

English Medium Secondary Schools: Privileged Orphans in the SAR

Sean O'Halloran
The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Abstract

This paper examines how Hong Kong has developed from a diglossic society, where the relationship between English and Chinese were largely in complementary distribution to each other, into a bilingual society, where there is a proliferation of mixed codes, involving a continuum of language use from "high" Cantonese and English to "low" Cantonese with code switching.

Against this background, the Government's recently promulgated mandatory language policy on the medium of instruction in secondary schools is examined. Though the obvious purpose of this policy is to improve the credibility and prestige of mother tongue education, it has the effect of creating a set of elite monolingual English medium schools. Whether these will be able to fully serve the needs of a bilingual society is discussed, especially as Putonghua and High Cantonese are increasingly used in the domains of government and higher education, and a variety of mixed codes and modes used in other social and domestic domains.

The paper concludes with a preliminary examination into possible directions in research into the development of a bilingual teaching code, which is genre and domain sensitive and responsive to student needs.

Bilingualism in Hong Kong

Johnson (1997) writes of a "remarkable shift within the local population throughout the community towards Chinese/English bilingualism over the past decade and a half. He cites recent sociolinguistic surveys which indicate that "whereas 40% of the population considered themselves bilingual in 1983, 70% did so ten years later". A realignment and redistribution of roles of the main languages have accompanied this across Hong Kong. In 1982, Luke and Richards described Hong Kong as a case of diglossia without bilingualism. The European expatriates, administrators and businessmen alike tended not to learn either written or spoken Chinese, the language of 98% of the local population, and the majority of Chinese did not know English. The result was that the higher functions of language - those associated with government, the law and higher education, were conducted in English. A relatively small group of Chinese bilinguals acted as intermediaries between the two groups.

In response to this situation, language policy of the Hong Kong Government over the century aimed to achieve a high level of bilingualism from a small but growing percentage of the population. This was provided by a number of Anglo-Chinese English medium schools and the Hong Kong University, where English has always been the medium of instruction. This group of bilinguals has been added to by the considerable number of students who have received part or all of their education overseas. The rest of the local population was to receive primary and secondary education in their mother tongue in Chinese Middle schools. The establishment of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1965 was to extend Chinese medium education to the tertiary sector.

However, this diglossic pattern has changed considerably over the last two decades. Since July 1997, we have seen spoken Cantonese used extensively in the higher functions of languages in politics and law. This unique use of a "high" form of a spoken Chinese dialect is perhaps evidence of Hong Kong's growing sense of identity. Further evidence of this new linguistic identity is the rapid spread of a Cantonese based popular culture, as "Canto Pop" spreads to include the development of a vernacular writing system discussed and described in Li (1998). Likewise, we have seen the younger middle-class section of the Chinese population prepared to use a mixed code of English and Cantonese in their speech. Thus they acquire a certain trendy modernity and demonstrate linguistic autonomy from the spoken Cantonese of Canton, on which the spoken Cantonese of Hong Kong is based (Johnson, 1998).

Further fragmentation of the diglossic pattern has been shown by Afrendas, (1998) who explores the mix of English in the domestic domain in Cantonese speaking homes. This is largely confined to the growing group of Hong Kong returnees whose children go to international schools and who easily slip into English with peers and siblings, and even parents. This use of English is also evident in other homes where the use of Filipina maids is seen by some parents as means of acquiring English proficiency for the children in whose charge they are left.

There is abundant evidence that among the middle class Hong Kong residents, the departmentalisation of codes, where English is used for the "high" functions and Cantonese for the "low" functions in a functional complementarity of language is rapidly breaking up. (Pennington, 1998) The proliferation of code switching involves a continuum of language use from "high" (English or "high Cantonese) to "low" ("low" Cantonese with code-switching) depending on domain, participants and setting.

Further evidence of this is found in the increasing acceptance of and demand for bilingual code education among teachers who see mother tongue as a valuable and necessary part of instruction. (Pennington & Balla, 1998) Two surveys of English majors, one of pre-service BA teachers and the other of post-graduate in-service teachers, have shown that this espousal of bilingual code teaching is a direct function of age. The younger generation of teachers in particular view the mixing of codes, not as an evil necessity, but as a useful maximisation of linguistic resources in the classroom. They point out that this is further evidence of the demise of the diglossic system that has maintained

English and Cantonese in complementary distribution within the community.

