

Kowloon Park. They experienced most difficulty recalling the vocabulary items which they had only seen in picture form e.g. flamingo. The core activity of the second lesson gave the pupils much needed practice in asking WH questions in a realistic setting, rarely presented in HK classrooms. In the third lesson, the pupils followed instructions to grow their own plants, but they had difficulty in giving the instructions to their peers. The fifth extra lesson which presented the pupils with a map and asked them to give and follow directions highlighted the pupils' weaker areas as that of giving directions correctly and coherently.

During the outing we observed that the pupils were able to follow their group leader's directions on the map very well, were able to recognise and talk about various birds and activities. They obeyed the park signs and used them to locate the sporting areas. The pupil's weakest area was in identifying the flower parts and we noted a need for asking for assistance, clarification and confirmation in English that the pupils had not been fully prepared for in the Pre-outing stage.

The Evaluation Stage of the project involved pupils in interviews which, when played back, demonstrated both an increased confidence in the pupils' use of English and an improvement in the quality of English used: namely they attempted to use phrases and sentences rather than one word answers. The pupils were quite amazed at their newly acquired abilities in spoken English when the tapes were played back!

4. What positive feedback did the group observe?

Pupils exhibited no discipline problems, in fact the reverse. They remained highly motivated throughout the project, and showed satisfaction from their communicative experience in English. The motivation was sparked by the idea of an opportunity to use the English, learnt in class in the preparatory stage, in a real life situation in Hong Kong.

Working in small groups in a project was also new and interesting to the pupils. They were more responsible for their own learning. They participated more actively and there was more involvement in project work than in regular class coursebook activity.

From questionnaires, sent to the twenty-one pupils involved a week later, it was found that all the pupils enjoyed and found the games and activities interesting and useful. They thought that they had learnt a lot from their project.

The project made us aware of the possibility of using the many authentic sources in our immediate environment for promoting interest in the learning of English. Pupils drew upon knowledge and skills from science and other subjects, even adding to them during the project period.

5. What constraints did the group experience?

One constraint was the lack of time which was highlighted by the lack of familiarity with project work on the part of both the teachers and the pupils.

In practice, project work creates extra work for the teacher(s). In addition to a teacher's daily routine involving regular lesson planning, the preparation and marking of exercises and test papers, projects necessitate the design of materials, such as tasksheets, maps, questionnaires and charts, the location of pamphlets and brochures as well as the collation of all the information. Teachers may therefore, experience difficulty in fitting projects into a scheme of work that is already laden with tight schedules of lessons and tests. As the co-operation of at least one other staff member is advisable if an excursion is included in the project, then time is needed to inform and enlist the co-operation of colleagues.

6. What were the factors for our success?

While we believe that one teacher can handle a project without too much difficulty, it is advisable, at least initially, to work in a team with teachers at the same grade level. In our case we had a willing, enthusiastic team of colleagues who shared the workload with a will and it was this teamwork that ensured the success of our project.

Careful planning at the preparation stage was also one of the ingredients for our success because once the project was underway there was no time for major revisions.

Last but not least, the consent, enthusiasm and co-operation of the Headmaster and staff, especially the class teacher, were vital, indispensable ingredients of our project.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion our group considered the positive outcomes far outweighed the constraints. The time and effort put in by the group reaped such large gains in terms of pupils' attitude, confidence and language ability that it was considered worthwhile.

Topics like The Kowloon Park project can, with some modification, be adapted to suit the needs of children at different levels. There are many alternative tasks and activities that could be formulated to meet the needs of a language class at any Primary level. Similarly, there are many alternative project topics to be found in any local community.

Figure 1

Tasksheet (2)

Aviary

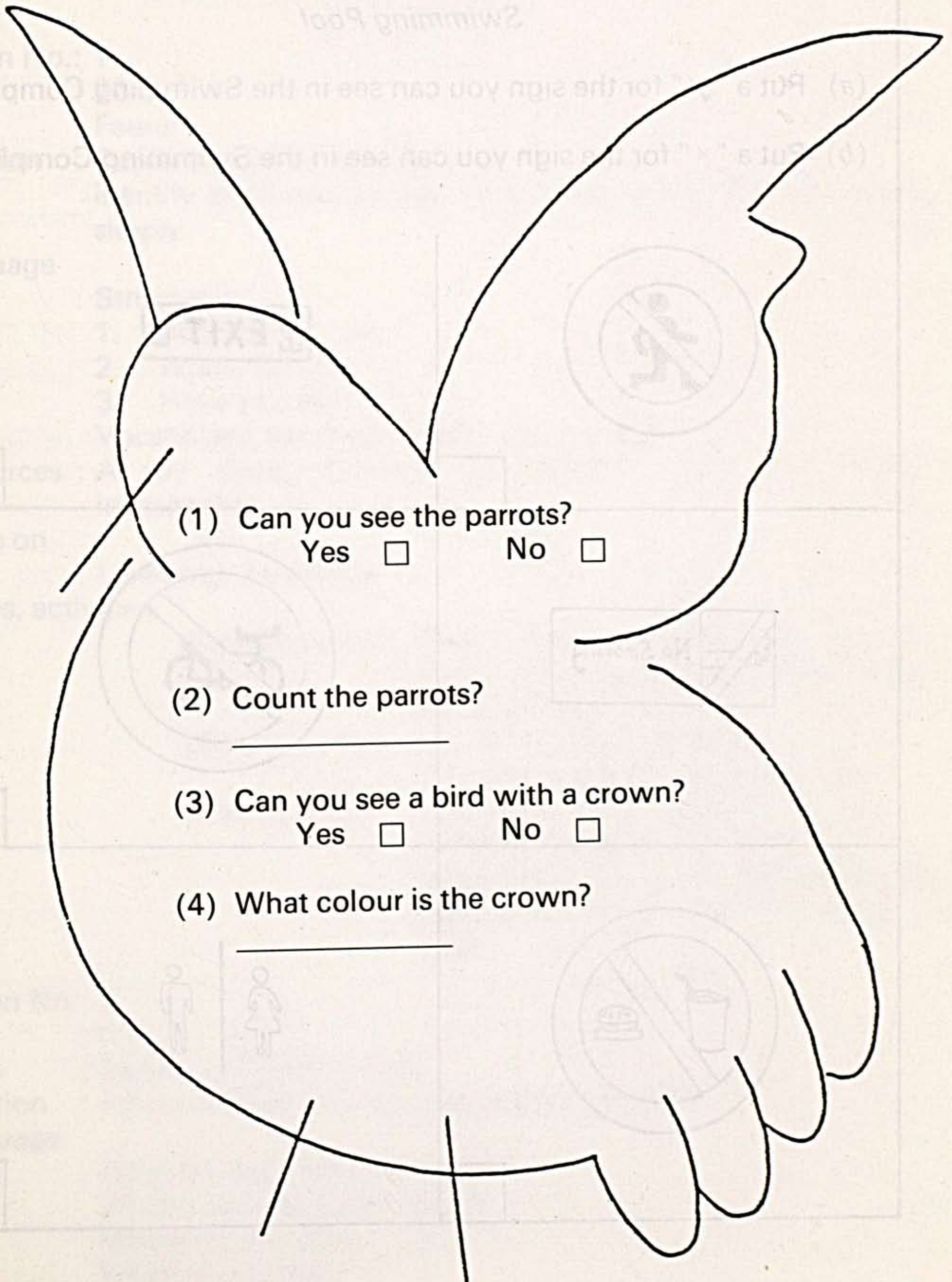
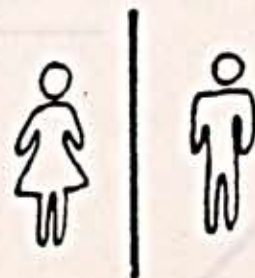
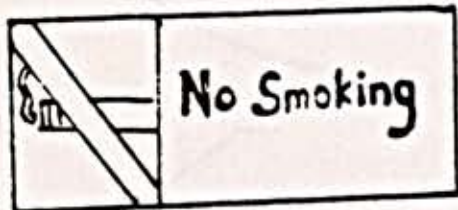


