English or EAP.

The first social selection in that ESL/EFL divide coincides with the streaming of primary school-leavers to CMI and EMI schools. It is from this point that social inequality is perpetuated or reproduced by the education system: by virtue of their higher English proficiency, Primary 6 students from socioeconomically better-off families tend to have a greater chance to be placed in an English-medium school, which is by definition a prestigious Band 1 school.[3] While their CMI peers may

[2] Owing to the tremendous typological distance between Chinese and English (Chap. 4), in general the goal of mastering English would seem to be a greater challenge compared with that for Putonghua (Chap. 3).

[3] Following the expansion of free compulsory education from 6 years (1971, Grades 1–6) to 9 years (1978, Grades 1–9), under the Secondary School Placement Allocation (SSPA) system, primary

have the 'luxury' of learning through their mother tongue from S1 to S3, typically in a Band 2 or Band 3 school, beyond S3 their prospects of gaining access to university education are significantly curtailed by a lack of sensitivity to idiomatic-sounding Standard English or EAP, as epitomized by their inadequate knowledge of field-specific English terminologies, both being crucial for success in virtually all content disciplines except Chinese Language and Chinese History. What to do to help CMI students bridge that language and knowledge gap in disciplines-specific English jargon and EAP lexico-grammar from S4 to S6, is a tough challenge, often an uphill battle, that preoccupies most if not all CMI teachers and school principals. The social selection process via education is complete, at the end of the six-year secondary curriculum, when offers are made by local universities to successful HKDSE candidates. Here too, there is no surprise: those with better English – typically from better-off families – tend to be more successful as they outnumber their working class peers who are struggling to stay afloat by meeting the minimum entrance requirement for English (and Chinese, SCMP editorial 2013). Undergraduate programs that would naturally be linked to 'the professions' upon graduation – medicine, law, actuarial studies, accountancy, architecture, among others – all demand a firm grasp of Standard English or EAP. An EMI education may or may not be enough to meet that stringent demand for English. This is why, 'far-sighted' parents who can afford it would send their children to study in a secondary school in a traditional English-speaking country like the UK, Australia, Canada or USA, in effect combining (upper) secondary education with immersion in English. According to news reports, such an option attracts several thousand Hong Kong students per year, in addition to many secondary-school leavers who would target a prestigious university in an English-speaking country for their undergraduate education (see, e.g., Wen Wei Po 2014). For obvious reasons, such 'immersion' options are open only to students growing up in households with the means and requisite resources, where the students are more likely to learn English under ESL rather than EFL conditions.

In sum, linguistically, the learning curve for Cantonese-L1 Hongkongers to become biliterate in Standard English (or EAP) and SWC, and (balanced) bilinguals in spoken English and Putonghua in addition to Cantonese, is unusually steep. This is especially true of students from socioeconomically modest families. Likewise, the sociolinguistic environment governing the normative patterns of their use in society is hardly conducive to effective language learning. If the acquisitional problems and learning difficulties have been shown to be located at the linguistic and sociolinguistic levels, what can we do to raise the odds of the biliteracy and trilingualism policy agenda, such that more Hongkongers will come closer to or reach

school-leavers were categorized into five Bands, with Band 1 students having the highest priority, and Band 5 the lowest, in being allocated to their first choice of school. In 2001, in an attempt to mitigate the labeling effect, the then Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) reduced the bandings from five to three (see Ho and Man 2007, pp. 8–13). In 2012, free compulsory education was further extended to 12 years (Grades 1–12), and the three-tier banding system continues to prevail.

that goalpost via education? In Chap. 7, we examined a body of psycholinguistic and neuroscience research for inspiration, in the hope that empirical insights there may enlighten us on desirable strategic change to the existing policy provisions. That review indicated some exciting breakthroughs which, in the main, point toward a "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382). When it comes to plurilingual language development in multilingual societies, therefore, the maxim 'the earlier the better' appears to have been scientifically vindicated and empirically supported. On this basis, specific recommendations intended to capitalize on this age-sensitive golden window, roughly age 4–8, are put forward to enhance the learning outcomes of Putonghua learning, including teaching Chinese in Putonghua (TCP) from P1 to P3. Interestingly, in our study of the language learning experiences and outcomes of 15 plurilingual English majors of South Asian descent in Chap. 8, the maxim 'the earlier the better' is also attested, in that three Pakistani participants attributed strong and useful support for their Chinese literacy development in primary school to Cantonese immersion in a local kindergarten.

Based on the summary of the key issues in the foregoing chapters, let us now take stock of the linguistic and sociolinguistic challenges for Hongkongers to develop biliterate and trilingual skills as envisaged by the education authorities.

1. *The use and vitality of Cantonese*. An overwhelming majority of people in Hong Kong have Cantonese as their usual language (93.6%, 2011 Census), which makes Cantonese the unmarked lingua franca in the SAR. It is widely used in the domains of home, school, broadcast media and government, including debates in the Legislative Council since July 1997, and it is also the language of a wide range of creative works and cultural consumables ranging from Canto-pop songs to TV dramas, from Cantonese opera to films and stand-up comedy. Cantonese is used as a medium of teaching and learning in Hong Kong schools, but not taught as a subject,[4] partly because it is officially positioned as a 'dialect' which is deemed unsuitable for writing. Quite the contrary, one of the goals of literacy training in Chinese lessons at primary level is to eradicate colloquial or L (low, as opposed to H, or high) Cantonese elements in students' writing. Even though written Cantonese is not part of school literacy, it has found social space to thrive and grow in the 'soft' sections of local media not only in print, but also in emails, blogs, SMS, MSN, Whatsapp, and various social media mediated by the internet such as Facebook and Twitter.
2. *English is more like a foreign than a second language*. The relative homogeneity of Cantonese-L1 speakers in the SAR makes the use of English-only communication highly marked among them – unlike Chinese Singaporeans in this regard. For this reason, among local Chinese there is strong peer pressure against initiating a conversation entirely in English (inserting English words in the middle of Cantonese, however, is very common, resulting in 'mixed code' or translanguaging, see Chap. 2). For the majority of Chinese Hongkongers, especially those

[4] In Hong Kong, the Chinese Language subject (中文科, *zung*^{55}*man*^{21}*fo*^{55}/*zhōngwén kē*) is Cantonese-medium, but there is no separate school subject called 'Cantonese'.

from socioeconomically modest families, English has relatively little relevance to their lifeworld; for instance, few would choose, out of their own volition, to listen to songs, watch TV programs or read English newspapers or magazines for leisure.[5] To these Cantonese-dominant Hongkongers, schooling is almost the only site or domain in which they are engaged in learning English. Their exposure to and input in English is almost exclusively classroom-based. Despite the fact that English is highly visible in society, therefore, it is more like a foreign than a second language (cf. the ESL/EFL divide discussed above; see also Chap. 6).

