

Helping Students to Adapt to an English Medium of Instruction Environment in Hong Kong Secondary Schools

EVELYN YEE-FUN MAN,
DAVID CONIAM

Department of Curriculum and Instruction, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ICY LEE

Department of Education Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University

This article reports on the first year of a two-year project intended to provide support to students in Hong Kong entering secondary school (i.e., the start of Grade 7), where the medium of instruction in all major content subjects is English. For the majority of students, this presents substantial adaptation problems, not the least of which is the fact that the medium of instruction has changed from Cantonese in primary school to English in secondary. An overview of the project's general objectives is first presented, involving a "language-across-the-curriculum" approach and helping schools to create a "language-rich environment." The article then moves to describing the various support measures that have been developed and provided to five selected secondary schools which are participating in the project. At the end of the first year of the project, these schools completed an attitudinal questionnaire, which is also discussed. One important finding here is that schools which were generally less than enthusiastic about the project at the outset have changed in their attitudes toward "language-across-the-curriculum." The article concludes with a look ahead toward the second year of the project.

Introduction

Research indicates that schools using a second language as a medium of instruction stand a better chance of success when the whole school participates (Bird, Harris, & Ingham, 1993; Johnson & Swain, 1997). One way of implementing successful English-medium education is to ensure that the content teacher and the language teacher are one and the same (Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989). In other words, each and every teacher plays the role of a language teacher and the teachers together make a concerted effort to ensure the success of immersion education. A language-across-the-curriculum (LAC) approach which integrates language and content is seen as a good means to help students adapt to English-medium instruction (EMI) (Marland, 1977; Mohan, 1986). An LAC approach is relevant because language teaching and content teaching have traditionally been considered as two distinctly different domains in Hong Kong, but links need to be made between a language used as a subject in isolation and using the language as a medium for learning (Man, 1999; Mohan, 1986, 1993).

In Hong Kong, although LAC is being advocated, there seem to be few comprehensive measures to support EMI across the curriculum. The existing support measures often focus on some kind of a bridging course for Secondary 1 (S1) students before their entry into secondary school, which is often delivered as an isolated attempt to help students cope with EMI. While a short bridging program for S1 students may reap some benefits for students (Curriculum Development Institute, 1996), it is doubtful if a one-off program of this kind could ensure long-term gains and ongoing success of EMI at the school level. Equally questionable is whether piecemeal efforts in the form of English-speaking days or English language activities can help S1 students cope with EMI and make a significant and long-term impact on students' learning. Since the needs and issues surrounding an LAC approach are so diverse, it is unlikely that a single-focused approach will make a great impact (Davis, 1996). A multi-faceted whole-school LAC approach is thus necessary (see Lin & Man, 1999; Mohan, 1986, 1993, 2001). In Hong Kong, however, how such an approach can work has not been fully explored.

Currently there are 114 EMI secondary schools in Hong Kong. Although some support measures exist in many EMI schools, they are generally piecemeal attempts to address the immediate needs of S1 students. They have not been designed to be a structured and comprehensive support program with ongoing language enrichment and support measures that entail the

collaboration of both English teachers and content subject teachers. It is deemed necessary that the emphasis of the support measures should be on LAC and on a collaborative approach involving ultimately all teachers — language and content subject teachers — in the school. As Mohan (1986) so rightly points out, “Language teachers must find ways to help students learn the language needed to study subject matter in English, while content teachers must devise strategies to help such students understand content and become more independent learners. The joint task of both these groups of teachers is to provide for understandable communication, cumulative language learning, and the development of academic thinking skills” (p. iv).

LAC support measures are particularly timely and significant at a time when Hong Kong is committed to education reforms with a view to bringing about quality education for the new generation (Curriculum Development Council, 2000; Curriculum Development Council & Education Department, 1999). The proposed reform of the Secondary School Place Allocation (SSPA) system, as one aspect of education reform, will inevitably widen the diversity in students’ abilities in secondary schools, including their English language abilities. To make sure that each student allocated to an EMI secondary school is capable of learning effectively through the medium of English, it is doubly necessary to explore effective support measures to help S1 students adapt to the English-medium learning environment.