Figure 2

Tasksheet (5A)
Swimming Pool

- (a) Put a "✓" for the sign you can see in the Swimming Complex.
(b) Put a "×" for the sign you can see in the Swimming Complex.



PROJECT: KOWLOON PARK

Class: Primary 4B

School: Lo Yu Chick Primary School (PM)

STAGE 1: PRE-OUTING

Lesson No.: 1

Date : 30/3

Topic : Fauna

Function : Pupils should be able to:
identify common animals in the Park and describe them very simply.

Language

Items : Structures:

1. What do do ?

2. Where do they?

3. Have you seen?

Vocabulary: flamingoes, lake, cage, water

Resources : A toy duck, Cut-outs of animals, Wall Chart, Musical instruments

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking

Games, activities,

tasks : Guessing game: Class is divided into pairs. A cue picture card is given to each pair. Pupil A mimes and pupil B guesses.

Miming game: A: What am I? (mime)

B: You're a duck/bird/flamingo.

Singing game: Teacher sings the song

'Having you seen the little ducks?'

Groups of pupils with paper heads come out to sing and mime the ducks and birds.

Lesson No.: 2

Date : 6/4

Topic : Sports in Kowloon Park

Function : Ask and describe what people do in the park.

Language

Items : What do they do in the park?

What's your favourite sport?

Where do you play?

When do you play?

On Sundays
On Saturdays

Resources : Cut-outs, Frieze, Worksheets

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking

Games, activities,
tasks

: Activity 1: (Pair work)

1. A boy and a girl come in front of the class to demonstrate the activity.
2. Boys come out and ask the girls questions. Girls give answers according to their interests in sports.

Activity 2: Pupils fill in the questionnaire by asking their partners or members of the other groups. They write the information on worksheet 2.

Lesson No.: 3

Date : 27/4

Topic : Plants

Function : 1. Identify different parts of a flower, that is, petals, leaves and stem.
2. Ask and describe simple procedures of how to grow a plant.

Language

Items : 1. What do you do first?
2. What do you do, then?
3. What do you do next?
4. What do you do last?
First, put some cotton in the pot.
Then, put a seed on the cotton

Resources : A frieze, cut-outs, real flowers Worksheets 1, 2, 3, Pots, seeds, cotton, water, 3 green bean plants

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking, Reading

Games, activities,
tasks

1. Listen and find the word.
2. Picture re-arrangement.
3. Matching pictures with the correct sentences.
4. Ask questions about the procedures of how to grow a plant while demonstrating and answering the questions.

Lesson No.: 4

Date : 4/5

Topic : Signs and rules of the park

Function : Identify some common signs.

Language

- Items : 1. What does this sign mean?
2. It means
3. Where can we see this sign?
Don't pick the flowers. Don't litter.
Don't walk on the grass. No smoking.
Don't feed the birds. Men's toilet.

Resources : Wall charts, cut-outs of signs, jigsaws, puzzles, fishing game, bingo games, tasksheets, teachers' tasksheets.

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking, Reading

Games, activities,

- tasks : 1. Jigsaw puzzles of signs.
2. Listen and finish the tasksheets about signs.
3a. A board game
b. Fishing game
c. Bingo game

Lesson No.: 5

Date : 11/5

Topic : Finding the way in the park

- Function : 1. Identify 5 locations in Kowloon Park.
2. Follow directions.

Language

- Items : ■ Structures:
a. Where's the? Go up here and
b. Take the second left
c. What does this sign mean?
■ Vocabulary:
New: route, pass, aviary, Landmark
Recycling: park, bird, lake, sign, mean, Indoor Games Hall, swimming pool, left, right.

Resources : Frieze, worksheet, wall chart, board game fishing game, Bingo game cutouts of signs, Kowloon Park poster, Toy exhibition pamphlet.

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking, Reading

Games, activities,

- tasks : 1. Teacher recycles left and right with activities including "Simon Says"
2. Teacher presents map of Kowloon Park, pupils move according to oral directions.
3. Pupils direct each other using the map.
4. Pupils ask each other what can be seen at the various locations.

STAGE 2: OUTING

Date : 14/5

Outing to Kowloon Park. Pupils work in small groups to complete Project Booklets.

STAGE 3: EVALUATION

Date : 18/5

Topic : What I did on the outing.

Function : 1. Give simple accounts of things they did on the outing.
2. Speak and ask simple questions about past events.

Language

Items : 1. What did you do in the park?
drew a picture.

Vocabulary: Past forms of verbs.

