ABSTRACT
        English is used as a second-language (EL2) medium of
instruction in a wide range of developing countries, notably in East
and South Asia, the Middle East, and many parts of Africa, often in
the face of a vigorous resurgence of indigenous and regional cultures
and languages. A discussion of this situation illustrates some of the
social, political, and educational factors that make the
implementation of EL2-medium educational policies problematic for
developing countries. The discussion then looks into the case of Hong
Kong, with its particular linguistic and socio-political situation,
and the implications of an EL2-medium education system for an
ostensibly egalitarian education policy. The discussion concludes by
examining recent attempts by language planners and educators in Hong
Kong, in both secondary and higher education, to make the education
system more responsive to the sociolinguistic and educational
requirements and realities in the territory while retaining a strong
EL2-medium profile. (Author/MSE)

EL2-MEDIUM EDUCATION IN A LARGELY MONOLINGUAL SOCIETY: THE CASE OF HONG KONG

Nigel Bruce
University of Hong Kong

* * * * *

English is used as a second-language (EL2) medium of instruction in a wide range of developing countries, notably in East and South Asia, the Middle East and many parts of Africa, and often in the face of a vigorous resurgence of indigenous and regional cultures and languages. This paper first discusses and illustrates some of the social, political and educational factors which make the implementation of such "EL2"-medium educational policies so problematic for developing countries. It then looks into the case of Hong Kong, with its peculiar linguistic and socio-political situation, and the implications of an EL2-medium education system for an ostensibly egalitarian education policy. The paper concludes by examining recent attempts by language planners and educationists in Hong Kong, at both secondary and tertiary levels, to make the education system more responsive to the sociolinguistic and educational requirements and realities in the territory, while still retaining a strong EL2-medium profile.

* * * * *

I Introduction

In Hong Kong, EL2-medium education has long been a burning issue, inflaming passions among parents, teachers, schoolchildren, educationists and politicians. The issue is often reduced to questions like: "How necessary is EL2-medium education in Hong Kong?" and "Does it fit the real needs of society and of the vast majority of the young people of Hong Kong?". But this is not a problem confined to Hong Kong. Throughout the developing world, particularly in the Middle and Far East and in many parts of Africa, people have been asking: "How necessary is ("foreign") L2-medium education in the developing world, and how well does it fit that world's needs?", or simply: "Why not L1-medium education ?" and "How do these "foreign" languages come to assume such influence in the developing world ?"

The so-called "developing" world is generally pursuing that development in the wake or shadow of some form of colonial influence, and often seeking to emulate that power, or at least its economic and technological infrastructure. A feature of the ebb and flow of tribal fortunes has been the imposition of the languages of invading 'outgroups' and those languages' assumption of a role of prestige and pre-eminence; mastery of such languages typically becomes a pre-requisite to social, economic and political advancement. This has continued to be the case even after nominal independence and the "casting off of the yoke", as power on independence was generally passed on to an elite inculcated with the values of the departing colonial culture.

Language in Society

Widdowson (1982) has drawn an interesting portrayal of the role of language in society. He depicts a Janusian dichotomy of forces at work in human nature: an outward-looking, *cooperative* imperative which accounts for what he calls man's "questing" instinct, and an inward-looking *territorial* imperative, which accounts for man's "homing" instinct. The linguistic implications are that the cooperative imperative shapes language to enable reciprocal access between ingroup and outgroup territories, while the territorial imperative tends to shape language to reinforce solidarity *within* a community, this latter "homing" aspect is directed *against* outgroup cooperation. Examples of ingroup consolidation are, at an intranational level, dialects and, intracommunally, slang, the latter more expressly designed to exclude, or

9

2

at least preclude mutual comprehension with and by, "strangers" - in the shape of threatening authority, etc.. In this way, Widdowson argues, language comes not only to convey a communal reality or culture but also to represent it, i.e. not only communicating what you mean, but also what it means to be a member of your group: the mere fact of its use declares allegiances and antipathies and the limits of cooperation

2. A Bilingual Society

Language Attitudes in Hong Kong

The implications of the above scenario for this study are apparent if one looks at the many sociolinguistic studies on language attitude and performance conducted in Hong Kong over the past 15 years. Even with a predominantly EL2-medium education system and the strong profile English has in Hong Kong as the prestige language of government, the level of English here is surprisingly low, even among the university elite. Studies done at Chinese University (Fu 1975) and in the secondary schools (e.g. So 1984) suggest that these problems have less to do with curricula, classroom methodology or the quality of teaching, and more to do with *ethnolinguistic attitudes* and the perceived roles and values of the ingroup and outgroup communities and their languages. In Hong Kong, the estimated 95% Cantonese-L1 population[1] have what Giles & Johnson (1987: 72) term a "positive" ethnolinguistic identity, in that they tend to:

1. maintain their ethnolinguistic identity
2. diverge from outgroup speakers
3. resist acquiring fluency in English (the "outgroup" language)
4. keenly maintain use of their ethnic language within the family and close social context