This article examines a range of support measures based on an LAC approach to help S1 students adapt to EMI. The support measures have been implemented in five secondary schools which have participated in a two-year project contracted by the Education Department (ED). The project’s objectives can be viewed from three perspectives, geared toward enhancing students’ learning of English and learning in English.

- The first of these concerns the **school**, i.e., helping the school create a language-rich environment for students to use English, mainly through establishing an English culture in school.
- The second centers around the **teachers**, i.e., enhancing EMI teachers’ competence in English-medium teaching so as to maximize S1 students’ learning. This involves providing teacher training workshops and packages of materials to help both English language teachers and content subject teachers enhance their professional competence as EMI teachers by providing them with specific strategies and materials to cope with English-medium teaching especially at the S1 level.

- The third perspective is concerned with the **students**, i.e., strengthening S1 students' language skills so as to enable them to learn effectively in the medium of English; providing additional help for students such as an independent language enrichment package specifically designed for EMI students, and a summer bridging program for S1 students.

It is hoped that the project, which seeks to develop a well-structured, comprehensive support program for S1 students, will thereby enhance the effectiveness of English-medium education for students in EMI schools. The current article details the development of a plan for support measures for the first year of the project. It describes, as far as has been possible within the limited time span of one year, reactions by different parties concerned to the measures, their implementation and their relative success in the short and long term. It reports on the data collected from multiple sources to throw light on the effectiveness of the support measures and on the direction the project is taking. The article concludes with some recommendations as to what can and should be done to enhance the effectiveness of EMI in Hong Kong secondary schools.

The First Year: Development and Implementation of Support Measures

The objectives of the first year of the project — in terms of tasks to be undertaken — and which are referred to in this article, involved a number of questions:

- investigating the feasibility of developing LAC objectives for English language and content subjects;
- developing a range of support measures for EMI schools, including a bridging program of English language and content subjects;
- promoting good practices in EMI schools.

Five schools were assigned to the project, all of whom had been approached by the ED and were apparently willing participants in the project. The schools vary in their location, background, and tradition. One has been an EMI school in an urban setting for over 80 years, while another, located in the New Territories, has only a school history of about 10 years. The teachers' English proficiency varies from school to school, as do the students' socioeconomic background and family support for English. There is also a

big difference in the schools' English language culture and environment as well as in the collegiality and collaboration among staff. The constituency of the project team has been set up so that one particular team member could be assigned to each participating school for close contact and follow-up.

The following part of the article describes various issues and activities which have been explored over the course of the year, in an attempt to stimulate schools and teachers toward an LAC approach to their EMI teaching. We now describe some of these issues, namely: (1) needs analyses to identify students' adaptation problems; (2) teacher support; (3) support materials for teachers and students; (4) the sharing of good practices. Classroom observations are conducted to gain a better understanding of the project in action and questionnaires completed by schools on their existing support measures are also analyzed and discussed.

Needs Analyses to Identify Students' Adaptation Problems

In an attempt to move the project forward in a principled manner, focus group interviews were held with various stakeholders. The content of some of these interviews is discussed below.

Focus Groups With S1 Students

As a preliminary step to understanding students' adaptation problems, focus group interviews were held with a small group of S1 students in December, 2001 and May, 2002.

In the focus groups (conducted in Cantonese to allow students to express themselves more freely and openly), students were prompted to speak freely about their early days in S1 and how they viewed their progress and any adaptation problems they felt they had experienced.

It was apparent that students viewed the early period of S1 as a continual struggle. Comments ranged from the fact that there were many new subjects with a lot of new vocabulary items (with on average, students being expected to learn 20–30 new words every day but yet not knowing how to pronounce all these new words) to the fact that teachers talked too fast and students were often only able to follow what they were saying months after becoming S1 students. Students suggested that trying to overcome these difficulties involved them in a great deal of memorizing of texts and model answers while others sought private tutors to help them. They suggested that for

each subject, glossaries with Chinese explanations could perhaps be provided and that teachers should use mixed code during the first few months. Students felt that teachers who translated each new word in Cantonese helped them understand the lessons better. They also requested that teachers conducted communicative and fun activities to try and help students get over their fear of using English and that teachers could make lessons more lively by, for example, telling jokes, playing games, chatting with students informally, as well as less emphasis being placed on students' academic performance, especially in the early part of S1.