Resources: 3 sets of photos, Tape recorders, A chart

Focus on

Skills : Listening, Speaking

Games, activities,
tasks

- : 1. Each group is given a set of photos of the outing. The pupils take turns to answer questions about the outing.
2. An interview. Using a tape-recorder, teacher conducts an interview with some of the pupils. The questions are based on the outing.
3. Who's got the tallest plant?
Pupils compare the heights of their plants.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "WHAT MAKES A READER POPULAR AMONG OUR PUPILS?"

Course No.: ES 901

Group 8

Participants: Au Wong Yuen Ling, Lydia

Chui Siu Chun, Debebe

Lee Hoi Ming (Leader)

Leung Lai Fun, Louisa

Lui Leung Siu Yin, Esther

Ng Kar Ling, Karen

Ng Yim Lai Seung

Siu Yuen Lan

Tse Sing Kit, Sandra

Chan Wong Siu On, Sandy

Wong Chong Moi, John

Wong Lai See (Secretary)

Names of Writers: Wong Lai See

Lee Hoi Ming

Tutor: David Bunton

In this project, we set out to find out what kinds of books students really enjoy reading – and why.

"The practice of extensive reading needs little justification. It is clearly the easiest way of bringing the foreign learner into sustained contact with a substantial body of English. If he reads, and what he reads is of some interest to him, then the language of what he has read rings in his head, the patterns of collocation and idiom are established almost painlessly"

Geoffrey Broughton (1980)

in G. Broughton, C. Brumfit, R. Flavell, P. Hill &

R. Pincas (Eds.): Teaching English as a

Foreign Language, Routledge, Kegan and Paul

Why Extensive Reading?

The main reason why we chose to work on such a project was that we were convinced that reading, in particular extensive reading, can help a great deal in second language acquisition, especially when the learner has developed a reading habit outside the classroom as in so doing the learner can always keep in touch with the target language in the most convenient way and he can make second language learning part of his or her life. As Nuttal pointed out, "The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it."

How do we know where our students' interests lie?

The quotation at the beginning suggests that second language learners benefit a lot from reading materials which interest them. However, how do we know where their interests are?

It was this very question that led us to decide to start our survey. We hoped that our findings would help us in some way to run our own extensive reading schemes at school, which in turn would help our pupils develop a reading habit outside school.

Every major publisher provides lists of readers, specifying the vocabulary and their in-house grading system. When choosing books for use, most teachers try to find those that will be easy for the pupils to read and preferably of high intrinsic interest. The principles are sensible. However, no one but the students know what really are interesting and easy to them.

Aware of this, we came to a consensus that our project had to see what students themselves thought of as wide a variety of books as possible, rather than limiting their choice through our assumptions as teachers.

How to conduct our survey?

Subjects

Young children, curious and adventurous, are great explorers in their world of fantasy. From our experience, secondary school newcomers are more eager to try and more readily motivated. Once encouraged to begin reading, hopefully, they may develop reading habits thereafter.

We assumed that self-motivated pupils with higher standards of English will ensure a better response to the reading activity and hence contribute more to our project; whereas pupils weaker in English usually do not have the readiness to read and hence they may just do nothing at all. Mrs Christina Wong, a Vice Principal of ILE, pointed out in her report on the government's Extensive Reading Scheme (ERS) that brighter pupils would be most likely to benefit from extensive reading. With our assumption justified, we decided to survey pupils of average to above average English standard.

We selected one class of first formers from each of the three target New Territories schools, namely, POCA Wong Siu Ching Secondary School in Tsuen Wan, Shung Tak College in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun Government Secondary School, as our subjects and visited each school twice, for 1½ to 2 hours each time.

Books

13 of us tried our best to collect readers and other books from various sources such as publishers, our respective schools and libraries. With the help of Ms. Christina Wong, and Mr. David Bunton, our tutor, books of the ERS were made accessible to us. Eventually, a total of 493 different books,

including 363 fiction and 130 non-fiction, were assembled for the reading activity.

Activity

During the activity periods, pupil participants could choose freely from the choosing corner; sit down, relax and read comfortably at the reading corner; or if they did not like the book, they could always return it and get another one on the spot. On the other hand, if they liked certain books, they could take them home. Students had to tell us whether they liked the books or not – and why – by completing survey forms.

Survey Forms

Each pupil had to fill in a Personal Data Form and a Form A for each book he or she chose, giving the reason the book was chosen. If the chosen book was found to be to his or her liking, a Form B was filled in, giving reasons; if otherwise, a Form C was filled in, giving reasons for disliking the book. Forms were deliberately written in Chinese in order to eliminate any language barriers which might keep the students from giving genuine answers.

Our Findings

After visiting the schools, we collected 1049 Form As, 706 Form Bs and 225 Form Cs. However, some students might have submitted a lot more forms than the others and would have dominated the results. Thus we decided to take samples.

Features most appealing to students

According to the statistics, students tended to choose books with the following features:

1. beautiful pictures/illustrations
2. attractive/beautifully designed cover
3. big, bold print
4. simple language
5. interesting titles
6. hard cover
7. less than an inch thick and less than a hundred pages
8. clear, neat and tidy arrangement

(The above features were ranked according to the total number of Forms collected)

Students of this age like books with colourful and attractive covers and illustrations. Their choice of a book is very much influenced by its outward appearance. Most students prefer reading books that are short and can be finished quickly. Footnotes and exercises do not seem appealing to students though they are valued by some teachers.

Do the tastes of boys and girls differ?

Girls tend to prefer stories while boys are more attracted to books about sports. However, both of them show their preference for books about animals. Difference in taste does exist between boys and girls. On the other hand, we also found that neither of them have preference for one type of book only. If we are to choose books for students for extensive reading, there should be a great variety on different topics.

Conclusion

A number of other things emerged as the project was being carried out, the most significant, perhaps, being the effect of variety, availability and freedom of choice on students' interest in reading. Many students completed a book, in one way or another, within the first hour and a half session. Many more completed two or more books at home in two or three days. The fact that a great majority borrowed more than one book (average 2.6) when they were only required to borrow one brings into question the perceived lack of interest in reading.

It raises the issue of how to make this sort of availability of a variety of books possible for more students, both inside and outside the classroom. One student asked one of us during the project: "Where did you get all these books?" and many of those she was indicating came from the Tuen Mun Public Library – a short walk from her school.