Some studies (Pierson 1987. Pierson *et al* 1987) have shown that students in Hong Kong have ambivalent attitudes to English. whose status as the language of government and good jobs engenders in them a sense of inferiority. Set against this inferiority is pride in what are perceived as a great Chinese civilisation and an internationally prestigious language. Wong (1984) describes the resulting tension and conflict when the foreign language, English. is foisted onto the Chinese child in the majority of Hong Kong's secondary schools.
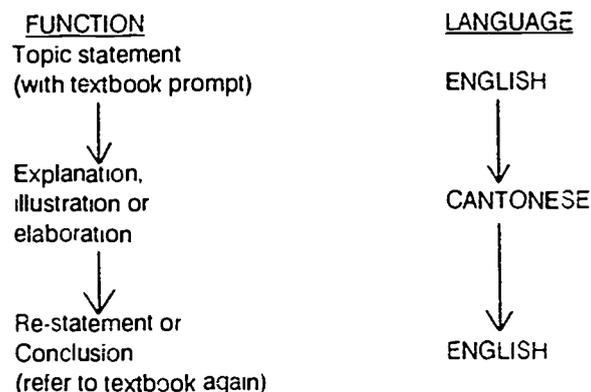
Wong identified a complex ethnolinguistic code developed by students at Hong Kong University In response to the one explicit rule that students make formal responses to the teacher in English, implicit rules we.e developed: in individual student-teacher interaction the student should hesitate in response and make no display of verbal prowess or enthusiasm when using English; in peer interaction, any use of English would be seen as an affectation of superiority. Cheung (1984) suggests that English has become more a symbol of power than a means of communication.

L1 and L2 in Hong Kong: Roles and Uses

Wang (1988) throws an interesting slant on this problem, and brings this paper round to some implications for language planning and teaching, and the question of what English we should be teaching in an EL2-medium system and with what objectives. Wang distinguishes the roles of Cantonese and Modern Standard (written) Chinese (MSC) as those of *mother tongue and father language*", the one soft, familiar and reassuring, the other stern, harsh and forbidding. Having compared the complementary spoken and written native language codes with the respective, and equally complementary, parental roles in the child's home, Wang then makes the analogy between English and MSC: both are formal codes taught for purposes only dimly perceived by the schoolchild, and their constant assessment by examination makes them all the more forbidding

The school "community" seems to have long since arrived at an unofficial compromise, and there is a high incidence of code-switching, between English and Cantonese, in most of the Anglo-Chinese secondary schools nowadays (in Hong Kong now only around 10% of secondary schools are Chinese medium). Johnson et al (1985) showed that on average there was actually more Cantonese spoken than English, and that, beyond the terminological level, the switching tended to occur according to function shift. For example, in the expository mode predominating in subject teaching, the most common pattern was as shown in Figure 1

Figure 1. Patterns of code-switching in the Hong Kong classroom (after Johnson et al, 1985)

FUNCTION	LANGUAGE
Topic statement (with textbook prompt)	ENGLISH
↓	↓
Explanation, illustration or elaboration	CANTONESE
↓	↓
Re-statement or Conclusion (refer to textbook again)	ENGLISH

Johnson et al and also Lin (1988) report on the positive humanistic role of this code-switching, and its educational necessity when even with code-switching at least 30% of the schoolchildren have difficulty following their EL2-medium curriculum. Kwo (1987) suggests that these students are often so poor in English that they switch off when the teacher switches to English

This brings us to the question "Why not switch completely to Cantonese-medium instruction ?
This argument has recently been critically explored by So (1988) with reference to the distinction Cummins (1979) makes between "basic interpersonal communication skills"(BICS) and the "cognitive-academic langauge proficiency"(CALP) functions of language. So points out that the Cantonese used to perform CALP functions "in the legislative council, in lower courts, as well as the medium of formal discourse in administration, education, academia and business" is "high" Cantonese which, since most local people's mother tongue is low Cantonese, is rarely used in ordinary, non-formal social discourse This indicates a CALP/BICS-type diglossic distribution of high and low Cantonese, and leaves us with the implication that Cantonese children will experience a disjunction between home and school (and subsequent professional) linguistic environments, whether the school medium is English or Chinese, and regardless of whether Putonghua enters the picture.

L1 and L2: "Functional Complementarity"?

Instead, then, of considering the L1 and L2 in terms of dichotomies, it might be more profitable to set them within a framework of co-habitation and interdependence Prabhu (1987) points to a "functional complementarity" of the L1 and L2 in communities such as Hong Kong, where the ingroup dialect or regional language cedes certain communicative domains to the L2 somewhere along the BICS-CALP spectrum. As we have seen, even within these domains there is likely to be code-switching according to function shift or lexical economy, so we can perhaps characterise the L1-L2 relationship as language codes complementing each other along a number of sociological dimensions Figure 2 offers a speculative range of possible dimensions influencing language use and choice

Figure 2: Factors influencing L1 or L2 choice in the diglossic context of Hong Kong

L1	L2
CANTONESE	MOD. STANDARD CHINESE
(Low ? So (1988)	High Cantonese?)
	ENGLISH
Spoken	Written
Mother Tongue	Father Language
(Dialect)	(Standard)
informal	formal
BICS	CALP
warm, friendly	cold, forbidding
pleasure	duty
ingroup-oriented	outgroup-oriented
territorial	cooperative
integrative	instrumental
social domains	professional domains
restricted (ideational)	elaborate
elaborate (interpersonal)	restricted

3. EL2-Medium Education

L2-medium and the Question of Educational Deficit

When peoples and their languages come into contact, then, the sociological imperatives promoting accommodation or resistance engender ambivalent attitudes not only to the outgroup L2, but also to the L1 itself. But in addition to the evidence of *affective* detriment, we are faced with evidence of the possibility that schoolchildren in an FL-medium educational programme risk significant *cognitive* deficit

Little is known about the extent and influence of language transfer, and measuring cognitive deficit in isolation from affective/attitudinal factors has proved extremely problematic. Lambert (1977) attempted to characterise the relationship between an L1 and L2 in a bilingual education system in terms of 'additive' and 'subtractive' bilingualism. It is the 'vitality' of the languages concerned, & the perceived prestige of the L2 in relation to the L1, which help determine whether a programme has 'subtractive' effects on the L1, producing a situation in which children leave the system with less than native-like competence in both the L2 and their L1, and with a measurable degree of educational deficit. Lambert concluded that there was probably a 'threshold' of adequate fluency in both L1 and L2 below which educational deficit from L2-medium education was likely to occur.