The reversion to Chinese sovereignty which took place in July 1997 when Hong Kong became the Special Administration Region (HKSAR) within China has increased the pace at which Cantonese is being used in "high" language domains. Previously, the Official Language Ordinance provided that the official languages in Hong Kong were English and Chinese. In Hong Kong the word "Chinese" when referring to a spoken language usually means spoken Cantonese. "Putonghua" is the term used to refer what to what is more usually known in English as "Mandarin". The official status of these two languages has been guaranteed after the transfer of sovereignty by Article 9 of the Basic Law. English had established itself as the main medium of communication in the Civil Service, the upper levels of business and professional sectors, as well as in higher education. However, since the reversion to Chinese sovereignty, the government has formulated a language policy for the civil service whereby the objective is to have a civil service that is bi-literate in Chinese and English and tri-lingual in Chinese, Putonghua and English. This effectively gives spoken Cantonese the status of an official language. The Civil Service Branch recently promulgated a series of measures to enhance civil servants proficiency in written Chinese and Putonghua. These measures include requiring a pass in Chinese in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), greater provision of training in written Chinese and Putonghua, and wider use of Chinese internally within the civil service.

The medium of instruction policy

Laissez faire

Until the mid 1980's, the language policy of the Hong Kong Government had been based on an assumption that Hong Kong requires a limited number of proficient bilinguals. However, policy and practice have tended to diverge. Hong Kong secondary schools, though closely controlled and monitored at the level of resources by the Department of Education, were given a free hand to implement their own language policies. Most parents in Hong Kong feel that an English medium education is the surest way of ensuring a place in tertiary education for their children. Responding to this demand, many schools followed the prestigious Anglo-Chinese school and offered English medium education. While it may have been practical for most schools to offer English medium education when only the social elite could avail of it, problems in this laissez-faire policy soon became apparent in the late 1970's after universal 9-year compulsory in the primary sector, where there is virtually no English medium education was implemented. The absence of a strongly directed language policy has meant that by July 1997 the vast majority of secondary schools claimed to be English medium and entered their students for public examinations assessed through English. However, there was a reverse tendency education in the local primary schools. However, the credentials of some of the English-medium secondary schools were dubious. After a mother-tongue primary education most pupils entered secondary school with a level of

proficiency in English below that required of English medium education. An Education department report published in 1989 points out that the weakest students entering first year secondary school are unable to read even the most elementary readers. A great strain was thus placed on the teachers, many of whom had not been fully trained as teachers, let alone as English medium teachers. Thus many do not feel confident they had either the methodological or linguistic skills required to conduct English medium lessons. This, coupled with the inadequate English proficiency of many of the students, has resulted in a widening discrepancy between the professed medium of instruction of the secondary school and the actual practice in the classrooms. Though 90.8% of the secondary schools professed to be English medium it was apparent that very few of these offered a genuine English medium instruction (Lai, 1998). Little was done to correct the worsening situation either in terms of monitoring schools' claims to be English medium or in teacher education. In a number of cases, either due to lack of proficiency of the pupils or teachers, teachers resorted largely to Cantonese instruction within the classroom. The Education department throughout the 1980's appears to have felt that the demand for English proficiency should best be met in the English lesson. As Johnson (1997) points out, it was only after 1990 that "the level of proficiency that can be achieved though teaching a second language as a subject and through using it (effectively) as a medium of instruction are very different, and that the high levels of English proficiency demanded would only be achieved through the latter". The bracketed "effectively" is Johnson's own, but the effective use of English in the classroom is perhaps the key. English has been used inaccurately and with Cantonese as a substitute rather than in support. It has been used with students who are not capable of benefiting from it and by teachers who have either little faith in its effectiveness or training in how to use English to support their students' language needs in their subject

Positive discrimination in favour of mother-tongue education

By the mid 1980's, the Education department started to show a desire to halt the unregulated flow of school students into English medium secondary schools. The Education Commission (1990) reflected this shift in policy and called for the scaling down of English medium education in secondary schools. It requested that "secondary school authorities should be encouraged to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction since, all other things being equal, teaching and learning would be more effective if the medium of instruction were Chinese" (p. 99). English medium teaching was believed to have harmed the educational development of less able students, as well as those not well motivated towards learning through it. The result was a new, more directed policy aimed at strengthening the credibility and viability of Chinese medium schools as well as improving the credentials of English-medium ones. Features of this policy implemented by the Education department included the following:

1. Schools were urged to move to a situation where Chinese and English

medium teaching was differentiated clearly, either by:

- teaching all subjects, except English through Chinese,
 - teaching some subjects throughout the school exclusively in Chinese and others exclusively in English,
 - teaching all subjects, except Chinese and Chinese History through English,
2. Secondary schools in which Chinese is used as the medium of instruction in the first three years have been provided with additional teachers of English to enable smaller classes for English lessons since 1988,
 3. A bridging programme has been developed to assist first year secondary students to transfer from Chinese-medium primary schools to English-medium secondary schools.
 4. An intensive English programme was introduced in 1993, which acts as a bridging course to allow students who have studied in Chinese medium schools to improve their English skills prior to entering tertiary education.
 5. In 1994, the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA) started to provide information to parents of children participating in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) on the medium of instruction most likely to benefit them. This takes into account the students' English and Chinese language skills and academic achievement. Admission to late immersion English medium schools is based on a minimum "threshold level" in English.
 6. As well as these measures, the Target Orientated Curriculum (TOC) was introduced to help identify more specific targets and objectives for teaching, learning and assessment.

A total of 272 schools did not follow the Education Department's advice on the medium of instruction most appropriate for their pupils (Education Research Section, 1998). Fear of losing their best students has led many school principals to persist in claiming that their schools were English medium when in fact the language of interaction in the classroom continued to be mainly Cantonese. Experience from the Practicum office of the Hong Kong Institute of Education shows that it is often difficult to place Chinese medium student teachers in Chinese medium classrooms because of a shortage of such classrooms. Nonetheless, many English medium student teachers find it necessary to use Cantonese extensively in the classroom. Throughout the late 1980's and up to the present day, the influential parents of pupils in EMI schools have shown a remarkable determination in opposing any spread of mother-tongue education into the more prestigious schools. No school principal could ignore the fate of Carmel Secondary school between 1988 and 1990. This highly regarded Anglo-Chinese school, under the direction of a principal committed to mother-tongue education and supported by the Department of

Education, pioneered the introduction of Chinese medium education in September 1987. This was followed by immediate protests from the parents and the withdrawal of many pupils from the school. The standard of subsequent intakes plummeted and the policy was abandoned in 1990 when English medium instruction was reinstated and the principal resigned. Four years later, the principal of the prestigious St Joseph's College announced the school's intention to move towards Chinese medium. The policy was quickly abandoned as the parents and pupils mounted some of the most determined demonstrations seen on the streets of Hong Kong. The flagrant disregard of Education Department directives and the confused state of medium of instruction issues in secondary schools led to the Education Research Section producing the Report on the Evaluation study on the implementation of the medium of instruction grouping in secondary schools, (1998). The major objective of this study longitudinal three-year study was to gauge the effects of the different modes of teaching medium on the academic achievement of pupils. 219 target schools were divided into seven groups based on the mode of instruction and 56 secondary schools were initially selected for the study. Schools were grouped according to their degree of compliance with the Education Department's advice on medium of instruction, as either complying EMI or complying CMI schools and as non-complying EMI schools. The complying schools were treated as the control group. To make fair comparisons, initial abilities of S1 intakes, as reflected in Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) were taken into consideration,

Its major findings were:

1. Mother tongue teaching helps pupils achieve value-added performance in Chinese, Mathematics, History, Geography and Science.
2. Pupils taught in English, especially those attending non-complying English medium instruction (EMI) schools, encounter language difficulties in expressing what they have learnt in the more language-loaded subjects, like History, Geography and Science.
3. Students studying in non-complying EMI had the worst performance in Chinese, English and Mathematics.
4. The non-complying two medium instruction mode (Chinese / English by subject) were the group which performed worst in all six subjects.
5. The study does not support the general belief that attending an English medium instruction school would always help pupils achieve high proficiency in English language.
6. The medium of instruction in non-complying EMI schools was different from that of complying EMI schools, For non-complying EMI schools, mixed code teaching was generally found. For the complying EMI schools, English was the main teaching medium, but even here it was found "that teaching was supplemented with Chinese from time to time."

Mandatory language policy

Within two months of the reversion to Chinese sovereignty and possibly with knowledge of these findings, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administration region (HKSAR) attempted to impose mother-tongue education in local secondary schools up to form 3. Certain provisions were made to allow schools to opt out and use English medium in a phased manner. These provisions are to come into operation in September 1999.