3. *Hong Kong Written Chinese is influenced by Cantonese and English*. Standard Written Chinese is lexico-grammatically more closely aligned with Putonghua, the national spoken language. The written Chinese used in Hong Kong, however, has been significantly influenced by Cantonese and English, hence Hong Kong Written Chinese (HKWC, Shi 2006; Shi et al. 2014). The natural tendency to write the way one speaks results in Cantoneisms in writing, which are systematically banned and cleansed through Chinese literacy training in school.
4. *More time-consuming to learn and develop literacy in logographic Chinese characters*. Written Chinese is non-alphabetic and logographic, which takes more time to learn and is easy to forget (unlike alphabetic languages with a shallow orthography such as Finnish and Italian); for children and adults alike, regular practice of character writing is required for effective retention. The global shift from pen-and-paper-based communication to electronic modes of 'writing' practices (more precisely, character inputting in Chinese text composition) makes it more and more difficult to write characters accurately by hand (e.g., in public examinations). This is true not only of 'dialect' speakers in southern China, but Putonghua-L1 speakers in Mandarin-speaking areas as well.
5. *Marked linguistic distance between Chinese and English, spoken and written*. In terms of how similar the two languages are linguistically, Chinese and English belong to very different language families – almost like the opposite poles on a continuum. They have very little in common in terms of the key linguistic subsystems needed for meaning-making (i.e., phonology, lexis and grammar). Syntactically, English has some characteristics of an agglutinating language. Grammatical meanings are marked typically by suffixing morphemes to word stems, a practice that is unknown in Chinese, an isolating language. Written English is orthographically deep, in that the spelling-pronunciation relationship is inconsistent and not so learner-friendly for this reason. One implication for Cantonese-L1 students' learning of English is that little of what they know about their own mother tongue Cantonese, including age-relevant knowledge of Chinese literacy, has any reference value, spoken or written (Chap. 3). This helps explain why Cantonese-L1 students of English are prone to making a large number of non-native pronunciation and non-standard lexico-grammatical errors in

[5] Except for international school students who have ample opportunities to use English naturally with their teachers and peers.

their 'learner language' (Chap. 4) as they strive to move up the proficiency scale, many of which would persist into their adult lives.

6. *Putonghua is more like a second language*. Standard Written Chinese is lexico-grammatically much more closely aligned with Putonghua than Cantonese, which is why in principle, there is some advantage for using Putonghua as the MoI for teaching and learning written Chinese. However, it has a fairly complex phonology, including pronunciation rules that are more efficiently learned through early exposure than late explicit teaching (Chap. 3). In mainland China, the standardized, alphabetically based pinyin system has been shown to work well as an aid to help students from Mandarin-L1 or 'dialect' backgrounds to master Putonghua pronunciation and to facilitate literacy acquisition from Primary 1 (Grade 1). In Hong Kong, however, while guidelines exist for teaching pinyin to primary pupils, individual schools may choose to make their best judgment and school-based curricular support for Putonghua.

In response to the above linguistic challenges, the current language-in-education policy is guided by a number of premises, some of which are likely to be changed or changing following more recent development:

1. *12-year compulsory education*. Government-sponsored compulsory education, extended from 9 years (1978) to 12 years (2012), covers the whole of primary and secondary education, from Primary 1 (Grade 1, age 6) to Secondary 6 (Grade 12, age 18). Preschool education, K1–K3 (age 4–6), is left entirely to the private sector. There is general consensus among preschool educators that kindergarten education should be government-funded and regulated more rigorously, including the qualifications of preschool teachers and their conditions of employment. There are signs that change in these directions is in the pipeline.
2. *Literacy training in Chinese*. The primary school curriculum (Chinese Language subject), P1–P6 (age 6–11), is looked upon as the life stage and educational space for helping students to attain the Chinese literacy threshold of 3000+ characters required for meeting students' needs for written Chinese in their adult lives (e.g., reading Chinese newspapers; understanding miscellaneous information from various sources, including the government). Same as the other SAR, Macao, but unlike the rest of China, students are taught to pronounce Chinese characters in Cantonese and write them in the considerably more complex traditional script.
3. *Identifying primary school-leavers with the aptitude to learn through English*. Within the free compulsory education system, English is taught from Primary 1. In practice, virtually all preschoolers start learning their ABC from kindergarten. Following the pedagogic principles of task-based learning (TBL), teachers of English are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to practice using English to make meaning and to interact with others, individually or in groups. Vocabulary and grammar are infused into TBL activities (Curriculum Development Council 2002). Based on past experience, not all students have the aptitude to learn content subjects through English at secondary level. Primary school-leavers (age 12) are therefore streamed into Chinese-medium and

English-medium schools as they progress to secondary school. The unwanted but unavoidable labeling effect has been a major problem and target of social critique, which was explicitly acknowledged by the education authorities. In 2009, to mitigate stigmatization, the EDB allowed CMI schools greater flexibility in varying the medium of instruction at lower secondary level, a corrective that came to be known as the 'fine-tuning' of the dual MoI streaming policy (Poon 2013; see Chap. 5).

4. *Supporting the teaching of Putonghua in primary and secondary schools*. In 1999, 'teaching Chinese in Putonghua' (TCP) was set as a long-term goal. Putonghua was made a compulsory subject from Primary 1 and an elective subject in secondary school. Students also have the option of taking the Putonghua exam in the HKCEE (replaced with HKDSE from September 2012). Since 1999, the education authorities have been providing different forms of support to individual schools to enhance the quality of teaching of Putonghua as a separate subject, with or without experimenting with TCP in addition (Chan and Zhu 2010, 2015; Ho et al. 2005). Owing to various constraints, notably a lack of qualified and proficient Putonghua-speaking teachers of Chinese, schools are given the autonomy to make their own decision regarding the timing, extent and scale of teaching Chinese in Putonghua. As of mid-2016, about 70% of the 400+ primary schools have experimented with teaching Chinese in Putonghua in one way or another (i-Cable report 2016).