There is considerable research indicating that bilingual fluency, perhaps through what Lambert & Tucker (1972) call 'incipient contrastive linguistics', has positive educational effects, including raised metalinguistic awareness - how the language operates in semantic coding and sensitivity to verbal interpersonal feedback cues - and superior verbal and non-verbal ability (Cummins & Gulutsan, 1974) Cummins & Swain (1986) quote Vygotsky's (1962. 110) suggestion that the ability to express the same thought ii different languages enables a child to " see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, which leads to awareness of his linguistic operations". There is increasing support for the theory (e.g. Barik & Swain, 1976) that the attainment of high levels of L2 skills is associated with greater cognitive growth. However, Lambert points out that most of the findings of this type are drawn from 'additive' bilingual programmes, where the L1 is dominant, prestigious and under no threat from any L2, and where the students have attained a CALP-type competence in both L1 and L2. In the real world, if the L2 is dominant in these terms, success stories for L1 minorities are likely to conceal compensatory factors Zepp (1988), for example, offers the speculation

that one of the reasons for tne high success of many Chinese children in the American education system is their parent's insistence that they attend Chinese school in the evening after their English medium instruction has ended. At the other end of the scale are the reports of subtractive bilingualism in Hispanic communities in the U.S. where verbal IQ scores were 14 points below performance IQ, and "concrete intelligence,...measured in performance tests, is observed to have partially replaced abstract intelligence as the dominant coping strategy to handle the academic linguistic shortcomings" (Ramirez, 1987: 97)

Contextual comparability, then, is critical, particularly on the basic issue of whether the L2 in question is the L1 of an indigenous majority, the L1 of an indigenous or immigrant minority or, more relevant to the context of the developing world, is a "anguage of wider use'. Such languages tend to be adopted either as a 'neutral' solution in a multilingual society, or as a medium of education more likely to hasten a nation's integration into the international technological and educational community - though Hong Kong's case reflects more individualistic aspirations, founded on the self-help philosophy for which the Territory is noted. There is a danger, then, that language planners in developing countries will succumb to 'confirmation bias' when surveying the literature for examples of successful bilingual programmes Particular care should be taken in drawing any conclusions from the many, often heavily-funded, studies of language programmes for indigenous or immigrant minorities, notably in Wales, USA & Australia. (See also van Lier, 1988. 5-9). And while the Canadian French immersion programmes, for children of a dominant anglophone majority, are cited extensively for their relevance to the Hong Kong situation, in fact they offer only superficial parallels While the methodology may be worth examining for its generalisability to many other bilingual contexts, its 'nation-building' dimension has little relevance for a largely monolingual territory like Hong Kong[2], in which the L2 educational medium (English) is, for the reasons given above, the educational medium for 90% of the secondary school population

More relevant studies concern those countries in the Third World - the majority - who are experiencing a post-colonial search for ethnolinguistic identity (see Zepp, 1989 162). Even here, many countries - Singapore, India, Nigeria - have a multilingual profile, and hence an education system which where the L2 - usually English or French - becomes a neutral lingua franca, generally for the quite understandable political reason of preserving inter-ethnic harmony Nevertheless, these are contexts where the L2 is a language of wider use but is the vernacular of at most a small minority of the population Hong Kong has a monolingual profile, in which the L1 vernacular, Cantonese, has been popularly rejected as an educational medium because it does not open the same doors to status, security and wealth The following study is illustrative of this kind of context.

The Inuit language of the Inuit Eskimos in the Canadian context was regarded by language planners in much the same way as the vernacular language in a colony of one of the declining empires Mackay (1988), after 2 years spent working with the Inuit Eskimos of north-eastern Canada, reports educational deficit as a result of a Canada-wide curriculum being imposed on a tribe sharing few of the cultural or economic assumptions or aspirations which the (English-medium) curriculum was based on and designed to meet. The subject teachers ended up settling for a tolerable learning environment as their prime objective; Mackay characterises this compromise as the institution of a "hygiene rule", the teachers simplifying activities and materials so as to minimise embarassment in the classroom This reduction of work to a cognitively undemanding level led to students becoming trapped in a deprived learning environment where they never learned the necessary cognitive skills. Mackay illustrates the "reductionist" process in Figure 3 overleaf.

The 'hygienic' approach cannot mask the subtractive nature of this type of bilingual education programme, and it is quite possible that the "tail" in Hong Kong's Anglo-Chinese schools are sharing the Inuktitut experience Even if the motivation is there we have to consider the possibility of cognitive deficit arising from a policy of avoiding the L1 as principal medium of instruction. Herb Clark states the problem thus·

13

6

Figure 3: The "hygiene rule": reducing cognitive demands & embarrassment in the classroom
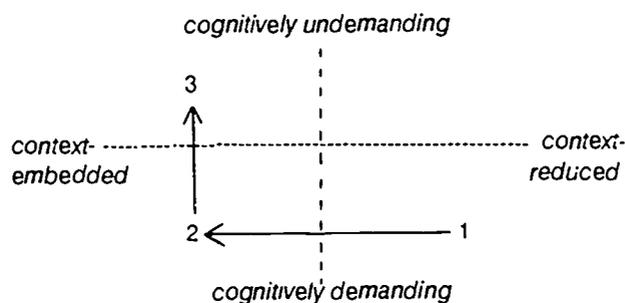
(Key: 1 - 3: stages in the reduction process)

Many reasoning problems are not due to cognitive processes specific to these problems, but to the very language in which the problems are stated.   (Clark, 1977:112-3).

