PROJECT REVIEW

Language Enrichment Project for Proficiency and Motivation

(Funded by QEGS of EDB, HKSARG)
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

With the unique historical and socio-economic background of Hong Kong, biliterate and trilingual education have long been of prominent importance to local students. English and Chinese (spoken and written) proficiency are always the key credentials of students to be considered for further study and professional interviews.

The Education Bureau has also emphasized the internationalisation and diversification as key education strategies (Annex 1 – Internationalisation and Diversification of Hong Kong Education strategy). It is crucial to let students taste different cultures and languages so that they can start familiarize themselves in a globalized and an ever-changing environment. Accompanied by the introduction of Working Holiday in Japan (Annex 2 – Working Holiday in Japan) and in Korea (Annex 3 – Working Holiday in Korea), there has been significant growth and rising popularity in learning additional languages such as Japanese and Korean. After all, exposure to additional languages gives edge to one’s career competitiveness besides cultural interest.

This Project across two academic years attempted to i) foster students’ motivation in language learning through exposure to wider horizon of languages in interesting ways; and ii) to improve their language proficiency by a variety of learning activities and incentives to support their attempt for public language test. Thanks to the QEGS, this Project has an advantage towards success building on the positive experience and developed provision in the 1.5 years’ pilot scheme with a complementary Language Centre in 2009.

The Project comprised two main areas:

1) Broader Language Learning Programme (the “Broader P”) attempted to boost students’ motivation in language learning by an array of social activities which widened students’ exposure to additional languages such as Japanese and Korean other than English and Putonghua.

2) Brighter Language Learning Programme (the “Brighter P”) aimed to enhance students’ language proficiency. A group of students were selected for the Brighter P gearing towards progression in English and/or Chinese proficiency level. They did a pre-test, i.e. practice paper of either IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or PSC (Putonghua
 Language Enrichment Project for Proficiency and Motivation (QEGS funded)

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Shuiping Ceshi); followed by participating in workshops/tutorials; and attempting a post-project test in the end.
2.1 Objective 1: to promote students’ motivation in language learning

In the light of internationalisation and diversification as the Hong Kong educational strategies, and the increasing students’ needs and interest towards foreign languages owing to more language and cultural exchange opportunities such as Working Holiday in other countries, one of the objectives of this Project was to promote students’ motivation in language learning by broadening their exposure to other additional languages such as Japanese and Korean in forms of various interesting activities:

All 2,000 post-secondary students studying in HKCT (approximate enrolment figure in average for 2011 – 2013 academic years) were eligible to join the variety of language learning activities in the Broader P, to which students taking programmes related to Tourism and Hospitality and those expecting to enrol in our brand new Language programmes in the coming two years were more directly attracted. There were chatting sessions, foreign movies appreciation, language and cultural events.

2.2 Objective 2: to enhance students’ language proficiency in English and/or Putonghua

The focus on biliterate and trilingual education in Hong Kong reminded teachers and students that the level of English and Chinese proficiency is always been taken into account in career development and articulation to further study. Together with the LC (i.e. last QEGS funded Project – Language Centre: a Pilot Scheme to Complement Classroom Teaching) experience, many students were found potential or qualified to attempt IELTS / PSC but lack of training and driving need for test taking given the high test fees. Therefore, another objective of the Project was to enhance students’ language proficiency in English and/or Chinese (Putonghua in specific) as the key vehicle for communication by giving them academic training as well as authentic test experience: 80 students in the Brighter P were planned to be selected and given English and/or Putonghua training in preparation for their attempt in respective language proficiency tests, i.e. IELTS and PSC with the test fees funded.
2.3 Expected project outcomes

The outcomes of the Project were expected to be in the following deliverables:

- **Workshops / tutorials** run for enhancing students’ language proficiency level
- **Teaching materials** developed for the Project which will also be reviewed for long-term use thereafter
- **Social chat sessions** in additional languages conducted in the developed Language Centre
- **Language immersion events** held to involve larger number of students in tasting the language and culture of other countries
- **Language learning resources** provided to arouse students’ interest in tasting different languages and help them do independent learning
- **Project experience** shared via website open to public to enhance readership and thus multiplied beneficiaries
CHAPTER 3
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Project was implemented in five stages across the two (2011-12 and 2012-13) academic years:

3.1 Stage 1: preparatory work (September to October 2011)

All the preparatory work including project plan, staff recruitment, Project promotion, and resources procurement had been accomplished by the end of October as scheduled.