On account of the above stock-taking of the key issues and the relatively low effectiveness of existing policy measures and coping strategies, I will now venture to make a number of recommendations below for wider deliberation. It is my wish that they will be probed into methodically, with a view to garnering empirical, evidence-based support to inform a revised, improved language-in-education policy agenda. The recommendations cover both language policy and language planning issues, as follows:

Language policy issues

(i) De-stigmatizing CMI students and schools
(ii) Rethinking late EMI immersion and the 'maximum exposure, no mixing' guideline
(iii) Strengthening exposure to English and Putonghua in preschool (K1–K3) and early primary (P1–P3)
(iv) Using audio-visually enriched materials for teaching English and Putonghua
(v) Teaching pinyin systematically in Primary 1 as Putonghua learning aid
(vi) Meeting non-Chinese, especially South(east) Asian students' needs for Cantonese and Standard Written Chinese (SWC)

Language planning issues

(i) Status planning: English and Putonghua
(ii) Attracting linguistically gifted and academically talented students to join the teaching profession

9.2 Language Policy Issues

9.2.1 De-stigmatizing CMI Students and Schools

In 2009, the education authorities undertook to fine-tune the mother tongue education or dual MoI streaming policy whereby, among other things, the stigmatization of CMI students and its damaging labeling effect have been openly acknowledged (Education Bureau Press Release, 2009). The fine-tuning policy allows CMI schools more flexibility in providing EMI classes by subjects within the same Form, provided the conditions for running EMI classes are met (cf. Poon 2013). In effect, this move amounts to the blurring of the dividing line between CMI and EMI schools, a welcome move in the right direction in my view. To further facilitate the development of literacy in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and to enable CMI students to access English terminologies of a wide range of content subjects in preparation for English-medium tertiary education, it may be wise for us to rethink the 'maximum exposure, no mixing' guideline for (especially EMI) teachers, and to promote research in as well as the sharing of good practices in bilingual teaching strategies. This in turn would require a fundamental change in our attitude toward translanguaging and translingual practice (Canagarajah 2013a, b; Cummins 2008, in press; García and Lin in press), which is traditionally labeled as 'code-mixing'. Rather than linguistic segregation through the dual MoI streaming policy, secondary schools will have a better chance of approximating the biliteracy and trilingualism[6] goalpost by fostering a multilingual environment within its school premises, including in the classroom, as noted by So (1998) and Tung (1998):

> [M]onolingual English-medium and Chinese-medium schools are not consistent with our aspiration to achieve *liǎngwén-sānyǔ* bilingualism on a large scale in Hong Kong, especially given its current sociolinguistic conditions. It is hard to conceive how *liǎngwén-sānyǔ* bilingualism in our society could be engendered if schools are precluded from engendering an environment of *liǎngwén-sānyǔ* on their campuses. (So 1998, p. 170)

> Available evidence indicates that students prefer to study initially in the mother tongue, but wish to be able to study in English as soon as they can manage it. (...) Given the diversity of the learning contexts in Hong Kong schools, it may not be in the interest of providing quality education to our students to impose a uniform medium of instruction on our schools. (...) it could be advantageous for students in some students to study in the English medium, and for students in other schools to study *mainly* through the medium of Chinese. (Tung 1998, pp. 125, 127, emphasis added)

In addition, all language varieties and vernacular literacy skills that students brought with them to the classroom should be recognized as linguistic resources, to be exploited pedagogically rather than to be seen as a nuisance or impediment to be suppressed and eradicated (see below).

[6] 兩文三語 (*loeng*^{23}*man*^{21}*saam*^{55}*jyu*^{23}/*liǎngwén-sānyǔ*), 'biliteracy and trilingualism'.

9.2.2 *Rethinking Late EMI Immersion and the 'Maximum Exposure, No Mixing' Guideline*

The rationale behind the mother tongue education or dual MoI streaming policy since 1998 is largely driven by the SAR's woman- and man-power needs for some proficient English speakers/writers in a knowledge-based economy and job market. The transition, at Secondary 1 (Grade 7), coincides with a selection process based on standardized assessment of primary school-leavers' English-language performance. Under largely EFL teaching and learning conditions, however, such a 'late immersion' model clearly has its limits (Johnson 1997). Learning through the medium of English, although perceived as prestigious community-wide especially by parents, impacts negatively on many students' quality of learning in their content subjects. This is especially true of such language-loaded subjects as Biology, Economics, Geography, and History. Those students who can cope tend to have home support to engage a private tutor or attend a group tutorial after school – support measures which make English more like a second language (ESL) to them. From the education authorities' point of view, to compensate for the lack of natural opportunities for students to practice using English outside the classroom, class input is viewed as absolutely crucial for ensuring that students have maximum exposure to English. The argument, taken largely at face value, is grounded in what may be termed a zero-sum logic, in that EMI class time used to explain or exchange ideas in Cantonese is held to be time lost relative to the higher-order objective of maximizing students' exposure to English. This is essentially the rationale behind the recommendation, made in successive Education Commission reports since the 1990s, that teachers' use of Cantonese-English 'mixed code' led to students' poor English and therefore should not be tolerated (cf. Poon 2010, 2013; Chap. 5), even though to my knowledge such a socially constructed causal relationship has never been subjected to rigorous empirical investigation, let alone proved (Low and Lu 2006). In addition, it is questionable whether 'code-mixing' could be construed as a symptom indicative of poor English, given that proficient plurilingual users of English tend to be among the most copious 'code-mixers'. At the same time, there is plenty of evidence showing that using students' L1 is often pedagogically conducive, and sometimes necessary, with regard to achieving the immediate teaching and learning goal at hand, be it content-related, or out of a situated concern for rapport-building or maintaining class discipline (Chan 2015; Lin 2015a; Lin and Wu 2015; Lo 2015; Lo and Lin 2015; Tavares 2015; cf. Cenoz 2015; Li 2015). All this leads to an unfortunate policy-versus-practice dilemma: the MoI 'guideline' stipulates that EMI teachers should not 'code-mix'; if 'caught' code-mixing in class, by inspectors on surprise visits or the school principal, teachers are accountable for their 'misdeeds' and liable to punitive measures, with shaming in front of their students being the extreme.