**Ranking of the 27 "4/5 – star" books by their
respective number of form B**

Rank	Title	Publisher	Fiction or Non-fiction	No. of Students who gave book 4/5 stars		
				Total	Male	Female
1	Inside the Personal Computer	Penguin	N	17	9	8
2	Fred	Jonathan Cape	F	13	2	11
3	Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs	Grafton	F	10	0	10
4	Sleeping Beauty	Ladybird	F	9	0	9
5	Growing Up ! Jack the puppy	Purnell	N	8	8	0
5	Stanley Bagshaw and the short-sighted trainer	Hamish Hamilton	F	8	6	2
5	Don't give up, Charlie Brown	Fawcett Crest	F	8	1	7

Rank	Title	Publisher	Fiction or Non-fiction	No. of Students who gave book 4/5 stars		
				Total	Male	Female
8	Footballer	Franklin Watts	N	7	7	0
8	Alice in Wonderland	Ladybird	F	7	0	7
8	Bambi	Ladybird	F	7	1	6
8	Cinderella & the Sisters	OUP	F	7	1	6
12	Dinosaurs	Methuen	N	6	6	0
12	The Three Little Pigs	Hamlyn	F	6	2	4
12	Star Wars	Longman	F	6	6	0
12	Fast Food	Longman	N	6	3	3
12	The Photograph	OUP	F	6	0	6
12	The Proper Bike	OUP	F	6	4	2
18	Book of Riddles	Collins	N	5	0	5
18	On the Trail of the Fox	JM Dent & Sons Ltd	N	5	4	1
18	The World of Sharks	Wayland	N	5	5	0
18	Baby Rabbits	Macmillan	N	5	4	1
18	Sharks in the Wild	Wayland	N	5	5	0
18	Dracula	Ladybird	F	5	3	2
18	Sleeping Beauty & Bluebeard	OUP	F	5	1	4
18	The Lion and the Mouse	OUP	F	5	1	4
18	William and the Dog	OUP	F	5	0	5
18	Pop Stars in Hong Kong	College Press	N	5	2	3
Total:				187	81	106
F – Fiction				Total:	16	
N – Non-fiction				Total:	11	
				% of Male:	43.3%	
				% of Female:	56.7%	

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "DEVELOPING LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT MATERIALS ON SONGS, POEMS AND VIDEOS FOR LOWER SECONDARY CLASSES"

Course No.: ES 911

Group 10

Participants: So Lai Wah

Christina So

Denise Jim

Bless Ho

Rosa Ho

Aman Cheung

Winnie Chiu

David Chiu

Aliana Wong

Connie Leung

Mabel Fan

Tutor: Anne O. L. Lo

Introduction

Most students in Hong Kong do not have a genuine purpose to use English. Therefore, the students' motivation to learn English is generally low. They seldom have the chance or need to interact with speakers of English in either the school or home environment. Besides, the examination syllabus dominates the homes and classroom of both teachers and students. In other words, what is not tested in the examination is seldom taught in the classroom.

As a consequence, most of the students and teachers view English simply as a requirement or qualification to be sought after. To achieve this, many teachers find themselves administering, checking and making tests of the four skills in the language classroom, while students drill and regurgitate chunks of language items for operational needs in examinations. Such a situation does not get them interested or involved in what they are doing. Another point is that it does not help to cultivate interpersonal relationships between the student and the teacher as its content is too impersonal. There is very little cultural context, aesthetic appeal, affective involvement or intellectual stimulation. It is not conducive to authentic communication.

On the other hand, we find that one of the domains of use, English as a medium of pleasure and entertainment, receives very little or no attention from coursebook writers, teachers and students. This domain emphasizes English as the language of one of the world's great literatures and as the medium of popular international culture through which learners can broaden "the range of aesthetic experience and entertainment available in Hong

Kong". It is complementary to other domains because it makes the learning of English meaningful and enjoyable.

However, the workload of Hong Kong Secondary School teachers is so heavy that most of them cannot spare much time and energy to design supplementary materials for their students. On the other hand, there is not sufficient supply of supplementary materials of this kind available for use. Thus, teachers simply make use of the "activities" or the drills in the coursebooks, which are boring and mechanical.

After considering the advantages of using supplementary materials in class to cater for the interests of the students, we decided to develop a set of Language Enrichment materials for lower secondary classes to be used to widen students' range of aesthetic experience and entertainment through English. These materials offer pleasurable experiences and enjoyment which can motivate students to persist in the difficult task of learning English. They can also provide the opportunity for language to be explored for its own sake, and to bring students into an encounter with language in its most complex and varied forms, presenting the thoughts, experiences and feelings of people outside the realm of the students' daily awareness. (CDC H.K., 1983) Hence, the language of students is enriched subconsciously and if they carry on reading English books and poems, listening to English songs, radio programmes and advertisements, watching English TV programmes, videos and dramas outside classrooms, their pursuit in English will be a continuing process throughout their lives. It is highly beneficial for them to balance their linguistic development in English with appreciation and enjoyment of the language. However, we can only design materials for songs, poems and videos since time and manpower are limited for preparation, and we believe that these three types of materials are of great interest to students.

Materials Design

We were only able to focus on songs, poems and videos which we think are more appealing and suitable for the lower secondary students we teach.

Music is a kind of art that has a universal appeal. Most young people enjoy songs. No matter what language a song is written in, it becomes internationally popular if it has a good melody and is easy to learn. English songs can stimulate the students' interest and liven up the class. Students may have few opportunities to speak English to other people outside the classroom but they can always sing a song when they are alone. Thus songs are a means of oral reinforcement outside of the classroom.

Poetry (if chosen carefully and used intelligently) can open up and enrich the content of language lessons, can provide useful opportunities for gaining experience of the world, and can contribute to the development of 'the whole person' as well as the 'learner of a language'. Poems, (as well as songs and short stories) can provide even elementary learners with opportunities to start developing the so-called 'advanced' skills.

Since every primary and secondary school in Hong Kong has already been equipped with television and video recorders for educational use and students enjoy watching TV and video at home, we, as teachers of English language should make use of the machines available to bring active and profitable learning activities to the classroom so that our students can enjoy the lessons and get the maximum benefit from them.

In this package, we have included both the teaching materials and activities i.e. songs, poems and videos. Our materials are graded for different levels of difficulty by asterisks. Materials with one asterisk are the easiest while those with three asterisks are the most difficult. Some activities are suggested for the materials so that teachers may use them whenever they think appropriate and necessary. Some of these materials have been tried out in our Experimental Teaching.