3.1.1 Project plan and staff recruitment
A yearly plan for the whole project was drafted in early September, 2011 so as to keep all project activities be carried out on time. And staff recruitment advertisement was posted on-line on Classified Post for part-time language tutors and native speakers of foreign languages.

3.1.2 Project promotion (2011-12)
Brighter P and Broader P promotional activities were held in early October. Propaganda materials for Brighter P like PowerPoint and posters were prepared and a 15-minute Project briefing was given to every year 2 and year 3 Higher Diploma classes. Broader P activities and services were introduced by class teachers during English lessons. Students were encouraged to join the activities and make use of the resources provided by the Project. Whilst a co-curricular project, ‘Continuous Learning Project’ was designed to encourage students’ participation.

3.1.3 Students selection for Brighter P 2011-2012
Interested students for the Brighter P were requested to fill out an application form downloaded from Blackboard. Students should seek teacher’s recommendation to complete the application, and attempt a piece of IELTS writing and / or upload a Putonghua monologue recording onto Blackboard for the selection process. 65 and 16 applications for IELTS and PSC trainings were received respectively and 40 of them were shortlisted to join the Project in
the end based on their teachers’ recommendations and language proficiency.

3.1.4 Language resources procurement & teaching material preparation
Language learning resources such as movie DVDs and language books had been procured since early October. 171 items of reading materials including books, magazines, newspaper and on-line programmes and 34 DVDs had been procured as at February, 2012.

Teaching material for Brighter P training workshops have been developed since October. They were uploaded to Blackboard, an on-line platform, so that students can get access and retrieve them before and after workshops.


Brighter P pre-test and training, and Broader P activities such as social chat sessions and social immersion activities were in place as scheduled from July.

3.2.1 Brighter P (2011-12) activities and services in place
Brighter P workshops for IELTS and PSC training commenced in November 2011. The students participating in IELTS training took part in a 7.5-hour core module which allowed them to get familiar with the tests in general and attempt a pre-test in early November. They were then, according to teachers’ recommendation and their pre-test results, arranged to attend different series of elective modules for specific paper, i.e., Reading, Writing Task 1 & 2, Listening and Speaking. Registrants for PSC were divided into two groups and attended the 2-hour weekly training workshops since late November (Annex 4 – Pictures of Brighter P workshops). As at late July 2012, almost 600 hours of training workshops have been organized.

3.2.2 Broader P (2011-12) activities and services in place
Social chat sessions in English, Putonghua, Japanese and Korean were held every week. During each 35-minute (for Japanese and Korean) or 45-minute session (for English and Putonghua), students can join and practise their target language with the native speaker (Annex 5 – Pictures of social chat sessions). As at 31 August, there have been 84 sessions with 336 students participated.
Six language immersion events were held to raise students’ interest and awareness in foreign languages and cultures in the first six months of the Project (Annex 6 – Pictures of the language immersion events 2011-12):

1. ‘全港日本文化常識問答比賽 2011’
2. Japanese and Korean Cultural Meet
3. ‘韓國忘不了攝影比賽’
4. Christmas Carnival
5. Language Immersion Day
6. Writing for the media

3.2.3 The Brighter P (2011-12) post-test

For IELTS, twenty-eight students in total sat for the real IELTS test between April and June. Above 96% of the students’ band scores were upgraded compared with the pre-test, with 61% increased at least a band and another 36% raised half band. Regarding PSC training, workshops ended in late July and 9 students in total sat for the real PSC in late August. 7 of the students’ grades were enhanced after the training while 2 of the results remained unchanged.

3.3 Stage 3: Year-end Review & Review of the Project activities (Aug-Oct 2012)

Year-end project review has been conducted in August, 2012 via students’ questionnaires, and the review results were taken into account as reference for the planning and adjustment of the project implementation in the last Project year.