Discussions With Secondary School Teachers — English and Content Subject Teachers

Focus group discussions were conducted with secondary school teachers from the participating schools in September, 2001. Important issues were raised concerning S1 adaptation problems, and a number of suggestions were put forward as to how these might be alleviated. Concerning improving teachers' adoption of English in EMI schools, it was suggested that the formal curriculum should be trimmed, or redesigned, so as to integrate language and subject content. Some teachers commented that there appeared to be a gap between the English learnt in primary education and the English required for secondary EMI education. The language demand for content subjects was much higher than that for English as a subject, it was suggested. Some teachers queried whether immersion should perhaps start earlier, for example from Primary 4. Teachers commented on the fact that some primary schools were already using textbooks written in English for Science. Concerning school leadership, the principal's decision governed how teachers worked, such as how English was used during lessons and assemblies. It was remarked that some principals and content subject teachers used Cantonese during assemblies; nonetheless, these same senior members of staff still demanded that students used English when making announcements during assemblies.

Teachers felt they had no time to try out new materials or ideas because of their heavy workload; comments here were that time and effort were required for LAC coordination and that if students were to adapt, or were to be given more individual attention, class size needed to be considered. With 40 students in a class, it was very difficult to cater to the great range of language abilities and to give students individual attention. Some students' English was very weak and teachers doubted if these students could really learn effectively in the English medium.

Interviews With University Content Subject Professors

In January 2002, interviews were conducted with a number of content subject professors at a local university in Hong Kong. Four professors (two of whom wrote textbooks for schools) were interviewed. Their subject specialisms were geography, history, mathematics, and computer studies.

The opinions of the content subject professors varied considerably. For the major subjects, the opinions of the professors were that a high level of English language proficiency was required by EMI content subject teachers. The general tenor of opinion appeared to be that, with regard to the major subjects, EMI teachers were not as proficient as they might be. One professor even went so far as to suggest that it might be necessary for EMI teachers to sit an English language “EMI benchmark test” to demonstrate their proficiency in the language.

The ability of students was also commented upon. It was noted that in early secondary, the demands of both content subject vocabulary and the English language skills necessary to make a description, comparison, explanation and so on were great, with many students falling short.

Suggestions were also made as to how EMI teachers might help their students adapt and follow their content subject lessons. Comments here ranged from simplifying their own language and using graphics, to EMI content subject teachers knowing the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to help students pronounce words, to interactive content subject or language ideas such as writing mathematics diaries. A suggestion was also made that English language teachers might base some of their English language classes around the content required for other content subjects — doing reading comprehension on mathematics materials and topics for example.

The different perspectives provided by students, teachers, and teacher educators in the above have thrown light on the complexity of the issue, such as the heavy demand of the syllabus, the huge language gap students have to bridge between Primary 6 and Secondary 1, teachers’ heavy workload, teachers’ English proficiency and so on. It can be seen that devising comprehensive support measures to help S1 students adjust to EMI is an extremely taxing task.

Teacher Support

Teacher Workshops and Feedback

Four school-based workshops were held during the first year of the project

with participating schools. The focus of the early workshops centered around introducing the concept of an LAC approach, raising teachers' awareness that all EMI teachers are language teachers, introducing how to set language objectives as an integral part of content objectives, and reinforcing the principle that all teachers are responsible for helping S1 students adapt to EMI teaching.

Later sessions focused on ways of integrating language and content, and introduced teachers to teaching materials that the project team had been preparing. These materials embraced principles for integrating language and content; an attempt was also made to provide teachers with a number of concrete teaching ideas and short activities that might be conducted with EMI classes of different subjects.