Experimental Teaching

Our group members tried out materials on songs, poems and videos in a Secondary 2 class of three different schools. Secondary 2 students were our target group because they are more accustomed to secondary school life than Secondary 1 students and are not yet under any public examination pressure. We chose schools which differed in the make-up of their students so that we could see how different types of students responded to the lessons. In fact, this was one of our objectives in our experimental teaching.

One of the schools we chose was Maryknoll Convent School which is an elite girls' school which attracts students of high academic ability and good command of English. The other schools are Kwun Tong Maryknoll College and T.W.G.Hs Wong Fut Nam College. The former is a boys' school where as the latter is a co-educational one. Mixed-code teaching is a common practice in both schools and the students of both schools are of average academic ability.

Our objectives in carrying out the experimental teaching in three different types of schools were as follows:—

- (a) to develop or design Language Enrichment materials to try out in class.
- (b) to find out what kinds of materials or activities for language enrichment would interest the students most, how much they would enjoy and benefit from them.
- (c) to find out how students of different schools with different academic ability would react to these activities.
- (d) to develop suitable materials for language enrichment lessons from the findings of our Experimental Teaching.

There are two hypotheses that we wanted to test in our experimental teaching.

- (a) Students enjoy language enrichment lessons.
- (b) Language enrichment lessons can be a useful supplement to normal English lessons.

In our experimental teaching, we allocated four lessons to try out some of the materials in each school. The first two lessons were for trying out materials on songs and poems whereas the other two lessons were for trying out materials on videos and for evaluation.

From the questionnaires and observation forms we collected, we found that the students' questionnaire responses and oral feedback really threw light on our choice of materials and presentation of the lessons. Most students said that they could learn something from these lessons and they would like to have this kind of lesson regularly in their English course. Through the preparation of Language Enrichment materials and Experimental Teaching, we found that the materials really were more interesting than those in the coursebooks and we also felt the excitement and enjoyment of our students during the lessons. Therefore, all our objectives and hypotheses were achieved and confirmed.

Implications for further research

For further research, it is advisable to carry out a survey on students' interest and preference for topics and types of activities before developing any materials. There must also be a longer period of time for experimental teaching (at least some months or a whole year) and within such a period, there should be regular Language Enrichment lessons e.g. once a week, or once every two weeks, so that the research workers can have sufficient time for developing and trying out materials as well as revising them. In addition, a longer period of time for observation allows the research workers to collect more reliable data and feedback for a more valid evaluation and conclusion. Language enrichment is a long term process research to find out whether language enrichment lessons can motivate students to read more, listen to songs, radio programmes and view films and TV programmes, etc. in English at their leisure. Research workers are advised to conduct a survey before and after the language enrichment programme to see the effectiveness of these lessons.

It is essential to involve in-service teachers (if possible, from more than one school) in the research team because teachers are in the front-line of classroom teaching and are most directly involved in the learning process. There is another advantage of having in-service teachers in the team – there is already a certain kind of rapport between the teachers and the students and so it is easier and more convenient for the team to arrange and carry out their experimental teaching in their own schools in which case students will not feel uneasy about having a strange teacher.

Moreover, as students have a wide range of interest, the research team can explore other materials for language enrichment lessons. Areas such as drama, role-play, extensive reading, language games (especially those of communicative value) are worth exploring.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "INTRODUCING A LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMME TO A S2 CLASS"

Course No.: ELS 902

Group 6

Participants: Louisa Cheung

Florence Lam

Gladys Wong

Hilda Leung

Arena Lee

Lydia Lo

Tutor: Madeleine Lau

Introduction

We propose here in this project the integration of a 'Language Arts Programme' with language teaching. By 'Language Art Programme', we mean the use of literature in the language classroom. Sources of literature can range from traditional literary works, such as poetry, fiction and drama, to modern short stories and simple poems, including those specially written for kids. The implementation of such a programme, we think, is the best way to provide English lessons with appropriate and enriching authentic written texts for learning.

Experimental Teaching

In our experimental teaching, the teaching of writing simple poems for one's enjoyment was tried out. A selection of poems of various styles and themes were collected and introduced to the students. Nursery rhymes were used to help illustrate the rhyme and rhythm of a poem. A worksheet for students to practise filling in the rhyming words was designed for use in the first lesson. The selected poems had been either recorded on cassette tapes or written on large pieces of paper for students to listen to or to read for appreciation. An ETV programme, "Likes and Dislikes" was shown to the class to motivate them to think of their own likes and dislikes; which was also the theme they would eventually write about in the rest of the experimental lessons. While listening to or reading the poems, students were asked to concentrate on the ideas and imagination other people were capable of expressing through poetry. The writing process involved group report, group writing, and individual writing. We hoped that during the process, students could pour out their ideas freely to help each other and learn from each other. In this way, we also hoped that they could become more and more confident in composing their own poems. In order to make the task more enjoyable and stimulating, students were asked to write their little poems on cards, book marks or book covers for a mini-display after school. The mini-display turned out to be a great success.

During the preparation stage, we did encounter a lot of problems due to the lack of experience in teaching the writing of poetry. Moreover, students' levels and interests which were unknown to us had caused another difficulty. We found that they were a bit passive and shy at first. Perhaps it was the result of meeting seven new teachers at one time. However, the students were in fact bright and creative. Not only could they understand teachers' instructions and answer questions in English, they had also shown great interest in writing poems which were creative, lively, and much better than our expectation.

Conclusion

On the whole, our experimental teaching is far from perfect. However, we have gained a lot during the whole process. The most precious experience we gained is the experience of trying out poetry with F.2 kids. The knowledge and experience of this project will help us a lot in future when we want to design and implement a similar 'Language Art Programme' in our own school.