The hazards of running an L2-medium programme which neglects L1 development are suggested in Zepp's quote from Lemon (1981):

material learned in an L2 may not be directly available in the same form when the individual is forced to operate in his L1, thus further reducing the relevance of the knowledge he has acquired (in) his formal education. (Zepp, 1988)

Kvan goes as far as to suggest, of the switch to L2-medium education in lower secondary, that

this reduction of possibilities for expression would cause a neurosis fully as severe as the one we find in children backward in reading and writing. (Kvan, 1969: 334)

Language planners are increasingly questioning the validity of choosing a 'language of wider use' over a national language of however limited a regional or international currency. Unfortunately, there is little consonance between political and ethnolinguistic boundaries in the developing world. And given the plurality of languages in many such societies, one can see why language planners are reluctant to promote the principle of vernacular education for all. Nonetheless, one should caution against sacrificing educational principle on the 'altar' of economic and political expediency. There are many who believe that it is vernacular and not 'prestige L2' education which will bring the mass of children in the developing world to a higher level of intellectual attainment. In a 1974 study of Ghanaian schoolchildren studying science, Collison reported that the children functioned at a higher conceptual level in their vernacular than in English, and offered the tentative conclusion that education exclusively in a foreign language denies a sizeable proportion of schoolchildren appropriate conceptual experience[3]. His recommendation was that local languages can and should replace the colonial language; he quotes Pattison's (1962) suggestion that, given time, any language becomes able to cope with the main communicative needs of its community Pattison cites the example of English itself, which only in 1362 replaced French as the language of Parliament and the law courts, and not until 1700 was accepted as a fitting medium for the proceedings of the Royal Society, then (interestingly) preoccupied with the development of an English style suitable for scientific discourse.

14

4. EL2-Medium Education in Hong Kong

In the light of the above sociolinguistic and educational discussion of bilingualism, we turn to the problems of education in Hong Kong, first at the secondary level, and then at the tertiary level. As we have noted, schools in Hong Kong are largely (90%) English-medium. This is mainly due to the pressure of parents, who perceive that an English-medium education will guarantee a more lucrative and secure future for their children. Such a high demand for a language which enjoys minimal social currency inevitably leads to problems. The desire for an English-medium education in Hong Kong has for some time outstripped the ability of so many of the territory's children to obtain a satisfactory education in English. The education system is similarly unable to furnish the schools with the requisite number of teachers able to teach their subjects wholly and effectively in that medium. The result, as we have also noted, is a *modus vivendi* in the classroom whereby most children receive a 'mixed code' education and yet are still expected to pass English-medium A-level exams to enter English-medium tertiary education.

Over the last 3 decades, there has been a series of education commission reports and, most recently, a report on the role of language in education in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Government, 1989). With the prospect looming of reintegration into China, the structure of L2-medium education is once again being reviewed. The following changes have taken, or are scheduled to take place:

a) *1987*: introduction of a new, revised Use of English exam, oriented more to CALP-type skills
b) *1989*: the introduction of AS levels, an attempt to broaden the 6th form curriculum, the better to develop students' cognitive and communicative skills
c) *1992*: the planned introduction of Chinese-medium A-levels, grades to be indistinguishable from their English-medium equivalent, the Use of English grade will suffice as the sole measure of linguistic aptitude for tertiary education
d) *1995*: over the 5 years 1990-95, Hong Kong's tertiary education intake is currently scheduled to double from 7,500 to 15,000.

These last proposed changes, if implemented, will certainly have major implications for tertiary education in Hong Kong, both in terms of the quality of education, and in the level of English competence of the average entrant. It is in the light of such a policy that one must interpret the current Education Department proposal (*op. cit.*) to stream schools into L1 (Cantonese) and L2 (English)-medium bands. The reasons for this move are clear, and in line with Collison's findings elsewhere: a significant number of schoolchildren are being put through a severely 'subtractive' bilingual education system, in which they are failing to gain a proper education (see also Gibbons, 1989). Estimates vary as to the proportion of pupils sufficiently disadvantaged to require instruction in their L1 all the way up to A-level. The clear preference of Hong Kong parents for EL2-medium secondary education shows no sign of changing in the run-up to reunification with China. Just recently (1990), one secondary school was forced by parental and teacher pressure to abandon its L1-medium status only 3 years after its principal stood out for the principle of mother-tongue education. That school had been academically successful; once ambitious parents began taking their children elsewhere, the school's academic profile suffered, and teacher and parent pressure has now resulted in the school having to return to English-medium instruction. The principal remains unrepentant but realistic; parents are less concerned with the substance of 'an education' than with the currency a good diploma or degree offers. There seems to be little sympathy in Hong Kong for a policy of helping the less fortunate at the expense of ensuring the opportunity to attain the best possible outcome for one's own children.

The attraction of an English-medium secondary school education is, as has been said, partly that it will ensure a more lucrative future in the form of better jobs (in Hong Kong or abroad) It will also offer a stronger profile in any application to emigrate and, most importantly, it will open the door to higher education. These are powerful reasons for a public insisting, against the judgement of many educationists, on an English-medium education system. Faced with this reality, educationists are then faced with the task of seeking a language planning compromise whereby educational and popular objectives can both be met,

specifically, they have become concerned with the questions of what *kind* of English should be taught in an EL2-medium system, and *when* and *how* it might be most beneficially phased in to the curriculum

What English for What Purposes ?

It seems clear that English has a negligible social role to play in everyday Hong Kong life; it only has communicative currency in the technological, academic and, above all, the international commercial sectors. Johnson (1988) proposes teaching a form of "International English" (IE) designed for people and nations who do not use English as a community or national language. The role model for IE learners would be bilinguals within the learner's own culture and not members of some other, alien culture.