Overall, the teacher workshops aimed to provide S1 EMI teachers with a range of strategies to enhance the effectiveness of EMI teaching, with the integration of language and content being an important focus of each workshop. The feedback of teachers in the workshops varied; some content subject teachers felt that it should be the job of the English teacher to deal with the language while they concentrated on content subject matter. Others pointed out that as they were not language teachers, they were not always aware of the opportunities of implementing certain strategies that could help students' language development. Still others commented that the vocabulary and sentence structures in the textbooks were too difficult for students and it was time-consuming for teachers to simplify them. On the whole, participating teachers felt that the workshops helped them to develop a greater awareness of students' language needs, and how to better integrate content and language. Teachers found the lesson plans and teaching materials, largely based on topics related to the syllabus and the textbooks, particularly useful. It was clear that better understanding between language teachers and content subject teachers regarding students' linguistic and emotional needs was helpful.

Support Materials for Teachers and Students

An important aspect of the project in terms of support has been in the area of the development of materials — learning and teaching materials for students and for teachers. So far, a number of booklets of materials have been produced and delivered to schools. These are briefly described below.

Materials for Teachers

The materials produced for teachers were not to be viewed as a textbook of materials to be simply “implemented” with classes. Rather they were intended as a way forward in terms of *strategies*: they constitute sets of suggestions and prompts for English language teachers as to how they may engage with content subject teachers and the demands of students learning content subjects through English. For content subject teachers, the strategies characterized ways to marry certain English language principles with content subject teaching, taking into account relevant knowledge frameworks and structures (Mohan, 2001). The teachers’ materials represent a part of the project team’s long-term LAC strategic approach; they are an attempt to get schools to consider how they may move forward in developing a “language-rich environment.” They embody and consist of strategies, and are not a simple set of lessons to “deliver” which magically improve students’ English language, which would be a rather naïve assumption to make (see Man et al., 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, for the materials).

Summer Bridging Program Materials

The aims of the Summer Bridging Program center around easing the transition from Chinese-medium primary schools to EMI secondary schools. Apart from familiarizing students with the school culture, the objectives of the program involve preparing them to have lessons conducted in English, teaching them the vocabulary for different subjects, raising confidence in using English, enabling them to use simple classroom language, and developing critical thinking skills. The content involved informal and fun activities to get to know their friends and teachers, learn about school rules, go on a treasure hunt to find out about the school environment, learn how to make announcements in English, prepare for pair or group work conducted in English, and explore the English language structures and vocabulary of different subjects.

Many schools have a summer bridging program in place, consisting of materials that they have been producing and refining over the last few years. Consequently, as with other aspects of the project, the thrust has been not to attempt to reinvent the wheel therefore, but to share best practice. In this regard, as a number of schools have summer bridging programs in place and quite professionally put together, the team requested that the ED contact some of the schools to see if it would be possible to share good materials

and ideas. Although most schools agreed to give the team access to their materials, some noted that they themselves did not have copyright clearance for all the materials. Although this somewhat restricted the amount of materials the team were able to make use of, a set of summer bridging program materials of approximately 30-hour duration was developed and distributed to participating schools (See Man et al., 2001e).

Independent Learning Materials

Independent learning materials are another important focus of the project. Materials were initially produced only in paper-and-pencil format. Subsequent discussions with the ED's Hong Kong Education City website (<http://www.hkedcity.net>) have involved making some of the student independent learning materials Web-accessible, with as an initial step, implementing some of the materials through the software *Hot Potatoes* (<http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/hotpot/>).

The value of converting the independent learning materials into computer-based materials is apparent. The extent to which this can be achieved within the confines of presently available resources will need to be explored further, however.

The Sharing of Good Practices

In the project team's proposal, it was noted that a lot of good things were happening in many EMI schools. Consequently, the team stated that they did not wish to be viewed as "parachuting missionaries" telling schools how to change their practices by adopting supposedly "magical techniques." The team stated that a part of their role would be to identify good practice and to encourage the sharing thereof. In the initiative to identify best practices, the team approached one school in particular which had been working on and implementing very innovative and — from what had been seen and heard — successful LAC tasks, materials and strategies with regard to EMI in early secondary. The school in question was invited to give a session, introduce their implementation of cross-curricular projects in their school, and explain their LAC strategies and approaches. The session was very well-received and some of their ideas and materials were subsequently used in the teacher workshops, for example, on how to organize cross-curricular projects.