ACTION RESEARCH SUMMARY: "SELF-ACCESS LEARNING"

Course No.: EUS 902

Group 1

Participants: *Chiu Kit Man, Emily*
Chung Mui May, May
Fung Lai Kam Hung, Esther
Hung Ping Yiu, Bernard
Lau Tin Wah, James
Leung Ping Ki, Steve
Leung Yuk Shuen, Helen
Ma Man Kwong, Joseph
Tang King Fong, Michelle
Tsoi Fung Lin, Clara

Tutors: *May M. T. Lee and K. Y. Wu*

Introduction

As our assignment in the ILE Refresher Course, we did an action research into the feasibility of implementing self-access learning in the Hong Kong context. After completing a review of the literature, we as a team of 10 teachers designed a package of self-access materials. Then we tried them out with four classes of senior forms students in St. Louis School between 6 December and 11 December 1990. The aim of our action research was to verify the following three hypotheses:

1. Self-access can cater for individual learner differences.
2. Self-access can help students learn and work independently.
3. Self-access is suitable and feasible in the Hong Kong context.

Reasons for our action research

We decided to carry out our action research on self-access learning because we believed that this mode of learning had two main advantages.

1. It enables different learners to choose materials that suit their own needs, interests, levels, and learning styles. In the traditional classroom where the learning materials and progress of all students are controlled by the teacher, individual differences are often ignored. The use of self-access materials, we believe, can help the teacher cope with the problem of mixed ability classes.
2. Self-access learning changes the role of the learner from one of dependence and passiveness in traditional classroom teaching to one of independence and activeness. It requires greater responsibility and more involvement from the learner, thus preparing him/her for later learning in life.

Our action research aims at providing some useful information to teachers on this relatively little explored area.

Organisation of our action research

A. *Review of the literature*

After a review of the literature and some discussion within the group, we arrived at the following definition of 'self-access learning'. This term to us means the learner works without the direct control of the teacher, and takes responsibility for his/her own learning.

B. *Designing self-access materials*

When preparing self-access materials for our action research, we concentrated on three areas: reading, speaking, and vocabulary. We chose these areas for the following reasons:

1. Reading is one of the most important skills students need to master since most textbooks are written in English.
2. Spoken English is important in verbal interactions but is often neglected by both teachers and students in the teacher-centred classroom.
3. Vocabulary is important in a good mastery of English but its teaching is often difficult and boring. More interesting ways of teaching lexical items need to be devised.

We designed a total of 258 activities, which were divided into three groups: reading, speaking and vocabulary. It should be noted that many of these activities involved not just one language skill but an integration of skills. All the activities were classified into three levels of difficulty: A, B and C meaning 'easy', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' respectively.

Most of the activities were designed in such a way that they were to be done in pairs or small groups. We believed that among other advantages, peer help could play an important part in self-access learning.

Apart from open-ended discussions and some role plays for which there were no definite answers, we prepared a suggested key for each activity so as to provide students with some immediate feedback after they have finished a task.

C. *Research methodology*

We decided to collect data by different means in our experimental teaching. The following forms were designed:

1. Questionnaire – This was filled in by individual students upon completion of an activity. Its aim was to find out whether the activities could be carried out without teacher help and whether they could help learners practise English.
2. Teacher Observation Form – This was completed by a teacher who observed the progress of an activity. This teacher should use the form to indicate whether the students could work independently and whether they participated actively.

3. Interview Form – This was used at the end of our experimental teaching when we would interview the students individually to collect feedback on self-access learning.

D. Experimental teaching

We tried out our materials successfully with two classes of F. 4 and two classes of F. 6 students in St. Louis School.

We found that most students enjoyed our activities and participated actively in class. Data from interviews revealed that over 90% of the students used more English during our teaching practice than in ordinary English lessons. In other words, self-access learning is a feasible and effective mode of learning.

Our suggestions

We would like to make a few suggestions on how self-access learning can be implemented successfully in Hong Kong secondary schools.

A. Preparation of materials

1. The production of self-access materials is an enormous task, and the cooperation of the whole English Department should be sought.
2. The school authorities should be convinced to lend their support in terms of money and other resources.
3. Students in senior forms can be asked to prepare self-access materials for their schoolmates.

B. Contents of materials

4. Self-access materials should not be too lengthy or complicated. If they are, students may not attempt them.
5. A placement test or questionnaire may be designed and used before students are introduced to self-access activities. This is to raise their awareness of their own levels, needs, and interests before they choose activities suitable to them.

C. Where to do self-access learning

6. We suggest that self-access materials should first be used in the classroom with some guidance from the teacher. After this, they may be used by students at home or as extra-curricular activities.

D. Preparing students for self-access work

7. Students should be familiar with the content and organisation of the materials if they are to work efficiently.
8. Students need to be prepared for the language skills and functions required for the activities.

E. Evaluation of students' progress

9. We suggest students keep their own progress by keeping their record sheets.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "TOWARDS IDENTIFYING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT QUESTION TYPES IN RELATION TO STUDENTS' IMMEDIATE VERBAL RESPONSE IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM"

Course No.: EUS 911

Group 9

***Participants: Chan Kam-wing, Philip
Chan Mee-lee, Mary
Wong Suet-ming, Vickie
Tsang Kwok-cheung
Lai Kam-choi, Olive
Au Shu-keung, Albert
Hui Mei-fung, Sammie
Tang Hing-chiu, Derek
Chew Lai-chun, Jane
Nora Chiu***

Tutor: Wendy Lam

Summary

The project's aim was to investigate the effectiveness of different question types in generating students' immediate responses and to look at how the different forms and functions of questions could affect these responses.

This area was chosen for investigation because we believe questioning has a role to play in stimulating students to speak up in English lessons, an area in which our students are generally very weak. We wanted to examine the relation between different question types and students' response and to make recommendations on the type of questions to ask and the manner of asking them to encourage our students to speak up effectively.

The very first step of our research was to think of how questions could be classified. We observed several videotaped lessons for reference. Then we read books on related studies borrowing some ideas from them and modifying some others. Finally, we came up with three different ways of analysing a question. First, we looked at what the question elicited and decided whether it was a factual, opinion, personal experience, explanation or reasoning question. Second, we looked at whether the question was a genuine or display one. Third, we looked at whether it was a 'wh-' question or 'yes-no' question. In short, questions were classified by their different forms and functions. In addition to these, a question may employ one of the three strategies, namely simplification, repetition and probing.

Having designed the typology of questions, the next logical step was to relate questions to responses. In our experimental teaching, we had four normal reading comprehension lessons with F.4 students in four different

schools and all questions asked in the lesson were analysed in relation to the kinds of responses they generated. Responses were subcategorized into either voluntary or nominated, elaborate or minimal, processed or text-bound. An elaborate answer is a more sophisticated, usually longer discourse whereas a minimal one refers to a word, phrase, clause or a very short sentence used to answer a question. Processed and text-bound answers distinguish whether a response is basically an extract from a text or is something linguistically processed or original.