This thesis is a strong version of an increasingly popular view that in a monolingual society like Hong Kong with an L1 of high vitality but fragile identity in the wider socio-political context, the most acceptable and pragmatic policy would be a utilitarian one, focusing on CALP rather than BIC skills, which are the province of the mother tongue. This view holds that the overt teaching of "BICS English" is likely to meet with a negative ethnolinguistic reaction, while the less culturally-bound CALP (English) language will not meet that problem. By introducing CALP-style English to the schoolchild when (s)he can perceive its instrumental benefit, the "medicinal" quality of the dose (of the "father language") will provoke less resentment in the pupils and less hostility from advocates of mother-tongue education. The new Use of English exam certainly works on that premise, with its emphasis on the language of study and the workplace.

EL2- Medium in Hong Kong's Secondary Schools

This brings us to the second question of *when* and *how* to phase in English-medium instruction In both 1963 (after the Marsh Sampson Education Commission Report) and 1973 (Education Green Paper), the government strongly advocated a change to L1-medium instruction in the first 3 years of secondary education, but had to back down in the face of public opposition (Gibbons, 1989: 126-7) More recently, there has been further evidence of the goverment's desire to ensure a better education for the linguistically less versatile in the Education Department's (1989) proposal to 'stream' schools into English and Chinese-medium streams. While this proposal is intended to offer a choice of medium in a wider range of schools, it indicates a lack of sensitivity to the sociological implications of dividing schools into prestige- and non-prestige-medium streams, and of assigning children definitively to these streams from the outset of secondary school. The proposed 'bridging' year of intensive English study after sitting Chinese-medium A-levels will set back a child's education by a full year, while the success of such a scheme remains to be tested. Once again, one has to be careful in seeking precedents which are truly relevant and comparable.

An option which seems to have been rejected, yet which might have been seen as allowing families and their children greater flexibility and responsibility in determining their goals and aspirations, is to phase in English-medium subjects in a flexible programme, according not only to criteria of cognitive and institutional requirements, but also to the children's tolerance thresholds and their perceptions of its relevance. One model which attempts to ensure that L1 and L2 develop in harmony, and according to the above principles, is based on the 'concurrent' bilingual education policy proposed by Daniel So (1987, 1988), which abandons the notion of 'sequential monolingual tracking', advocating instead a more flexible 'a la carte' menu which starts offering L2-medium subjects as early as primary school[4]. The scheme outlined overleaf (Figure 4) is based on his suggestions, though it does not advocate L2-*medium* instruction before secondary school.

In this model, one subject is taught in the medium of English from Year 2 of secondary, and a range of options is introduced at age 14 according to desired future specialisation. This would encourage the present trend for large schools to offer parallel English and Chinese-medium classes in a number of subjects, but would add the vital element of pupil *choice*. The existence for both streams of a mandatory subject taught in the medium of English would ensure an emphasis on English not only as a subject but as

a learning *medium*, and on building CALP-type skills. As an instrumentally-transparent medium of access to information, English CALP skills would be *used* rather than simply deductively learned. The option to increase the number of English-medium subjects from Form 4 might be more motivating to the child, since such subjects would be *selected* by that child for his or her own instrumental purposes

Figure 4: A model for individualised switching to EL2-medium instruction
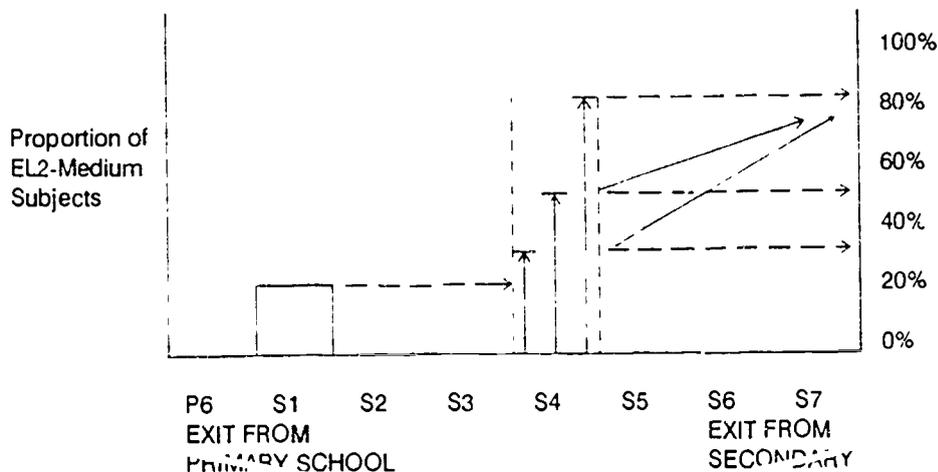
Let us now consider two areas of objection to this kind of proposal pedagogical and logistic Pedagogically, serious reservations are sometimes expressed over the idea that sufficient 'mastery' of an academic subject can be obtained when switching medium at age 14 or 15. The territory's A-level attainment criteria tend to be framed in terms of tertiary entrance requirements, resulting in a monolithic examination system which could not accommodate such changes and which would militate against Chinese-medium pupils gaining tertiary entrance results in such a competitive system as Hong Kong's (even though the tertiary population is to be doubled over the next 5 years). On the other hand, the proposal described above would meet an important Hong Kong imperative of providing freedom of opportunity - however tough the competition - and would also fit the 'interdependence principle' proposed by Cummins (1979. 23): "the level of L2 competence that a bilingual child attains is partially a function of the type of competence the child has developed in L1 at the time when extensive exposure to L2 begins" This is a principle gaining in support in bilingual education circles, and supported by studies which show not only that it is possible to "promote additive bilingualism among minority children who are academically at risk", but that such programmes can successfully develop academic skills "despite the fact that students receive less exposure to English than in monolingual English programmes" (Cummins & Swain, 1986, 86 87).