3.3.1 Year-end project evaluation

All 37 students participated in IELTS and PSC training filled out the programme-end evaluation. Comments and suggestions from students were encouraging and constructive. In general, participants enjoyed the Programme because of the test fee reimbursement and free training. The area that participants graded relatively low is the venue as they requested more choices of class venue apart from CWB campus. An overall grade 4.5 out of 5 was recorded for the content, pace and way of teaching of each particular module that they have joined in
the Programme. Positive comments like ‘professional teachers’ and ‘very good programme’ were received.

3.3.2 Review of the Project activities (2011-12)

With the first project year experience, promotional plan, Brighter P training and Boarder P activities were revised based on the overall students’ and teachers’ feedback.

*Brighter P* promotion has been started earlier compared to that of the first Project year in order to leave more time for training workshops. Introductory sessions for Project promotion were conducted in the first two weeks after school day commencement in mid September. Similar to the first year, propaganda materials like PowerPoint and posters were prepared and a 15-minute Project briefing was given to every year 2 and year 3 Higher Diploma classes. However, the core medium of the propaganda materials was changed to Chinese instead of English so as to capture students’ attention easily.

Based on the teaching and learning effectiveness; in addition to the teachers’ and students’ feedbacks on the Project in the first project year, some changes have been made:

For the length and structure of the training, IELTS classes this year were run in an intensive mode, from one lesson per week in seven months last year to two lessons per week in three months this year. In addition, the training was no longer divided into different modules based on the four papers as in the last year; but an integrated as one comprehensive course. While the length and structure of PSC classes remains unchanged. Regarding the class time and venue, more choices on timeslot and venue were available. For instance, evening class introduced in MOS and HMT campuses were arranged.

Promotion for *Broader P* was similar to that of the first Project year which activities and services were introduced by class teachers during the second English lessons in late September. And since the experience of the co-curricular project, ‘Continuous Learning Project (CLP)’ was proved to be effective in encouraging students to join the activities and make use of the resources provided by the Project so it was fine-tuned and launched again.

Social chat sessions in Putonghua were cancelled but the number of English sessions was
increased to four sessions every week based on their popularity.

3.4  **Stage 4: Implementation of the Brighter P & Broader P (Nov 2012 - July 2013)**

3.4.1  **Broader P (2012-13) activities and services in place**

*Social chat sessions* in English, Japanese and Korean have been held every week. During each 35-minute (for Japanese and Korean) or 45-minute session (for English), students can join and practise their target language with the native speaker. As at July, 2013, there have been 286 sessions with 1,726 students participated.

Five *language immersion events* were held in the second Project year to raise students’ interest and awareness in foreign languages and cultures namely:

1. Foreign Cuisine Luncheon
2. Halloween Face Painting
3. Christmas Carnival 2012
4. Putonghua Talk Show Contest
5. Foreign Movie Appreciation

(Annex 7 – Pictures of the language immersion events 2012-13)

3.4.2  **Brighter P (2012-13) activities and services in place**

103 Brighter P applications were received (73 and 30 for IELTS and PSC trainings respectively) and 59 of them were shortlisted to join the Project in the end based on teachers’ recommendations and language proficiency. Trainings for the two tests have been scheduled in different course structures based on the students’ and teachers’ feedback and the first Project year experience.

Brighter P workshops for IELTS and PSC training commenced in late October 2012. 35 shortlisted students in five classes participating in *IELTS training* took part in a 2.5-hour training workshops twice every week (i.e., 40 hours in 8 weeks in total). The training aimed to acquaint students with the test skills in general. Students had sat a pre-test of each paper before they were coached in a particular English area. All training classes have finished by the
end of December, 2012. The students had sat the IELTS between Jan and April 2013.

24 registrants for PSC training were divided into three groups and attended the 2.5-hour weekly training workshops from late October to present. The training is expected to complete in early April and each registrant will have finished a 40-hour training. All students participating in the PSC training sat the PSC in April, 2013.

3.4.3 The Brighter P (2012-13) post-test

For IELTS, thirty-five students in total sat the IELTS by April, 2013. Over 85% of the students’ band scores were upgraded compared with the pre-test, with above 57% increased at least a band and another 28% raised half band. Regarding PSC training, workshops ended in April and 21 students in total sat the PSC in which 14 students’ grades were enhanced after the training.