Our research is subject to several limitations. The limited population and sample size of each type of question and response may militate against our findings. The uneven proportion of each type of question asked also affects the resulting findings. The situation in which students gave no response because of lack of nomination was not fully examined. Other constraints like setting and teacher's unfamiliarity with students also negatively affected student responses.

In spite of its drawbacks, our research revealed some interesting findings. Of all the responses, an overwhelming number of responses was of the minimal type. It was found that Opinion/Feeling, Personal data/experience, genuine, 'wh-' questions were more effective in generating responses in general while reasoning questions were the most generative in yielding elaborate responses. Regarding strategies, probing was the most effective in eliciting responses. It also revealed that genuine questions related to students' personal interests were more effective in generating voluntary responses. Another finding showed the importance of teacher's nomination in yielding responses because majority of the students have the habit of waiting for nomination.

A few suggestions were made to teachers to encourage more students to speak up in class through questioning. In order to stimulate students' response in class, it was recommended that the teacher asked more opinion, reasoning genuine and 'wh-' questions, though we should not overlook the importance of other types of questions. To encourage students to respond voluntarily to teacher's questions, the teacher should try to eradicate the student habit of waiting for nomination and to ask more genuine questions related to students' personal interests.

Our research provides a crude framework on how to study students' response in relation to questions types. Further research in the same area can take into account its weaknesses and improve on it. Besides, there are relevant areas beyond the scope of this research which are worth further investigation. For example, the interplay of different factors in contributing to the effectiveness of a question is an area worth examining.

The research fulfills its purpose of finding out what question types tend to generate more students' responses. Yet, how effective questioning is as a whole in encouraging students to talk, is an area left for further investigation.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "PUTTING THOUGHT INTO WORDS"

Course No.: EUS 902

Group 2

Participants: Lau, Yuen Ching Grace

Siu, Mee Yan Marian

Tsang, Fung Lan Phoebe

Yip, Shuk Yee Anna

Kwan, Pak Hung Victor

Yuen, Ka Chai Thomas

Ng, Leung Wai Yung Joanne

Kiang, Chau Yuen Ying Anna

Wong, Hui Fung Wa Nancy

Wong, Yip Hang Fong Jenny

Tutors: Mike Murphy and Chris Green

Why we chose the topic area

The present language situation in Hong Kong's education system does not help to develop students' oral competence. Most students are not good at generating, organizing and expressing their ideas verbally in English lessons. The assessment system in Hong Kong lays too much emphasis on written work. Therefore most teachers devote most of their time to developing students' reading and writing skills and neglect training their speaking skills.

Although English is essential in the commercial field and tertiary education, it is not used as a means of communication in social life in Hong Kong. The majority of the population is Chinese. Students use Cantonese, their mother tongue, to converse with relatives, friends and classmates in their daily communication. It is difficult for them to perceive the importance of speaking English, since they lack the opportunity to use English for genuine communication. Therefore we decided to carry out this project to stimulate students to think and express their ideas in words. It is hoped that students can then develop their ability to think and enhance their verbal fluency.

How our project might solve the problem

In order to build up the confidence of students in using English in communication, our project provides activities which stimulate thinking and talking. These activities provide students with ample opportunities expressing their ideas, opinions and attitudes.

Moreover students are willing to think when the activities are interesting and challenging enough. With the help of more able students acting as group tutors, students would be helped to organize their thinking better. As

students grow familiar with the process of thinking, less help will be required from the tutors or teacher. As a result there will be a lot of interaction and genuine communication among students themselves. They will become more confident when communicating in English, and their competence in speaking will be strengthened.

What activities were selected

1. *Viewing*

We selected a video, "Animal Magic" from "Television English 1". It was about a scientific experiment on animals which could generate electricity. We chose viewing as our first activity because the students may not be used to discussing and expressing ideas and opinions in English. This video would then be able to motivate and initiate them to discuss the mainly content-based questions arising from the video programme.

2. *P.M.I.*

Our second activity was based on De Bono's book "Cort Thinking". The P.M.I. system of thinking trains students to broaden their thinking process. For examples, instead of deciding whether they like or dislike an idea, they make an effort to find the good points (P=Plus), the bad points (M=Minus) and the interesting points (I=Interesting) about an idea.

3. *Puzzles*

We selected three problem-solving activities. In Activity 1, we took out a set of 11 pictures from Klippel's "KEEP THINKING". These pictures help students to describe, to discuss and finally arrange the pictures in a logical sequence. Activity 2 is a puzzle called "The 4 Babies" extracted from Ronvolucris's "CHALLENGE TO THINK". The puzzle-stories in Activity 3 were also taken from the same source. These activities stimulate students to express their opinions, to give reasons to support their ideas, to make deductions and to make hypothesis.

4. *Moral Issues*

This theme was also extracted from "Challenge To Think". Activity 1, "The Survivors", is a group discussion on the character students like best and the character they like least. Activity 2, "Laying Off", is a group discussion on which member of staff to lay off to improve the economic situation of a company. These activities lead students to indicate preferences according to moral judgement and to express opinions with reasons.

5. *Reasoning*

Two activities were designed to provide semi-authentic situations for practising thinking and verbal reasoning skills. In Activity 1, some attractive

advertisements were selected from newspapers and magazines. Brand names and pictures of the advertised products were removed and students were asked to guess the advertised products, giving reasons for their guess. In Activity 2, a board game called "Merry Christmas", students were required to explain why they wanted to send certain gifts to their friends/relatives. In these activities, students had to give opinions, make deductions, make hypotheses and of course, give reasons.

How we tried out our materials

We carried out our experimental teaching at Kwun Tong Maryknoll College for a total of ten periods over four days. The class S.6B was chosen and the 23 students were divided into 6 groups. On the first day, the activities were viewing (1 1/2 periods) and P.M.I. (1 1/2 periods). On the second day, the two periods were devoted to Puzzles (Problem Solving), the theme for the two periods on the third day was Discussion on Moral Issues. We concluded our experimental teaching with Reasoning activities in the three periods on the final day.