Logistically, it is sometimes argued that the school system could not cope with the unpredictability of demand that would result from passing such control into the hands of the 'consumer'. The idea that the pooling of resources by schools in each area (by dividing up areas of specialisation & so economising on staff resources) could provide the necessary flexibility has been met by a sceptical response: schools in Hong Kong are in the business of competing rather than collaborating with each other, and each has its own religious, educational or socio-economic profile which sets it apart from its neighbours Yet it remains debatable whether there are indeed any actual *logistical* impediments to moving children around between

2 c. 3 schools, or to schools offering courses to children from neighbouring schools. Certainly, there are no such problems after hours when the serious business gets under way of hosting evening and weekend supplementary crammer courses for all comers.

5. EL2-Medium: Implications for tertiary education

Teaching and Learning at University

While Hong Kong secondary school students may have linguistic problems, as evidenced by their Use of English grades, sufficient numbers to fill the available tertiary places do nevertheless obtain the necessary pass grades in the English-medium A-levels. They do this despite their linguistic shortcomings, but while one can applaud their resourcefulness, one cannot applaud the type of strategies the system is content to let them develop to a high art. Memorisation and the learning of lists of facts are the strategies which the students know pay off, the system currently offers little incentive to students to develop the skills of argumentation, analysis, application and transfer of knowledge, and creative and individual thought and speculation. The result of this severely biased intellectual development is that students enter tertiary education with educational problems which, while they have largely arisen from an accommodation to an EL2-medium system, by now manifest themselves in much more diverse ways.

In brief, the incoming students' shortcomings can be paraphrased as 'rhetorical and rational' in nature - the students arrive with neither the linguistic nor argumentative, analytical or synthetic abilities necessary to take full advantage of a university education[5]. Evidence for this phenomenon is largely anecdotal or from questionnaire feedback, university staff have, for example, found the same verbatim passage repeated in dozens of exam scripts, stretching relevance to the question asked to the extreme Biggs (1989: 434-5) does caution against labelling Hong Kong learners as having a purely 'surface-achieving' approach to their education, but a later study (Gow, 1989), using the same research instrument, showed an *increase* in this surface approach to study as students progressed through 3 years of polytechnic study. Findings such as these only reinforce the experience of tertiary language trainers in Hong Kong, who feel that the point has been reached when EL2-medium tertiary institutions, particularly the universities, need to re-examine the assumptions they make about the aptitudes and abilities of incoming students, and about what their own fundamental educational objectives and curricular demands should be.

Even today, teaching at most universities worldwide is education by example and inspiration. It is essentially non-interventionist and laissez-faire, prescriptive only in the syllabus imposed and the standards and criteria of attainment set - though even these often remain opaque to students. The process is ruthlessly selective and causes much heartache among students - and that is a description of an *L1* University; it is not difficult to imagine the results of the emulation of this kind of ethos and operational structure in an EL2-system, such as we see in Hong Kong Exacerbating the problem is the fact that universities pay only lip service to the importance of good teaching, promotion is invariably decided on the basis of publications and proven scholarship.

The low status of teaching competence has institutional ramifications. Academic staff are not expected to have any educational training, are rarely offered any, and certainly have no material incentive to acquire any. They are expected to be able to teach, but only in the sense of having the minimal competence necessary to transmit the knowledge that they acquired by the same process. More understandably, but crucially negligent in the EL2-medium context, academic staff receive not even rudimentary training in language acquisition or teaching. As a result, language trainers are too often resigned to expecting a lack of understanding of the problems the student body faces and hence a lack of cooperation.

The message needs to be put across clearly that the business of the language-training arm of EL2-medium tertiary institutions like HKU lies increasingly in the teaching of study skills, and in task-orientation,

11

self-directed learning and subject-study relevance. The Language Centres and English Departments of such institutions need *greater* cooperation from subject discipline teachers than ever Unfortunately, they are often perceived to be encroaching on subject departments' academic domains and, at the internal political level, the requests they make for resources to continue and improve their work are often seen as extravagant.

The crucial problem would seem to lie in academic perceptions of the educational process and the conflation of *learning* with *teaching* A number of academic staff are becoming aware of a language problem, but the response of the majority seems to be to retreat further into the transmission approach, following a textbook closely and, perhaps operating Mackay's 'hygiene rule', simplifyi .j thei. lecture presentation and lowering their expectations of student performance. When assessing student assignments, staff have confessed to sifting out the relevant information rather atomistically, and to glossing over inadequacies of clarity, organisation and the relationship of ideas. The "transmission" format is not only used in the lecture halls, but also in the "tutorials", often of 20 to 30 students. It is small wonder that the language of tutorials has increasingly become the "friendly" mother tongue, with the students' c ? ploy to divert the proceedings to a more informal explanatory mode being to resort to Cantonese

Recommendations and Prospects

At Hong Kong University, there are currently (1990) reassuring signs that this type of situation is to be remedied. The University first made public in 1988 its diagnosis that there was a 'lack of fit' between school and university, and its detailed prescription for an additional 'Foundation' year to remedy many of the problems described above (Hong Kong University, 1988). After much debate, this proposal was vetoed by the Government as too costly Since then, the University has prepared more economical proposals for *foundation studies* - including the development of critical think ng skills, *broadening* courses to stretch students' intellectual horizons, and an *induction* programme for new students, to ensure that they receive an orientation to the essence of a university education. A heartening aspect of these proposals is that it is the academic staff themselves who have been identified as responsible for the gestation and teaching of each of these programmes. It is this type of response which can make fullest use of an institution's applied linguistic expertise to help remove both linguistic and institutional obstructions to communicative and intellectual development.