While teaching a course on Hong Kong language education attended by in-service EMI teachers, I came across an anecdote how an EMI teacher was instructed by her principal to re-teach the 'code-mixed' content to the class in 'pure' English in his presence. If that was what really happened, I would query that principal's professionalism and deplore his on-the-spot decision, for nothing could be more damaging to the teacher's self-esteem than shaming her in front of her students. On the other hand, given the many circumstances under which using the students' L1 is so natural and sometimes irresistible, that 'no mixing' guideline tends to make teachers feel guilty, teachers who could not help or resist translanguaging at times. Such a sense of guilt is pedagogically not at all conducive to ensuring the quality of teaching and learning, not to mention being constantly on guard against unwanted surveillance can be very tiring, physically as much as emotionally. The apprehension of guilt and shame is by no means an isolated phenomenon among EMI teachers. Quite the contrary, it is sufficiently widespread for Swain et al. (2011) to write a booklet, entitled *How to have a guilt-free life using Cantonese in the English class: A handbook for the English language teacher in Hong Kong*, to explain why and under what circumstances EMI teachers of content subjects should have the peace of mind and not hesitate to use or translanguage to their students' L1.

Judging from the way the 'maximum exposure, no mixing' guideline has been enforced, it is imposed top-down like a dogma, with no room for bargaining or negotiation, even though there has been plenty of classroom research evidence internationally showing how, if used judiciously and strategically, the use of the students' L1 through translanguaging can be pedagogically sound (students learn faster) and affectively emancipating (the teacher is one of us / cares about us) (see, e.g., Cummins 2008, in press; García and Lin in press; see also Weber's 2014 review of various modes of 'flexible multilingual education' across a wide range of multilingual school settings). Where students are entirely capable of learning through the medium of English, as in top-tier Band 1 schools, there is of course no compelling need for EMI teachers to use the students' L1 (Lo 2015). On the other hand, for students who are visibly struggling and who have demonstrated a gap in their learning, it would be improper, to say the least, to deprive bilingual teachers of the option to help those students fill a learning gap quickly or getting assurance from peers through their L1 (e.g., the teacher dropping a hint about a low-frequency word using the Chinese translation; students being allowed to discuss the answer in their L1 before responding in L2; see Lin 2015a; Lin and Wu 2015 for instructive examples).

From the point of view of teaching and learning effectiveness, and taking into account a cline of EMI student proficiencies and abilities to learn through the medium of English, there is no reason to prevent bilingual teachers from exercising their professional judgment to translanguage or switch to their students' L1 in order to meet the situated need for quick clarification or to allow students to elaborate an idea confidently before expressing that idea in English. In short, what is needed is empirical evidence of pedagogically sound and strategically productive classroom translanguaging practices, and let such research-based good practices trickle down to the community of EMI teachers through sharing (e.g., seminars and workshops) and teacher training (e.g., pre-service or in-service award-bearing teacher education programs). This is also in line with the premises of 'flexible multilingual education' advocated by Weber (2014), among others, where all the language varieties brought by students to the classroom – standard or non-standard, vernaculars supported by literacy or otherwise – should be de-stigmatized and recognized as legitimate learning resources toward the goal of acquiring the target language (e.g., English).

9.2.3 Strengthening Exposure to English and Putonghua in Preschool (K1–K3) and Early Primary (P1–P3)

The current policy in support of English proficiency development may be characterized as late immersion (Johnson 1997), whereby primary school-leavers (age 12) identified as meeting the threshold requirement for learning through the medium of English are assigned to EMI schools, whereas those who fall short of this threshold level are assigned to CMI schools. As for Putonghua development, it is a compulsory subject from Primary 1 (age 6), with or without Putonghua being used as the MoI for teaching the Chinese Language subject.[7] Even if Putonghua is used for teaching Chinese, there should be flexibility for PMI teachers to decide whether a given genre is not as appropriate and therefore had better be taught in Cantonese. This happens when the speech-writing alignment is not as apparent in classical Chinese texts. As Leung and Fan (2010) among others have pointed out, if a written text conforms to the syntax and lexico-grammar of Standard Written Chinese, especially if it contains elements of conversational interaction, teaching it in Putonghua is perfectly appropriate. On the other hand, if a written text contains plenty of *wenyan* or Classical Chinese elements, it would make better sense to teach that text in Cantonese. Thus, apart from developing their professional judgment through teacher training, PMI teachers should have the discretion to decide, based on a careful examination of the genre of a text in question, whether it is more productively taught in Putonghua or Cantonese.

At present, before the 12-year free compulsory education starts at age 6, the amount of exposure to and quality of input in English and Putonghua are left more or less to the odds, subject to the choice of the nursery or kindergarten selected by the parents. English is usually introduced to preschoolers from ABC along with simple vocabulary. Putonghua, on the other hand, may or may not be included in the curriculum; the amount of input varies from zero attention to Putonghua, to a Putonghua-focused curriculum (possibly with a twin-focus on both English and Putonghua). As So (1998) has observed:

> *Liăngwén-sānyŭ* [biliteracy and trilingualism] is quite a sophisticated form of individual bilingualism. (...) it is obvious that most of the young people of Hong Kong will not acquire it as infants; they will have to achieve it in school. (...) it is only through a twist in history and by design that a degree of individual bilingualism is in evidence in our society. Hitherto, the schools have been a principal part of this design (…) and remain the major vehicle for spreading individual bilingualism in Hong Kong. (So 1998, p. 168; cf. So 1992)

[7] That is, 普教中 (*pou*^{35}*gaau*^{33}*zung*^{55}/*pŭ jiào zhōng*).