Main findings from the try-out

1. The students showed keen interest and took an active part in group discussion.
2. There must be appropriate motivation for every activity to arouse the interest of students.
3. A "Language Ladder" should be provided for every activity to help students express their ideas fluently.
4. The teacher should make spontaneous correction of verbal grammatical errors that occur frequently.
5. As students showed a keen interest in open presentation, group work should be followed by open presentation as often as possible.

Future implications

1. Our project depended on the joint effort of ten teachers. In a normal class with only one English teacher, these activities would be difficult to carry out without much modification and adaptation.
2. A more able student can take the tutor's place in each group to monitor the activities.
3. Before the activities, the teacher should give clear and detailed instructions if no tutor is available.
4. A larger classroom should be used if the class size is larger.
5. Without teachers acting as group judges, the group-based competition factor may have to be dispensed with.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY: "INTRODUCING A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TO WRITING TO A S4 CLASS IN A CHINESE MEDIUM SCHOOL"

Course No.: EUS 911

Group 8

Participants: CHU Sau-han

KWOK Wai-lan, Teresa

LI Suk-fong, Romaine

NG Siu-ping, Aries

PANG Mi-ha, Rita

TAM Wai-han, Amy

THUMB Yin-fun, Jenny

Tutor: Norman Bird

What is our action research project about?

This action research project is designed to try out a process writing approach in a Chinese middle school. Students are to develop their writing ability through a recursive process of generating, organising, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. The strategies used are brainstorming, fastwriting, sharing, drafting and peer-reading. The approach used is student-centred rather than teacher-centred.

The try-out was carried out in Pooi To Middle School. With the principal's approval, we carried out a survey of the students' writing habits and needs before we started our tryout. Two hundred and seventy two S4 students in Pooi To Middle School were invited to fill in a standard questionnaire. The data was then collected, processed and analysed. According to the findings of the survey, a set of process writing materials was compiled to cater for their needs. A scheme of work was written as guidelines for our tryout lessons. We then spent five days at the school to introduce the approach to a class of thirty-six S4 commercial students.

Reasons for choosing the process-oriented writing approach for investigation

From our experience, we notice that most secondary school students find writing English composition boring. Our traditional teaching approach may have been partly responsible for nurturing such negative views. Throughout the years, we have placed too much emphasis on the product rather than the process itself. Students are usually only given the topic of the composition with minimal explanations and a deadline. Then they are left in the cold to produce a product. What we teachers really focus on is our students' product writing rather than the procedures of writing. We pay very little attention to the creativity of our students.

To revamp the present dead-fish image of writing, we tried to explore new approaches of writing. One of the approaches we came up with is a process writing approach.

Process writing approach places its main emphasis on the process of writing. Its main features are brainstorming, fastwriting, sharing, drafting and peer-reading. It is student-centred rather than teacher-centred. Students are encouraged to create and re-create; to think and re-think.

Since its introduction into Hong Kong schools, it has been tried out and adopted by various teachers who teach in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools with English as the main teaching medium. After talking to some of the teachers, we find that the feedback is encouraging. Those teachers who have tried out this approach find it practical in the sense that students find writing more stimulating, interesting and effective than is otherwise the case. They express what they intend to express and generate new and innovative ideas.

Since it is practical in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools, we thought that it might also be effective in Chinese middle schools which differs mainly from the former in terms of the teaching medium. To test our hypothesis, we chose to implement a process writing approach in a well-established Chinese middle school—Pooi To Middle School.

What did the project aim to do?

Our aim was to investigate whether a process-oriented writing approach can be carried out in a Chinese medium school. With this in mind, we tried to encourage learners to develop confidence in using the target language, to develop the learners' ability to generate, select, organise, revise and edit ideas, to create a co-operative and sharing atmosphere through exchanging information and revising each other's work and finally to arouse learners' interest in writing.

Materials used

Extracts from newspapers were used, a content checklist, a language checklist, discussion guidelines and rewriting guidelines were also designed. These were introduced at various stages to help students draft, redraft and edit their writing.

How materials designed were tried out?

In order to familiarize students with the different stages of process writing, an introductory lesson was given. Through brainstorming, sharing, focussing, fastwriting and peer-reading, they were guided to produce a piece of writing in class. The topic is to introduce themselves to a new teacher.

They were then introduced to the main writing task—writing a letter of complaint. They were encouraged to explore the existing problems in their

school through brainstorming and to devise solutions to the problems. Wh-questions and sketches were used to help them generate ideas and think comprehensively. Extracts from newspapers were given as input to familiarize students with the format of a letter of complaint. After finishing their first drafts, students peerread each other's work and gave comments on the work. They concentrated only on the content at this stage. They then revised their own drafts.

Discussion guidelines, content checklist, language checklist and rewriting guidelines were supplemented to help students peer-read and revise their second drafts. Exercises on rearranging the sequence of a letter were provided to give them practice in the organisation of a letter of complaint.

Findings from the tryout

We observed that the students participated actively during brainstorming, sharing, fastwriting, discussion, peer-reading and drafting during our try-out period. Comments in the Student's Evaluation Form were positive. The students found the processes of writing useful, interesting and helpful. Writing was no longer boring for they helped each other to generate innovative ideas.

There were factors such as boredom, impatience, reluctance, time constraints, English language competency, cooperation, self-discipline and examination that hampered the smooth operation of this try-out.

Some students found revision of their drafts boring and were therefore reluctant to improve them. Both drafts were virtually identical. Impatience surfaced at times, even among the motivated students because all of them were used to writing one version of their composition. It is an intensive course, so they must do all the tasks within a time limit. Some weaker students found that they had too little time to do a lot. The better students found it stimulating because they were given more room for creativity but they felt they were wasting their precious time on waiting for the weaker students to complete their tasks. Some did not have enough words and expressions to communicate with others during discussions. The more competent students found themselves dominating processes like brainstorming and discussion. Though accuracy was not heavily emphasized it was still important. Weak students and good students alike were frustrated by their grammatical mistakes. A pair of weak students would certainly not be able to help each other in accuracy. They might even obstruct each other. Only the better students could offer help to the weaker ones especially during peer-reading and discussion. Cooperation among students within a group is essential because it is basically a student-help-each-other situation. Since the teachers were not able to monitor and supervise each group or pair at the same time, students' self-discipline was vital. Some resorted to jest instead of work, chat instead of discuss. They were unproductive. A few copied ideas from other classmates instead of generating their own. To the