Classroom Observations

As part of a formative examination of how well teachers have been managing to use, or take on board, some of the project team's strategies, a number of observations were conducted. It was found that content subject teachers incorporated strategies as suggested in the team's teaching materials to varying degrees. Some teachers were very aware of the language when teaching, while some needed to be coached. Some teachers taught extremely well, integrating language and content subject. Specific strategies that teachers could adopt were many (Evans, Hoare, Kong, O'Halloran, & Walker, 2001), and those specifically taken from the project team's materials included, for example, guessing meanings of words from content subject context, helping students to see the relationship between sound and spelling in the teaching of pronunciation and vocabulary, making use of semantic mapping or speaking and writing frames to aid student understanding, introducing related forms of words or different parts of speech, and using a much wider range of classroom language expressions. Through the post-lesson discussions, teachers became more aware of the need for clarity in language and the problems faced by students learning through the English medium. Teachers reflecting on their own lessons also helped them think about what further language strategies could be adopted to assist students to learn the subject content matter better.

The First Year: Discussion and Evaluation

This section discusses and describes the relative success of the first year of the project. After a general description of the different perspectives on support which the project has attempted to embrace, we then present the results of a questionnaire administered to teachers involved in the project and report their reactions and attitudes toward being involved in the project, how they feel toward LAC, and their impressions of the first year of support.

Relative Success of Support Program — Implementation of LAC Approach

Initially, reservations were expressed by both English language and content subject teachers with regard to an LAC approach, commenting that it would be extremely difficult to achieve any form of cross-curricular implementation. Indeed, coordinating language across the curriculum requires a lot of effort

and specific conditions (Hoare, Kong, & Evans, 1997). Davison and Williams (2001) also point out some inherent difficulties of implementing such an approach. At the end of the first year of the project, however — after having run questionnaires, informal interviews and workshops — it would appear that teachers are now less resistant to LAC ideas. They are beginning to appreciate the relevance of English language teachers and content subject teachers cooperating, and are beginning to see gains that may be achieved by such cooperation. We had not been expecting that such change in teachers' mindsets might be achieved overnight, and are generally heartened to see that some change in ideas and attitudes have taken hold.

EMI Teachers' English Language Proficiency

One issue which has only briefly been touched upon is that of the English language proficiency of teachers teaching content subjects in EMI schools. It was noted that, in classes, where the teacher's English language proficiency is less than adequate, students are inevitably going to experience more problems. In part this is because they may actually have problems understanding the teacher. Conversely it may be that because the teacher's English is less than adequate, both students and teacher lapse into Cantonese more, facing students with a kind of language dilemma. Yes, they now understand the content because it is being delivered in Chinese. No, they are not adapting, because they are not being exposed, first, to adequate English, and second, to "good" English.

One of the professors we interviewed mentioned the issue of an EMI "benchmark." While this is a rather controversial comment, it is, nonetheless, a point that needs to be borne in mind: not only do students need to be immersed with English, they need to be immersed with "good" English.

Use of Materials/Strategies

Various questionnaires and other assessment instruments to ascertain teachers' and students' responses to the different types of support were administered in early 2003. Results will be discussed in a subsequent paper.

Although data is limited, we would like to comment briefly on some of the classroom visits we have conducted. It has been heartening to see that a number of content subject teachers have been incorporating and using the strategies we have been advocating. Some teachers have been internalizing the strategies, perhaps even unconsciously. For example, one teacher of

geography whom we observed told us that she felt our strategies were useful, but that no, she had not yet had time to use them. She might when she had time, she said. However, when we observed her, it was interesting to see her treatment of items of vocabulary. In attempting to explain the word “unemployment” to students, she broke this word into its three constituent morphemes: *un – employ – ment*, and attempted also to teach the pronunciation. Despite her insistence that she did not have time to deal with language in her lessons, she was in fact beginning to adopt some of the very strategies we have been advocating!

Questionnaire Survey

At the end of the first year of the project, a questionnaire was distributed to four of the participating schools. (One school was not available when the survey was being administered.) The survey was in six sections, as detailed below.