In light of the empirical findings in psycholinguistic and neuroscience studies reviewed and discussed in Chap. 7, there is clearly room for rethinking the SAR's language-in-education policy provisions, especially the Putonghua curriculum. Language learning effectiveness being highly age-sensitive, subject to the "time-delimited window in early life" (Mayberry and Lock 2003, p. 382), any language input during a child's preschool years (K1–K3, age 4–6) and early primary (P1–P3, age 6–8), be it a first, second or foreign language, stands a much better chance of being absorbed and incorporated into the child's expanding plurilingual repertoire. Much of the conundrum surrounding the SAR's biliteracy and trilingualism policy is arguably due to the scientifically ill-advised order of priorities, in that the bulk of funding support for boosting our students' plurilingual development is deployed from 'Key Stage 1' (P1–P3, age 6–8) to tertiary level (age 18–) (CDC 2002; CDC and HKEAA 2007/2015), with preschool education falling outside of the education authorities' funding formula. In terms of teaching and learning effectiveness, such a policy may be characterized in Chinese as 事倍功半 ('getting half the result with twice the effort').[8] For instance, back in 1998, the then Principal Education Officer of the Education Department reminded us that:

> Since 1993, an intensive English language programme has been run to help Secondary 6 and Secondary 7 Chinese-medium students to achieve the standard of English required for entry to tertiary institutions. (Lee 1998, p. 114)

Based on the learning outcomes of local university graduates in the past years, one wonders how effective such language enhancement measures have been. In light of neurobiological insights obtained in the past decades (Chap. 7), it is hardly surprising that Cantonese-dominant young adults tend to find it difficult to make progress in their English learning just before or during their undergraduate studies. The opportunity cost of missing the golden window – to provide schoolchildren with requisite exposure to and input in Putonghua and English beyond this life stage – is huge. To revert this trend, rather than late immersion (from Secondary 1, age 12), it would seem necessary to revamp the existing policy by capitalizing on the age-sensitive golden window for language learning and development (age 4–8). Preschool (K1–K3) and early primary (P1–P3) correspond with a person's life stage in which efforts expended towards language learning and development have been shown to be more productive, or 事半功倍 ('yielding twice the result with half the effort')[9] – the exact opposite of the above-mentioned quadri-syllabic Chinese idiom. Put differently, schoolchildren's exposure to quality language input from age 4–8 is much more likely to be fruitful compared with similar input beyond that age range. I believe this is one promising area where more empirical research on effective measures toward promoting additive bilingualism is worth supporting.

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[8] 事倍功半 (*si*[22] *pui*[23] *gung*[55] *bun*[33]/*shì bèi gōng bàn*).

[9] 事半功倍 (*si*[22] *bun*[33] *gung*[55] *pui*[23]/*shì bàn gōng bèi*).

9.2.4 Using Audio-visually Enriched Materials to Teach English and Putonghua

Research shows that preschoolers have sharp sensitivity to distinctive speech sounds, which makes them very good language learners, including under second or foreign language learning conditions (Chap. 7). The amount and quality of input is the key. In Chap. 8, we saw that the three Pakistani students whose parents consciously placed them in Cantonese kindergartens all attributed their native-like pronunciation of Cantonese (and, to a lesser extent, their knowledge of Chinese characters) to their preschool experiences. Apart from learning everyday vocabulary and age-relevant colloquialisms like other Cantonese-L1 peers, distinctive tone levels, a major stumbling block for older learners of Cantonese, were acquired more or less subconsciously. Equally helpful was the fact that they had ample opportunities to make meaning by interacting with their Cantonese-L1 peers and, in the process, developed a network of Chinese friends who provided useful and often timely feedback and assistance, for example, when literacy-focused questions arose while learning to pronounce or write specific Chinese characters (Li and Chuk 2015).

Being logographic, Chinese characters take time to learn. According to Prof. S.-K. Tse, an expert in Chinese literacy acquisition, it is important to guide children to learn the words encountered or needed in their everyday lives (see, e.g., Tse 2014a). For instance, children living in *tin^{55}seoi^{35}wai^{21}* (**天水圍**) or *tung^{21}lo^{21}waan^{55}* (**銅鑼灣**) have a natural need to know the characters required for writing the name of their neighborhood. This will give them the incentive to learn to recognize and write those characters. Other natural opportunities include learning to recognize the names of dishes and dim sum when frequenting a Chinese restaurant, or names of stations along the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) (cf. Fung 2015). To parents who are eager to push their children to learn Chinese characters through dictation, Tse advises against that practice, especially characters whose meanings are unrelated to their children's everyday lives or studies. Chinese literacy skill areas are threefold in essence: character recognition, production, and use (Tse 2014b; cf. Fung 2015).[10] Recognition naturally comes before production and use. So long as children are guided to recognize a large number of characters, this may nurture them to become avid readers. Cultivating an interest in reading is very important. At different life stages, when learners feel the need or urge for creative writing, prior exposure to a large amount of reading will provide inspirations (ideas) and the necessary resources (language expressions) to help them excel in writing. As for fostering children's literacy in Chinese characters, Tse et al. (2014) recommend that parents cultivate their children's interest early, best before primary school. To this end, nursery rhymes characterized by a lot of repetition such as the following are particularly helpful (Tse 2006, pp. 5–6):[11]

[10] 學習中文的三個層次是「認字、寫字、用字」(Fung 2015).

[11] Schoolchildren from Hong Kong homes will most likely learn this text in Cantonese. Pinyin is provided; the text may also be read in Putonghua.

xiăo míng xiăo míng xiăo xiăo míng
小　明　小　明　小　小　明,
shàng shàng xià xià zuŏ zuŏ yòu yòu
上　上　下　下, 左　左　右　右,
qián qián hòu hòu huŏ chē chuān shān dòng
前　前　後　後, 火　車　穿　山　洞。

Once children have internalized this nursery rhyme and the meanings of its constituent vocabulary (cf. 'mental lexicon', Aitchison 2003), learning to write the characters needed for expressing those meanings will be relatively straightforward, for example, the name 小明 (*siu*^{35}*ming*^{21}), the bisyllabic word 火車 (*fo*^{35}*ce*^{55}) for 'train', characters expressing spatial relations such as 上 (*soeng*^{22}, 'up', 'above'), 下 (*haa*^{22}, 'down', 'below') 左 (*zo*^{35}, 'left'), 右 (*jau*^{22}, 'right'), 前 (*cin*^{21}, 'front'), and 後 (*hau*^{22}, 'back').