One dimension of EL2-medium academic communications programmes which has significance for the rest of the university curriculum is that of providing the opportunity for student-centred activity and behavioural rei .forcement of new messages - whether principles, theories or problems Activities of this kind, as Biggs and Telfer (1987) say, help "link the content being learned with existing knowledge, provide cross-links between different methods of encoding the material and help students become 'metacognitive' or aware of their own learning processes"

If such ideas and initiatives are to bear fruit, EL2-medium institutions need to become more aware of their distinctive identity, and of the importance of ensuring that sufficient emphasis is placed on the language medium so that it might be most efficiently harnessed to transmit the academic 'message' and to develop those intellectual - analytical, interpretive and argumentative - skills which are the fundamental objectives of a university education. Otherwise we will end up with that common travesty of an L2-medium system, in which the cart, the 'message', is put before the horse, the 'medium'; the students end up pushing both horse and cart up the curricular hill, with Faculty sitting atop urging greater effort While the analogy may also be overworked, the message is clear we need to put the horse back in harness, give it proper nutrition, and further lighten the load - by getting off the cart, and down to the perspective of the learner. If L2-medium education fails to adopt a realistic and humanistic approach along these lines, it should forfeit any right to precedence over L1 education

19

NOTES

1 In fact, the picture is a complex one. In Bolton and Luke's survey (publ. 1990) of the Chinese 'land' population (i e. excluding boat & floating-village dwellers), only 76.45% of respondents gave standard Cantonese as their mother tongue. The other Chinese languages given as L1 were Chiu Chow (2.90%), Mandarin (2.53%), Hakka (2.31%), Hokkien (1.61%) and Yap (1.24%). Although the picture is muddied somewhat by the 7 99% who could only nominate their L1 to be 'Chinese', the figures clearly show that, properly speaking, Hong Kong's Cantonese-L1 population is not quite the figure (95%) normally quoted, this figure should strictly be used to refer to those Hong Kong Chinese who conduct practically all of their social communication in Cantonese (see Note 2).

2. 'Monolingual', as suggested in Note 1, is not a clear-cut concept. In this context, it can be taken to mean 'Cantonese-speaking' in the sense of both the mother tongue character of Hong Kong society, and the Cantonese language's status as the primary language of social communication among all strata of that society Monolingual is not intended to mean that most Hong Kong Chinese can only speak one language Bolton and Luke (1990) found, for example, that 32% of the Chinese population claimed an 'active knowledge' of Putonghua (Mandarin).

3 Some of the support for the argument that L2-medium primary education need not inflict any educational disadvantage is again often taken from bilingual contexts - even in the developing world - that are quite different from the Hong Kong one. Wagner et al. (1989), for example, cite the case of Berber monolingual children in Morocco catching up with their Arabic-speaking peers by the 5th year of primary school In explanation, they point out that 'there is no competing literacy in the Berber language', that therefore for these people 'Standard Arabic literacy is the first key to school success' and, above all, that Arabic is the language of Islam, and thus enjoys great acceptance and respect among Berber speakers.

4 There are studies which point in the other direction. Rutherford et al (1989) studied Hindi and N. Sotho L1-speaking students' recognition of science concepts in English. Their findings suggested that students exhibited higher recognition levels when using the L2 than when using the vernacular - and showed, incidentally, no evidence of a rote-learning strategy.

5 Wong-Fillmore and Valadez, in an exhaustive survey for the AERA's Handbook of Research on Teaching (1985), report largely positive effects of bilingual programmes at the tertiary level in the U.S.A. They cite, as an example, Kessler and Quinn's (1980) studies of Spanish-English bilinguals, who outperformed monolingual English students in the quality and linguistic complexity of the scientific hypotheses they were asked to formulate and express.

13

REFERENCES

Barik. H.C. and M. Swain. 1976. 'A longitudinal study of bilingual and cognitive development'
International Journal of Psychology, 11: 251-263.

Bickley. V. (ed.) 1989. Language Teaching and Learning Styles within and across Cultures Hong Kong
Institute of Language in Education, Education Department.

Biggs, J 1989 'Approaches to learning in two cultures'. In Bickley, V (ed.), op cit.

Biggs, J. and R. Telfer 1987. The Process of Learning (2nd ed.). Sydney: Prentice Hall Australia

Bolton, K R. and K K Luke. 1990 Report on the Sociolinguistic Survey of Language in Hong Kong Hong
Kong: University of Hong Kong

Cheung. S. 1984 'Conflicts in the uses of Chinese and English languages in Hong Kong' Chinese
University Education Journal, 11/1

Clark. H. 1977. 'Linguistic processes in deductive reasoning'. In Johnson-Laird. P. and Wason, P (ed)
Thinking: Readings in Cognitive Science Cambridge Cambridge University Press.

Collison. G.O. 1974 Concept formation in a second language. a study of Ghanaian schoolchildren'
Harvard Education Review, 44

Cummins. J. 1979 Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children'.
Review of Educational Research, 49

Cummins. J. and M. Gulutsan. 1974. 'Some effects of bilingualism on cognitive functioning' In Carey, S T
(ed.) Bilingualism, Biculturalism and Education. 129-136. Edmonton. University of Alberta Press

Cummins. J. and M Swain. 1986. Bilingualism in Education: Aspects of Theory, Research and Practice
Harlow, U.K.: Longman.

Fu. G. Schaeffer 1975 A Hong Kong Perspective. English language learning and the Chinese student
Univ. of Michigan: Comparative Education Dissertation No.28

Fu, G Schaeffer. 1987 'The Hong Kong Bilingual'. In word, R and Cheng. H. (ed.) op.cit.