In summary, Brighter P was proven to succeed in both IELTS and PSC trainings with the majority of Programme registrants having their IELTS band score or PSC grade enhanced. The Programme is suggested to be carried out again in the coming academic year with an increase of number of registrants so that more students can be of benefit and well-equipped before they graduate from their sub-degree programmes.

3.5 Stage 5: Project-end Review & sharing of Project experience (Aug 2013)

3.5.1 Project-end project evaluation (focus group interviews)

In order to evaluate whether the Project had successfully promote students’ motivation in language learning, particularly for additional languages such as Japanese and Korean, two focus groups were formed in May 2013 to collect students’ qualitative comments on their experience in the activities.

12 students in different majors of their second year of Higher Diploma study, namely Corporate Communication and Language Studies, Tourism Management, Art & Design, Accounting, Computing, Social Work and Business, were invited to participate in the survey. They were divided in two groups of 6 arranged on May 6 and May 10 in Language Centre at
Man Fuk Road campus.

The findings were quite rewarding with loads of positive comments and constructive suggestions. Among the 13 types of Broader P activities on the list, social chat sessions were the most popular. All subjects have participated in more than four sessions with at least one of them for Japanese or Korean session in the two Project years. The subjects appreciated to have authentic opportunities to chat with the native speakers, especially in Japanese and Korean. They also felt relaxed and comfortable when chatting with the native tutor whom they interacted and communicated with in a relaxing atmosphere rather than focusing on the accuracy of speaking the language. The native teachers were described as very funny and a person who was keen to make them interested to speak and learn. However, the subjects thought that the time for each session was too short. They suggested the Japanese and Korean chat sessions could be extended from 35 minutes to 45 minutes as that of English sessions. Two subjects also suggested having more foreign languages of social chat sessions to be held in the coming year.

Another popular activity among the subjects was one of the language Immersion events, ‘Japanese and Korean Cultural Meet’. They liked the mini-games and the souvenirs that were introduced and prepared by the students. And students were updated of news and trends of pop culture of the two countries in a very short time via games.

Apart from social chat sessions and Japanese and Korean Cultural Meet, the subjects expressed that the Christmas Carnivals (2011 and 2012) impressed them very much. All subjects have taken part in both the two Carnivals, and were delighted with the creativity of the natives who made use of the games which successfully motivated their participation. However, some subjects voiced that some of the student helpers of the mini-game booths should be given more training and more preparation so that they can help manage the booths and communicate with participating students effectively and efficiently. If possible, a session for rehearsing the whole programme of the event would be held to further get the helpers prepared.

English interest class / workshop was ranked the least in terms of popularity. Majority of the subject preferred learning languages through interesting and exciting games to joining lessons.
or workshops. But three subjects who had joined the workshops expressed that they enjoyed it very much since they had a lot more fun than expected, and some regarded the workshops more effective than the normal language classes since it allowed more interactions between students and the teacher due to the small-class arrangement. Based on the feedback and suggestions, interest class / workshops in future will be held on a need-basis instead of on a regular basis. Students in this way can choose a particular topic from a list of topics and make appointment with teachers in a flexible way. And the project team can evaluate the popularity of the topics that were on the list more easily.

In summary, all subjects believed that the Broader P activities helped promote their interests and motivation in learning foreign languages, particularly in Korean and Japanese. They liked the atmosphere created during the activities and the encouragement of attempting in speaking or using the foreign languages by the teachers or students helpers. All in all, the experience of the Programme proves that students in general prefer learning languages in a relaxed atmosphere and an informal way. This kind of continuous ‘outside classroom’ experiences in learning foreign languages is vitally important to arouse students’ interest and keep their momentum in learning.

3.5.2 Sharing of Project experience
This Project Review which summarizes the project experiences and feedbacks from students and teachers together with its annexes illustrate the whole project cycle on how the two-year project was planned, implemented, reviewed and re-implemented. In order to share the valuable experience and multiply beneficiaries, the Review was uploaded to the College’s website in November in a downloadable PDF format as a reference for interested parties (http://www.hkct.edu.hk/htmlpage.php?id=1155).