Melodious songs with interesting lyrics comprehensible to learners are also highly conducive to proficiency and literacy development. Humming to the familiar tune of a song that one likes (Fre: *chantonner*, 'humming along'), be it modern or traditional, contemporary or classic, targeting adults or children (e.g., theme songs of cartoons), is probably a universal human trait. The songs may have been encountered recently, or learned as a child repeatedly. This is corroborated by my own experience learning Mandarin, French and German. For instance, I can still improvise verbatim an excerpt from an opera 碧玉簪 (*bik*^{55}*juk*^{22}*zaam*^{55}, 'jade hair pin') sung in the Ningbo dialect (越劇, *jyut*^{22}*kek*^{22}), an album which was played at home frequently when I was a child. I can still sing the Mandarin song 雪人不見了 (*Xuě rén bù jiàn liăo*, 'The snowman has disappeared'), which was taught and learned in Mandarin lessons when I was a primary pupil (aged around 11); several decades have elapsed, and I can still sing this song effortlessly by heart with the lyrics intact. Similarly, while studying in France (aged 25–27), I became fond of the songs by the late Georges Moustaki (Greek artist with a predilection for French), many of which I can improvise, in part or in full. One of my favorites is *Le facteur* ('The postman'), which begins melancholically with:

Le jeune facteur est mort,	('The young postman is dead,
Il n'avait que dix-sept ans…	he was only seventeen…
L'amour ne peut plus voyager,	Love can no longer travel,
Il a perdu son messager…	It has lost its messenger…)

I found the guitar accompaniment in this song mesmerizing and the lyrics aesthetic. Three years later, while pursuing doctoral studies in Germany, I came across the song *Die Gedanken sind frei* ('[My] thoughts are free') introduced in an intensive German course (aged 30); over two decades later, I can still recall the melody and lyrics at will:[12]

[12] The song *Die Gedanken sind frei*, '[My] thoughts are free', was introduced in an intensive German class (intermediate level). Students were told that it was one of several songs specially composed for teaching German as a Foreign Language (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache*), hence not commercially available. There is however another song with the same title by Peter Seeger (searchable online, including YouTube).

German song 'Die Gedanken sind frei'	Approximate translation
Die Gedanken sind frei,	[My] thoughts are free,
Wer kann sie erraten?	Who can tell what they are?
Sie fliehen vorbei,	They fly by,
Wie nächtliche Schatten.	Like dark shadows.
Kein Mensch kann sie wissen,	No one has any clue about them,
Kein Jäger erschiessen.	No hunter can shoot them down.
Es bleibet dabei,	It remains true,
Die Gedanken sind frei.	[My] thoughts are free.

Under similar circumstances I learned to sing the first stanza of the German *Nationalhymne* 'the National Hymn' (aged 31), and have no problem improvising it at will now. Personal experiences such as these suggest to me that nursery rhymes, songs with lyrics at a suitable level, and multi-media cartoons of interest to children would make inspiring and effective language learning materials, even though they may not work equally well with every learner given their individual differences. If a song, nursery rhyme or cartoon is modeled on Putonghua-based SWC or English, including it in the curriculum or setting it as extra-curricular activity has good potential for facilitating the learning of Putonghua or English. The language input embedded in such partly poetic or musical genres, which children are familiar with, may also serve as excellent supplementary material for vocabulary or grammar teaching. This is one area where colleagues engaged in early childhood education curriculum development might want to further explore.

9.2.5 Teaching Pinyin Systematically in Primary 1 as Putonghua Learning Aid

Research has shown clearly that reading is necessarily mediated by speech. Since English adopts an alphabetic writing system, using phonics has good potential to speed up learners' grasp of the more or less regular spelling-pronunciation relationships in English, even though such relationships are not always consistent (i.e., orthographically deep). Accordingly, awareness of the spelling of English words may be enhanced by drawing attention to the regularities pertaining to words that rhyme (e.g., *bake, cake, lake, make, take, wake*; compare: *fake, naked, rake, sake*). The use of phonics for facilitating students' mastery of the spelling-pronunciation relationships in English is more or less a standard component of English language teaching methodologies today. This is also widely used by Hong Kong teachers at pre-primary and primary levels.

What about the teaching and learning of Putonghua? Since the 1980s, research in Mainland China has demonstrated that pinyin – the standard romanization system of Putonghua – facilitates the learning of Chinese literacy development effectively regardless of the learners' first-language backgrounds. Learners whose L1 is a 'dialect' may take longer to become completely familiar with the pinyin system (ranging from 6–12 weeks), which is usually taught at the beginning of Primary 1 (Grade 1). The advantage of teaching pinyin as a learning aid or tool is that it enhances learners' phonological (including tonemic) awareness significantly. More importantly, it can be relied upon to support independent learning, such as looking up the written forms of unfamiliar morpho-syllables through their (sometimes approximate) pronunciation in dictionaries or online resources. There is some consensus among scholars who have expressed concerns about the teaching of pinyin that the pace is too slow (extending from Primary 1 to Primary 4); there is room for considering speeding up and completing the teaching of the entire pinyin system at Primary 1 (on recommended pinyin instructional procedure, see Cheng 2005, p. 114; Cheung and Lo 2006).

As of 2016, there are as yet no standard guidelines provided by the SAR education authorities for teaching pinyin in Hong Kong schools. Instead, individual primary schools are free to decide when and how to teach pinyin to students. Some scholars have pointed out the drawback of late introduction of pinyin (e.g., Primary 4, Grade 4). One of the most frequently cited concerns is possible confusion with English at early primary level. Pinyin is indeed based on the Roman alphabet. The sound values of individual letters may differ (compare, e.g., Putonghua: *diàn* as in *diànhuà*, 電話 'telephone', and English: *Indian*). While I am not aware of any empirical studies of learners being confused as a result of being taught pinyin in early primary, available research findings in psycholinguistics and bilingual acquisition suggest that young learners exposed to different languages simultaneously are able to keep them apart, including matching languages with their speakers (Yip and Matthews 2007). Any possible risk of confusion is more than outweighed by prospects of the learner being able to use that important tool to harness the pronunciation of logographic Chinese characters. Another important argument in support of earlier introduction of pinyin is that most young learners at early primary level are digital natives. Given convenient and easy access to a large number of Putonghua learning resources and authentic materials, including dictionaries with a clickable demo pronunciation function online, delaying the systematic introduction of pinyin is clearly not in young learners' best interests.

