

## THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## IMPACT CASE HISTORY

**Title of case study: A Meaningful Journey of Teaching and Learning of Chinese for Non-Chinese Students: Towards Local, Regional and International Advancement****1. Summary**

A team of six principal investigators (Professor S. K. Tse, Dr S. K. Shum, Dr W. W. Ki, Dr W. M. Cheung, Dr W. I. Lam and Dr K. Y. Loh) at the Centre for Advancement of Chinese Language Education and Research (CACLER) of the Faculty of Education has been involved in over 20 projects to help non-Chinese students. The team found that the Chinese proficiency of non-Chinese students varies enormously, and the teachers may not be experienced or may not know how to tailor materials in the curriculum for them. Since 2006, they have organized a series of projects and after-school lessons from kindergarten to secondary school levels, benefiting more than 3,500 secondary school students, 500 primary school students and 1,000 pre-primary children and their parents. They have also provided research-based professional training and development to teachers, guidance on curriculum development, books and related materials, and other resources for teachers, and held four international conferences on learning Chinese to share their expertise with the community and the world.

**2. Underpinning research**

The project team at CACLER has conducted research which includes the following: action research on classroom teaching, case studies on students' learning processes, learning assessment and investigation on the motivation of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students ("NCS" is used in this case study as it is the term used by the Education Bureau, despite the fact that some non-Chinese students can speak Cantonese). Moreover, the learning materials and teachers' professional development programmes are based on theories of learning Chinese as a second language as well as on principles of meaningful, systematic and differentiated learning of the language in the local context.

The HKU team and teachers from the collaborating schools jointly conducted a number of action research which focused on learning and teaching (L/T) such as: (1) the Integrated Perceptual Approach (Tse, Marton, Ki, & Loh, 2007) to teach Chinese characters; (2) pedagogies and related teaching materials developed based on the differentiated concept (Tse, Li, & Loh, 2012) to teach Chinese characters, reading and writing by applying the Integrated Perceptual Approach (Tse, Marton, Ki, & Loh, 2007), drama approach (Ho, 2011), which provided the students space of learning (Marton, Tse, & Cheung, 2010), as well as teaching them effective reading strategies (Tse, Cheung, Loh, & Lui, 2008; Tse, Lam, Lam, & Loh, 2006; Law, 2011); (3) adopting approaches including pleasure reading, transformative pedagogy and PRISM model which have been proposed by prominent scholars in the field of second language acquisition (Krashen, Cummins, Thomas & Collier) to encourage and lead NCS students to read picture books and then write up their own picture books; (4) genre-based approach (Shum, 2010) to help students in organizing their ideas in reading and writing.

Moreover, the project investigators have extended theory and developed pedagogy that addresses pressing issues encountered by schools on the teaching and learning of Chinese for non-native learners. Such has been its success that it has been invited to co-host a series of International Conference on Chinese (Han) Characters Education and Research in Asian languages since 2011.

**3. References to the research****Key peer-reviewed publications:**

- Leong, C. K., Tse, S. K., Loh, E. K. Y., & Ki, W. W. (2011). Orthographic knowledge important in comprehending elementary Chinese text by users of Alphasyllabries. *Reading Psychology*, 32(3), 237-271.
- Loh, E. K. Y. & Tse, S. K. (2012). An investigation of school-based curriculum of effective Chinese character learning for Non-Chinese speaking kindergarteners, *Han Character and Han Writing*

*Education*, 28, 171-195.

- **Tse, S. K.**, & Wong, M. Y. (2012). An assessment tool for the learning of Chinese character writing by non-Chinese speaking students. *Han Character and Han Writing Education*, 28, 79-298.
- **Shum, M.S.K.**, Gao, F. & Tsung, L. (2012). Unlocking the racialized and gendered educational experiences of South Asian girls in Hong Kong: The case study of Pakistani girls. *Asian Ethnicity*, 13(3), 151-262.
- **Loh, E.K.Y.**, **Tse, S.K.** and Tsui, S.K. (2013). A study of the effectiveness of a school-based Chinese characters curriculum for Non-Chinese speaking kindergarteners: Hong Kong experience. *Han Character and Han Writing Education*, 30, 277-323.
- **Shum, M.S.K.**, **Ki, W.W.** & Leong, C.K. (2014). Cognitive and linguistic factors affecting alphasyllabary language users comprehending Chinese text. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 26(1), 153-175.