- Section 1: Personal and school details
- Section 2: Feedback on the involvement with the project
- Section 3: General concerns about operating in an EMI environment
- Section 4: Existing support measures within the school
- Section 5: Self-assessment in terms of English language ability for teaching through the medium of English
- Section 6: Evaluation of team work within the school

From the four schools, questionnaires were returned from 66 teachers (both English and content subject teachers). As there are usually about 20 teachers of S1 in a school, the return rate of 66 questionnaires is therefore in the region of 80%, a high return rate.

The discussion below reports selectively on the questionnaire — in particular, attitudes toward EMI practices and reactions to the first year of being involved in the project.

Only 25 (37.9%) respondents reported they were initially happy to participate in this project, presumably because they had been “instructed to participate” — reported by 37 (56.1%) respondents. This seemingly negative focus was not reflected in attitudes toward language and content awareness and practice at the end of S1. A total of 43 (65.2%) respondents responded that they had become aware of the need to be not only a content subject teacher but also a language teacher. The same number (43 or 65.2%) stated

that they now paid attention not only to the subject content but also to the language. Some 37 (56.1%) respondents responded that they now spent more time helping students with language, and 47 (71.2%) stated that they had become more aware of their responsibilities for helping students adapt to EMI teaching.

The issue of cooperation among different groups of teachers brought some interesting responses. With teachers of the same panel, 50 (75.8%) respondents considered that cooperation was “satisfactory” (or better), with frequent cooperation noted by 38 (57.6%) respondents.

Actual cooperation with teachers of other content subjects was rated as lower, however — with “satisfactory” (or better) cooperation rated by 27 (40.9%) respondents, and frequent cooperation noted by 16 (24.2%) respondents.

Cooperation with English language teachers was rated as even lower. Cooperation was rated as “satisfactory” (or better) by 24 (36.4%) respondents, with frequent cooperation noted again by only 16 (24.2%) respondents.

In terms of use and attitudes toward LAC materials for S1 students, while only 15 (22.7%) respondents felt the materials produced by the project team had been “useful,” 37 (56.1%) commented that the materials had inspired them to develop their own new materials. While respondents were not overenthusiastic about the project team’s materials, they did respond very positively later (50 or 75.8%) that it was likely that in future they would develop some materials based on the suggestions, strategies or examples given in the materials and in the workshops.

On the issue of “duties” and “responsibilities” as EMI teachers, 46 (69.7%) respondents stated that they felt it was an EMI teacher’s duty to be an English teacher as well as a content subject teacher — a healthy shift in attitude and contrasting with the observations of the project team at the beginning of the project. On the question of English as the medium, 62 (93.9%) respondents reported that they were “willing” or “very willing” to use English as the teaching medium.

In summary, then, the results of the questionnaire of teachers’ attitudes toward EMI in general and toward the EMI support project in particular indicate that the first year of the project has succeeded in making inroads into how both English and content subject teachers in EMI schools perceive their duties and responsibilities. Attitudes have improved since the start of the project. However, as can be seen, the embracing of an LAC approach still has a long way to go and has a number of hurdles to overcome.

The Year Ahead — The Second Year: Evaluating the Project

As the project is multi-faceted, it needs to be evaluated from a number of different perspectives — of both teachers and students. These perspectives are discussed below; they form the basis for the work for the second year of the project.

The summer bridging program will be evaluated by pre- and post-questionnaires and interviews to assess students' learning and attitudes. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with the teachers to find out the usefulness of the various teaching and learning materials for English teachers, content subject teachers and students. Formal and informal ongoing feedback will be collected from teachers and students through sharing sessions, e-mails, classroom visits, questionnaires and interviews as part of the evaluation measures. Classroom observations will be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the teachers' strategies, students' responses, and the learning outcomes. Various questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups discussions have been and are being administered to ascertain teachers' and students' responses to the different types of support.