Gibbons, J. 1989 The issue of the language of instruction in the lower forms of Hong Kong secondary
schools'. Ch 11 in Kennedy, C (ed.) Language Planning and English Language Teaching.
London. Prentice Hall

Giles, H and P. Johnson. 1987 'Ethnolinguistic identity theory. a social psychological approach to
language maintenance' International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 68: 69-99.

Gow, L. 1989. 'Effects of English instruction in Hong Kong on the ways students approach their studies'
Paper presented at the 5th Institute of Language in Education (ILE) International Conference
"Language Use, Language Teaching and the Curriculum", Hong Kong. December

Hong Kong Government Education Department. 1989. Report of the Working Party set up to review
language improvement measures. Hong Kong Education Department

Hong Kong University 1988. The Case for a Foundation Year Hong Kong University, Hong Kong
Reprinted in HKU Convocation Newsletter, 2, 1988

Johnson, R K (with others). 1985 *An investigation of the effectiveness of various language modes of presentation, spoken and written, in Form III in Hong Kong Anglo-Chinese secondary schools* Hong Kong: Education Department, Hong Kong Government

Johnson, R K. 1988. International English: towards a viable target grammar of English for international communication Paper presented at *1st Hong Kong Conference on Language and Society*, University of Hong Kong, April.

Kessler, C and M. Quinn. 1980. 'Positive effects of bilingualism on science problem-solving abilities' In Alatis, J. (ed) *Current issues in bilingual education.* Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 1980

Kvan, E. 1969. Problems of bilingual milieu in Hong Kong. Strain of the two-language system' In Jarvie, I C. and Agassi, J. (ed.) *Hong Kong. a Society in Transition*, pp 327-343 London: Routledge and Kegan Paul [cited in Gibbons, *op. cit.*]

Kwo, O 1987. 'Bilingual secondary education in Hong Kong. what are the options?' *Working Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, Vol. 10, Language Centre, University of Hong Kong

Lambert, W E. 1977 'The effects of bilingualism on the individual. cognitive and scoio-cultural consequences'. In Hornby. P. (ed.) *Bilingualism: Psychological, Social and Educational implications* New York Academic Press

Lambert, W E & G. Tucker 1972. *Bilingual Education of Children: The St. Lambert Experience* Rowley, Mass · Newbury House

Lemon, N 1981. 'Language and learning some observations on the linguistic determination of cognitive processes' In Gay, J and Cole, N (ed.) *Universals of Human Thought* Cambridge· Cambridge University Press

van Lier, L 1988. *The Classroom and the Language Learner Ethnography and second-language classroom research.* London Longman.

Lin, A 1988. 'Pedagogical and parapedagogical levels of interaction in the classroom. a social interactional approach to the analysis of the code-switching behaviour of a bilingual teacher in an English language lesson'. *Working Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, Vol 11, Language Centre, University of Hong Kong

Llewellyn, J (with others) 1982 *A perspective on education in Hong Kong· Report by a visiting panel* Hong Kong Hong Kong Government Printer

Lord, R and H. Cheng (eds) 1987 *Language Education in Hong Kong.* Hong Kong Chinese University Press

Mackay, R 1988. 'Classroom language and academic success'. Paper presented at the *22nd International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Conference*. Edinburgh, U K, April

Pattison, B. 1962 English as an international language *The Advancement of Science*, 19

Pierson, H 1987 'Language attitudes and language proficiency a review of selected research' In Lord and Cheng (ed) *op cit*

Pierson, H , H Giles and L. Young 1987. 'Intergroup vitality perceptions during a period of political uncertainty. the case of Hong Kong'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 8

Prabhu, N S. 1987. 'A world language in education. defining the domain' Paper presented at the *3rd Hong Kong ILE International Seminar*: "Languages in education in a bilingual or multilingual setting", Hong Kong, December

Ramirez, C.M. 1987 'Developmental linguistic interdependence and bilingual education Cummins and beyond'. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 67, 31-98.

Rutherford, M., Lynch. P. and A C Pachaury. 1989. 'The language of science and the high school student recognition of science concept definitions by English-speaking, Hindi-speaking and N Sotho-speaking students ' In Bickley, V (ed), *op cit*

So, D W C. 1984 *The social selection of an English-dominant bilingual education system in Hong Kong An ecolinguistic analysis* University of Hawaii, doctoral dissertation

So, D W C. 1987. 'Searching for a bilingual exit' In Lord, R and Cheng, H (ed.), *op.cit*

So, D W C 1988. 'Hong Kong bilingual education at the crossroads'. Paper presented at the *1st H K Conference on Language and Society*, University of Hong Kong, April

Vygotsky, L S. 1962. *Thought and Language* Cambridge, Mass . MIT Press

Wagner, D A , Spratt. J E and A Ezzaki 1989 Does learning to read in a second language always put the child at a disadvantage? Some counterevidence from Morocco' *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 10. 31-48

Wang, G W 1988. Opening address to *1st H K. Conference on Language and Society* University of Hong Kong, April

Widdowson, H G. 1982 'English as an international language. what do we mean by "international language"?' In Brumfit, C (ed) *English for international communication*. Oxford. Pergamon

Wong, C. 1984. *Sociocultural factors counteract the instructional efforts of teaching through English in Hong Kong* University of Washington ms. [cited in Fu (1987), *op cit.*]

Wong Fillmore, L and C. Valadez 1985 'Teaching Bilingual Learners' Ch. 23 in Wittrock, M C (ed) *Handbook of Research on Teaching* New York· Macmillan.

Zepp, R A 1988. 'Learning in the medium of English by speakers of Chinese.' Paper presented at the *1st H K. Conference on Language and Society*, University of Hong Kong, April

Zepp, R A 1989. *Language and Mathematics Education* Hong Kong University of East Asia Press