9.2.6 Meeting Non-Chinese, Especially South(east) Asian Students' Needs for Cantonese and Standard Written Chinese (SWC)

As there is virtually no home support for Cantonese and Standard Written Chinese (SWC), and given that reading and literacy development in a written language are mediated by speech, Hong Kong students of South(east) Asian descent tend to experience greater difficulties when learning SWC. The successful Cantonese- and SWC-learning experiences of the three Pakistani students reported in Li and Chuk's

(2015) study suggest that where possible, South(east) Asian parents should be encouraged to send their children to Cantonese-speaking kindergartens (Chap. 8). Getting started early would give them a better chance of mastering Cantonese and SWC, with the help of their age-relevant peers and neighbors. At the same time, there should be a separate goalpost for these non-Chinese students, which should have a strong focus on the development of Chinese literacy for work-related purposes in a Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) curriculum, where *wenyan* or classical Chinese texts are deemphasized and minimized. It is encouraging that some of these suggestions have been taken on board by the education authorities, and so some university scholars in relevant Chinese departments have been called upon to design a blueprint of a CSL curriculum. In longer terms, when linguistically gifted South(east) Asian students showing promising results in the study of Chinese have been identified, it is worth considering grooming them to become teachers of Chinese and prepare them for a career teaching Chinese to South(east) Asian students, for example, by awarding them a scholarship to study toward a Minor or even Major in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language.

9.3 Language Planning Issues

With regard to language policy, Poon (2010, pp. 26–28) observes that:

> Hong Kong's language policy both prior to and after the handover is basically language-in-education policy (a type of language policy in the realm of education), among which the most prominent sub-types are medium-of-instruction policy (with a focus on content-based learning) and language enhancement policy (with a focus on Chinese and English). (Poon 2010, p. 28)

As for language planning, there was virtually none until SCOLAR's 'Action Plan' (2003) with regard to corpus planning (e.g., standardizing the Chinese translation of names and places used in the media), but status planning of the target languages, English and Putonghua, is still neglected (Poon 2010, p. 58).

9.3.1 Status Planning: English and Putonghua

Hongkongers, of Chinese ethnicity or otherwise, hardly need to be told, let alone convinced, that English is a valuable language which has been functioning as an international lingua franca. This is clearly reflected in various stakeholders' concerns toward the controversial dual MoI streaming policy (Chap. 6). English is widely recognized as a form of linguistic capital, an indispensable asset for upward and outward mobility. Since English has been functioning as an official language in Hong Kong in the past 150 years, it would be fairly convenient for the government to make explicit the status of English in the SAR as a second language. Once the second language status has been made clear, however, it ought to be matched with appropriate policy measures. For instance, in a multilingual workplace such as the civil service or a higher-education institution (e.g., in meetings within the civil service or with education service providers), it would be useful to encourage action that would help break a tacit assumption or inhibition, widely shared among local Chinese-English bilinguals, that in the absence of non-Cantonese speakers, Cantonese is the unmarked, most appropriate language choice. Over the years, in my position as an academic staff at two tertiary institutions, I have observed time and again at various meetings how, as soon as the only non-Cantonese-speaking colleague has left or before such a colleague arrives, Cantonese is felt to be the norm, even though it is interspersed with plenty of technical terms and institutional jargon in English – 'mixed code' so to speak. This is typically flagged by someone, often blithely accompanied by a comment, that there is no more reason why English must be used. While there is nothing wrong using 'mixed code', if the government would take the lead to encourage a 'speak-English-where-we-can' language choice pattern in the workplace, especially in the education sector (e.g., among teachers), over time there may be more social space for English to be used more naturally within the local Chinese community. Notice that far from enforcing language choice top-down through punitive measures, which would be counter-productive, what is recommended here is to encourage language choice bottom-up by example. To those who are concerned or even alarmed about Cantonese being under threat when more local bilinguals opt for English as the matrix language, it should be emphasized that using English in the multilingual workplace – if it becomes widely accepted – should not and will not take place at the expense of Cantonese. What is gained would be a changed perception and attitude toward English as an equally appropriate language choice among plurilingual Hongkongers, which, short of institutional support and concerted action of like-minded plurilinguals, simply has no chance of success, despite lamentation and plea by business leaders.[13]

Linguistic inhibition, or refusal to switch over to other languages at the intersentential level, is largely a collective psyche, a conditioned response to the social taboo of violating the shared ethnolinguistic identity of one's conversation partner(s). As a social consequence, unless there is some natural explanation (e.g., a non-Cantonese speaker joining in), any switch away from Cantonese as the shared, unmarked language is generally perceived as alien, hence the psychological discomfort associated with such a move. For such a shift in unmarked language choice in plurilingual encounters to succeed, therefore, nothing short of a re-engineering of the mindset on a society-wide scale is needed. To persuade Cantonese-L1 speakers to relinquish linguistic purism or essentialism and to embrace plurilingualism instead, it is crucial and necessary for such an initiative to stand on solid ethical grounds, with egalitarian multilingualism being the social ethos and ultimate goal

[13] As an example, see legislative councilor, business leader and former chairperson of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) Michael Tien's plea, expressed at a public forum organized by the *South China Morning Post* in September 2015, for stronger government support measures to cope with Hong Kong students' worrying English standards (Yau 2015).

(Lin 2015b). Where meaning-making is the focus of interaction, plurilinguals ought to find themselves in a social milieu – a linguistic comfort zone so to speak – where there is a place for English among other conventionally discrete languages, and where ‘languaging’ or ‘trans-semiotizing’ (Lin 2015b) involving other linguistic, stylistic or rhetorical resources is widely felt to be perfectly natural. Individual repertoires are necessarily ‘truncated’ – no one knows all the languages, including so-called native speakers (Blommaert 2010). Whatever their labels, all languages are equal, and no speakers should suffer from any form of linguistic prejudice or discrimination (Kirkpatrick 2007). Through education and media publicity, it should be made absolutely clear that no one need to worry about being denigrated as a result of their language choice. Given this brief, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) would seem to be a suitable institution and key player to be engaged in promoting the merits of egalitarian multilingualism.