It had originally been proposed that some form of language tests might be administered to students participating in the program at the start and end of S1 to gauge development; that is to gauge students' *language proficiency*. The team was not convinced, however, that one-shot tests — such as end-of-year achievement tests — would be at all appropriate since our primary objective was trying to work on English and content subject teachers' *mindsets and attitudes*, not testing students to see what development they make in terms of English over the course of S1. Evaluation of content-language integration might be difficult (Leung, 2001), but some studies indicate (Coniam, 2000–2003, 2001) that students in EMI schools do indeed make progress over the course of the year. They get various types of exposure to English: in English lessons, in content subject lessons (and even if this is still over their heads, they still get exposure), in assemblies, by talking to teachers in the corridors, by announcements, and so on. Therefore, a one-shot proficiency test to measure “adaptation to EMI,” or more specifically the efficacy of the project, was not, it was felt, appropriate.

After deliberation as well as discussion with the ED, it was agreed that a portfolio approach would be adopted — which would give a better indication of students' language development and progress over time. The portfolio will consist of students' writing, with the sample consisting of two

S1 classes of average ability in each participating school. At exit from the summer bridging program (i.e., before entry into S1), three *specific* students — one of above average ability, one of average ability, one of below average ability — will be identified in each class and a writing portfolio will be constructed by collecting a piece of writing for English, science, and humanities every two months from these students. At the end of S1, analysis will then be conducted to examine the development of the students' writing ability over the course of S1.

The Issue of Support

For schools to be convinced of the need for change and to adopt some form of LAC approach, as much contact with individual schools as possible is necessary. Measures also needed to be introduced for both the formal and the informal curriculum (Lee, 1994; Lee, Lee, & Ng, 1994). As mentioned, the project team consists of five academic members, with one academic member attached to each school, as the school's liaison point, contact person, and where possible, the workshop leader. Establishing contact, trust and faith has taken time, but by mid-2002, it was becoming apparent that schools were beginning to "open up" in that they were not only beginning to adopt some of the proposed strategies, but were commenting on the value of our approach, and of the materials, and how they themselves perceived the second year of the project. Increasingly too, schools took the initiative to seek our assistance. For example, schools approached us on how to make the best use of the Multimedia Language Centre (MMLC), what resources to acquire, where to go for experts to help students with language arts activities, speech festival preparation, debates and so on.

Support for teachers — and for schools — can therefore be seen as meaning different things to different schools. A measure with regard to teacher support which had been discussed in the original proposal was a form of discussion group / Web-based support for queries and advice. Useful contact was established with ED's Hong Kong Education City (<http://www.hkedcity.net>). A Website and forum have now been put together so that if teachers do have queries they can raise them (<http://iworld.hkedcity.net/cu1001>).

Looking Ahead

As we look toward the second year of the project, the team would hope to

work as closely with the schools as we have so far, and to further the positive attitudes toward an LAC approach, which, we feel, is beginning to get a toehold in some of the schools.

We would at this juncture, however, like to restate points made by even the most successful and enthusiastic schools concerning the success of a cross-curricular, or language-rich-environment, approach to the developing of English in an EMI school. At heart here is the issue of time and resources. Teachers have mentioned on many occasions the amount of time required to plan, to work together, to coordinate, if the LAC approach is to be a success. They have stated that the lack of time simply does not permit them to cooperate with one another in a way that the LAC approach demands. The corollary of this — quite justified — comment is that time, or resources, need to be allocated, found, if teachers are to successfully implement any form of cross-curricular approach to language in an EMI school. For instance, teachers could be released, on a regular basis, from their day-to-day teaching to work on developing materials that integrate language and content or to plan with other content subject teachers on cross-curricular projects.

Teachers also feel that time spent on the language elements in a lesson means less time dealing with subject matter knowledge. “Covering the syllabus” in content subjects was a major concern for many teachers, and concepts like curriculum integration and curriculum tailoring, so widely advocated in the current wave of curriculum reform, do not seem to have taken a firm hold.

Perhaps more importantly, for EMI to reap success, the initiative of developing support measures based on an LAC approach should, in the long run, come from the teachers themselves who have the determination and commitment to make EMI work for their students. It is therefore toward these goals of “empowerment” that the project team will be working in the second year. It is hoped that, when the project ends and the project team is no longer going to schools and actively promoting LAC issues, teachers themselves will be proactive in implementing an LAC approach and in seeking measures to help their S1 students adjust to EMI.

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