**Selected external grant funding:**

The project team has obtained over \$87M since 2006 from the Education Bureau for a series of projects, some examples of which are listed below.

**Supporting Secondary Schools in the Teaching & Learning of Chinese for Non-native Learners**

Funding Scheme: University-School Support Programme (USP), Education Development Fund, Education Bureau, HKSAR Government  
Principal Investigator: Dr W.W. Ki  
Period: 2008-11  
Amount Awarded: HK\$16,169,111

**Supporting Secondary Schools in the Teaching & Learning of Chinese for Non-native Learners (2011-13)**

Funding Scheme: USP, Education Bureau  
Principal Investigator: Dr Joseph W.I. Lam  
Period: 2011-13  
Amount Awarded: HK\$12,391,050

**Research and Development of Exemplars on Chinese Language Assessment Tools for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Local Primary and Secondary Schools of Hong Kong**

Funding Source: Education Bureau  
Principal Investigator: Professor S.K. Tse  
Period: 2012-13  
Amount Awarded: HK\$1,308,000

**Provision of Services for Running of Chinese Language Learning Support Centres for Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students**

Funding Source: Education Bureau  
Principal Investigator: Dr Mark S.K. Shum  
Period: 2012-14  
Amount Awarded: HK\$6,697,100

**Tradition and Innovation: Supporting the Learning and Teaching of Chinese Language for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Secondary Schools (2013-2015)**

Funding Scheme: USP, Education Bureau  
Principal Investigator: Dr E.K.Y. Loh  
Period: 2013-15  
Amount Awarded: HK\$8,293,500

**Accommodating Diversity: Supporting Secondary Schools in the Teaching & Learning of Chinese for Non-Chinese Speaking Students in Primary Schools**

Funding Scheme: USP, Education Bureau  
Principal Investigator: Dr W.M. Cheung  
Period: 2014-17  
Amount Awarded: HK\$12,322,000

#### 4. Details of the impact or benefit

The project team has helped teachers ranging from kindergarten to secondary levels in advancing their knowledge, practice and understanding with the focuses on (1) the teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language; (2) the background and needs of the ethnic minority students; and (3) useful strategies and resources in advancing the learning of these students. The teachers' advancement in knowledge, practice and understanding could be seen in the innovations they carried out in the schools and their sharing of these innovations with other teachers in the field through seminars, conferences, and writings in the projects.

At the beginning of each academic year, the team and the teachers will draw up a school-based teaching plan including needs analysis of the school and NCS students, the focus of support, expected outcomes, support strategies and measures, monitoring and evaluation measures and the timeframe. The project team provides professional support and assistance to the collaborating teachers to develop school-based learning and teaching materials grounded on educational theories and research evidence for classroom teaching. Some strategies and methods in raising students' motivation and effectiveness of Chinese language learning were discussed and tried out. Other than provision of on-site school-based support, the team conducts systematic research studies with the collaborating schools. There is a cyclical mechanism of planning, acting, observing and reflecting to explore innovative forms of learning and teaching Chinese language to cater for the needs of NCS students.

The series of projects have engaged and directly benefited around 75 kindergartens, 44 primary schools, and over 70 secondary schools. The numbers of NCS students directly benefited are around 1,000 at pre-primary level, 500 at primary level and 3,500 at secondary level. The nature and extent of the impacts of the projects are summarized below.

##### **(a) Impact on teaching and learning:**

The learning of Chinese characters is considered one major obstacle for NCS students admitted to Form one. The NCS students were provided help to consolidate their character knowledge with meaningful and rhyming texts, and to become more sensitive to character structure and components. Help was also provided to extend their written vocabulary through mental lexicon activities based on the spoken Chinese vocabulary and their current knowledge. From the Form 1 pre-test and post-test data, learning progress can be clearly seen in the students' character knowledge and written vocabulary, as compared to when they first started.