What is said above with regard to the status planning of English may also apply to that of Putonghua. To my mind, there is not much to be gained by characterizing Putonghua in Hong Kong as an L1.5 (i.e., between L1 and L2, Lai-Au Yeung 1997; see Chaps. 3 and 7). In view of the marked phonological differences between Cantonese and Putonghua and the learning difficulties arising, it would be more reasonable to state unambiguously that Putonghua is a second language in the SAR. Once this has been made clear, similar strategies are needed to create a Putonghua-speaking environment within school premises (e.g., making an institutional initiative to encourage staff and students to ‘speak Putonghua where we can’). Since July 1997, cross-border communication has increased considerably, plus rising numbers of Putonghua-speaking visitors, tourists, scholars and students staying in Hong Kong on short or longer term, there are increasingly more or less natural opportunities for Cantonese-L1 students to practice using Putonghua. If the institution takes the lead in promoting the use of Putonghua in the workplace, including among Cantonese-L1 speakers, those who can may find it easier to initiate a conversation in Putonghua, without feeling strange or being obliged to explain his or her language choice. Here again, individual initiatives (e.g., organizing Putonghua lunch once per week) have their limits for as long as ‘Cantonese by default’ is deep in Cantonese-L1 speakers’ collective psyche.[14]

[14] In principle, in the interest of promoting additive bilingualism, there is nothing wrong for ‘Speak Putonghua where we can’ to be made an SAR government initiative. In the wake of protests culminating in the 79-day Occupy Central protests in 2014, however, such a move may be politically sensitive, and may need more careful deliberation and planning before being floated to the general public via the media for society-wide consultation.

9.3.2 *Attracting Linguistically Gifted and Academically Talented Students to Join the Teaching Profession*

A shortage of qualified teachers of English and Putonghua has been a perennial concern of the education authorities and a priority area for action.[15] In terms of attracting linguistically gifted and academically talented students to join the teaching profession, however, the current policy seems to be counter-productive. As is well-known, through the JUPAS system, HKDSE (previously, HKALE) students choose their preferred undergraduate programs offered by the eight UGC-funded universities. Statistics in the past have shown that relatively few academically outstanding and linguistically gifted students would choose a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree program among their top-tier choices. What this means is that the education sector is unable to recruit the best talents to join the teaching profession. For BEd language majors (Chinese or English) in particular, it is crucial that their sensitivity to and proficiency in the target language(s) be of a high standard. Otherwise, their teaching performance, classroom language use included, is unlikely to make them good role models for their students when they become front-line language teachers.

The Hong Kong SAR government has the enviable privilege of having huge reserves at its disposal to support various educational initiatives. One example of an eye-catching attempt by the SAR government to attract talents consists of injecting HK$480 million (ca. US$61.6 million) into the Government Scholarship Fund to support 20-odd outstanding students to pursue teacher-training programs in renowned universities overseas, their only obligation being to return to Hong Kong and teach for at least two years, according to the Financial Secretary John Tsang's budget address in February, 2013. Such a policy was lambasted by Legislative Councilor Regina Ip as an illustration of "bureaucratic myopia and confusion of policy objectives". In her view, that money was not well spent at all. Instead, she made a plea for recruiting local talents with passion and training them up as capable preschool teachers:

> To provide free, quality pre-school education, the government needs to do a lot more than provide 20-odd scholarships for overseas studies. To avoid repeating its past mistakes in education reform, the government must ensure that suitably trained individuals with a true passion for pre-school teaching are employed, or public funds would be wasted. (Regina Ip, 2013)

Regina Ip's emphasis on the urgency for sensible support measures to enhance the quality of preschool teacher education is insightful and entirely worth supporting. To be fair, this problem – difficulty attracting bright students to the field of education – is not unique to Hong Kong. Everywhere in the world, linguistically gifted and academically outstanding students simply have more lucrative under-

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[15] For example, through benchmarking measures to ensure that language teachers' proficiency in the target language is up to par: LPATE (Language Proficiency Attainment Test for English) and LPATP (Language Proficiency Attainment Test for Putonghua).

graduate program choices and envisaged career paths at their disposal. To counteract this problem, maybe the SAR government could think along the lines of 'prestige planning'. A good starting salary for new graduate teachers – among the highest of fresh university graduates in the SAR at present – is not enough; what is needed is for (student) teachers to have a true sense of pride and to command respect in society. There is plenty of room for thought and imagination in this area I think. Finally, to take advantage of a golden window or critical period (age 4–8) when kindergarteners are particularly adept at language learning, it would seem to be wise for the education authorities to strengthen language-focused teacher training for English and Putonghua at pre-primary and primary levels. As Gopnik et al. (2000) observe in the Preface of their (2000) monograph, *The scientist in the crib*: *What early learning tells us about the mind*:

> The new research shows that babies and young children know and learn more about the world than we could ever have imagined. They think, draw conclusions, make predictions, look for explanations, and even do experiments. Scientists and children belong together because they are the best learners in the universe. And that means that ordinary adults also have more powerful learning abilities than we might have thought. Grown-ups, after all, are all ex-children and potential scientists. (Gopnik et al. 2000, p. i; see also http://ilabs.washington.edu/scientist-crib-preface)

In light of the tremendous learning capabilities of preschoolers, and students at early primary level, it would appear that the current priorities of investment in and funding support for language education of the SAR are lopsided. It is therefore worth re-thinking the policy provisions and measures to help Hongkongers reach the biliteracy and trilingualism goalpost. In particular, it is worth encouraging research into the question, whether resources for language learning support in the education domain are more productively directed at a life stage of language learners, from K1 to P3 (age 4–8), where their language learning sensitivity and chance of success appear to be at their highest.

9.4 Epilogue

We live in a multilingual world. Whatever our first language(s), additional language learning is a crucial and arguably indispensable part of life-long learning. Unlike the learning of content subjects or discipline-specific knowledge, however, language acquisition or learning as an inborn human faculty has been shown to be most effective and productive from infancy to just before the onset of puberty (around age 10–11). Some 50 years after Lenneberg's landmark (1967) publication on the biological foundations of language (Critical Period Hypothesis, or 'CPH'), plenty of empirical insights from the related fields of brain science and neurocognitive research in the last two decades point towards a 'golden window', whereby human sensitivity to language acquisition is at its prime roughly between the age of 4 and 8, which in the Hong Kong education hierarchy corresponds with the key stages preschool (K1–K3) and early primary (P1–P3). While searching for alternative language-in-education policy provisions to help Hong Kong students regardless of ethnicity to gain the greatest mileage towards the goal of becoming biliterate and trilingual, such an insight gives us much food for thought and imagination. It is my wish that between its covers, this book will have some reference value for language policy-makers and other stakeholders when pondering more productive ways to deploy precious language enhancement resources in the SAR, and rethinking our language-in-education support measures.

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