Another learning difficulty of the NCS students is reading comprehension. Trials of picture book reading and writing by NCS students in different schools and settings have repeatedly indicated clear positive effects on the participating students. More teachers in the projects are adapting picture book reading and writing activities in their schools; some also introduce the use of drama and script writing as part of the activities.

Another important pedagogy spearheaded in the project is task-based language learning (TBLL). A number of schools have designed learning materials that bring students through pre-task, task and post-task learning activities of the TBL cycle. Successful experience has also been shared among schools.

##### **(b) Impact on promoting intercultural communication with respect to social psychological aspects of NCS students development:**

NCS students need to overcome the social psychological barrier before using the language confidently for intercultural communications. The project team in collaboration with some schools introduced innovative programmes that extend the experience of intercultural communication of their NCS students. For example, one school makes use of the drawing talent of the NCS students in creating illustrations for stories created by Chinese pupils in a partnership primary school. The interactions between the NCS students and Chinese students in the process help boost their confidence in daily communication using Chinese.

The projects helped 11 NCS school graduates to be admitted to Beijing Normal University Zhuhai

Campus in 2010 and 2012 to study a B.A. degree programme with major in Chinese language. These students subsequently went back to their schools to share their learning experience with junior NCS students.

**(c) Teacher empowerment:**

Learning materials for NCS students have been developed and tried in classroom contexts when supporting schools in the past three years. The Chinese Language learning materials adopted by different schools include *Differentiated story learning material for learner diversity* 《多層原著閱讀教材》, *Accessing Chinese for Ethnic Minority Learners in Hong Kong* 《新版中文八達通》, and *Picture Books in Chinese composited by 20 ethnic minority students* (Ki, Poon, & Kosar, 2011).

The project team also designed assessment tools for Chinese teachers to assess the Chinese language proficiency of their NCS students. In addition, teaching exemplars jointly developed by the collaborating teachers and the HKU team have been uploaded to the web to facilitate exchange among teachers.

Through providing on-site support to teachers since 2008, more teachers are willing to open their lessons to be observed and discussed. The project team has organized four conferences since 2009 for schools with on-site support to present their teaching examples and experiences, and the number of schools joining the conference has been increasing.

**5. References to the corroboration of impact or benefit**

- Government press release on February 22, 2011:  
<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201102/22/P201102220208.htm>

The then Secretary for Education, Mr Michael Suen, visited Hong Kong Taoist Association Wun Tsuen School, which was able to demonstrate an effective Chinese teaching and learning for NCS students. The contributions of the HKU project team were acknowledged in the press release:

“To enable NCS students to learn Chinese more effectively, the University of Hong Kong’s Faculty of Education has assisted the school in developing a school-based Chinese Language curriculum for students from Primary One to Six.

The curriculum helps to enhance effective learning of Chinese characters and improve students’ listening and speaking skills. It strengthens students’ reading ability with the use of storybooks, diversifying their vocabulary and knowledge in the target language. Students’ writing ability and interest is also nurtured and improved using a diversified writing strategy.”

- Some collaborating schools have become ‘Professional Development Schools’ (under Education Bureau’s ‘Professional Development Schools Scheme’), e.g. Hong Kong Taoist Association Wun Tsuen School and Caritas Tuen Mun Marden Foundation Secondary School, which offer professional sharing for other schools covering a wide range of subjects and themes.
- Professor S.K. Tse and the team were interviewed by TVB reporter on teaching Chinese for NCS students, which was broadcasted at TVB Jade channel ‘Tuesday Report (星期二檔案)’ on February 18, 2014.
- Professor S.K. Tse has been serving as overseas consultant to the Ministry of Education of Singapore since 2004 on the development of Chinese curricula to meet the needs of learners from a diverse range of cultural and language backgrounds.
- Professor Tse was also invited as trainer in a series of train-the-trainer programmes organized by the South East Asian Ministry of Education Quality Improvement of Teachers and Education Personnel in June 2011 in Indonesia.