1. EMI secondary schools whose Form 1 intake is made up of students assessed as suitable for EMI education and can demonstrate that the staff is capable of teaching in English can opt for English medium.
2. Student ability assessment is based on an average percentage of not less than 85% of the students assessed as suitable for EMI in the Medium of Instruction Grouping Assessment (MIGA Group 1-3 students)
3. Teacher capability is based on the principals' assessment and certification. Education Department inspectors may visit schools to determine the ability of the school to deliver EMI.
4. Secondary schools using mother-tongue education up to Form 3 can switch to EMI in senior secondary if they can satisfy Education department requirements.
5. All secondary schools can opt for English medium instruction for Advanced level course, i.e. Forms 6 and 7.
6. 124 secondary schools out of just over 400 applied to opt out of mother-tongue instruction and assume EMI status. The Education department announced a list of 100 schools, which it deemed could opt out as it felt they met the criteria. This figure appears to reflect the recommendation of the Education Commission Report 4 (1990) which stated, "only around 30% of students may be able to learn effectively through English" (1990, p102) The policy, the selection and appeal procedures were all met with a chorus of objections, especially from those schools who had lost the right to use English medium and the parents of the pupils therein. 20 out of the 24 unsuccessful schools immediately appealed the decision and, on appeal, 14 were allowed to opt for EMI.

Public reaction

There seems little doubt that the policy to promote Chinese medium was prompted by the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty and the accompanying sentiments of national pride. However, the greater effectiveness of teaching and learning in mother tongue is well documented. In order to make mother tongue instruction more publicly acceptable to the population of Hong Kong, it is necessary to improve the credibility and prestige of mother tongue schools themselves. Yet the present policy has reinforced the general perception that EMI schools require students with higher language ability and teachers

with greater competence. The lively and heated correspondence that took place in the press on the announcement of the policy indicates that schools that failed to be designated as EMI are regarded as poorer schools and the pupils that find places in EMI schools are seen as advantaged. Though it is intended that mother-tongue schools be given greater support, especially in English teaching, using bridging programmes and school-based assistance, this aspect of the policy is considered by many to be inadequate and has been given little prominence in the promotion of the scheme. Questions were asked as to how the figure of 85% had been arrived at and principals and staff of many of the schools, which were not selected, have expressed concern about the selection procedure itself. The list of EMI schools is dominated by the elite Anglo-Chinese schools and those with a Christian missionary tradition. Schools, which were not selected, complained that they doubted the thoroughness of the assessment of teacher language competence, which was claimed to be a criterion in the selection procedure. The appeal procedure itself did not clarify the exact nature of the criteria used or how selection decisions were made.

Is there a future for bilingual teaching in the secondary school classroom?

Certainly, the thrust of the policy has been to protect secondary students who were not capable of English medium education from receiving it and denying it to schools that are seen as incapable of delivering it. However, the upshot has been to place Chinese and English in complementary distribution as media of instruction in separate school systems when they are not so placed in the community at large. In other words, the policy is based on the assumptions of a diglossic rather than a bilingual society. Successive Education Commission Reports have made recommendations to eliminate the use of mixed code on the grounds that mixed code is detrimental to students' language and cognitive abilities. Education Commission Report, (1990) states, "the use of mixed code in schools should be reduced in favour of the clear and consistent use in each class of Cantonese or English in respect of teaching, textbooks and examinations" (p. 99).

Certainly, teachers in non-complying schools, and perhaps others have resorted to using mixed code as a result of the students' inability to learn in English and perhaps because of their own linguistic inability. In many classrooms the use of mixed code results in alarming poverty of coherent language in both written material and oral interaction. Johnson (1996) has described oral interaction in an English medium classroom in the following terms:

Interaction in English, when it occurs, tends to minimise the language required of the students....Teacher/student interaction therefore rarely requires from the student more than a one-word or single phrase answer. Where more is demanded, it normally results in silence until the teacher reformulated the question into a more manageable form. Extended

answers tend to occur only where the student is able to report a prepared answer or read from a textbook or blackboard" (Johnson 1997. p. 177).

He goes on to describe how weaker students resort to survival strategies when faced with texts in English. This involves matching content words in the question with the content word in the text and copying out the sentence. It is possible for students using this strategy attain full marks. Weaker students often focus on content words and simply ignore or guess at structural information or structural words. Even in tertiary institutions it is possible to hear lecturers argue against setting written work of any length. They feel the students' work will either consist of copied material, if it is a homework assignment, or will be a nightmare to mark, if it is set in examination conditions. Answers written in examination conditions are often characterised by the presence of appropriate content words - words that would appear on a mark scheme, but the surrounding text may be approaching the unintelligible.

In order to avoid the difficult area of how to reward fluency and accuracy in assignments, subject teachers frequently set test materials that test recognition rather than production. Indeed this practice is even followed by the examination authorities where markers feel they are either unqualified or are unwilling to assess language accuracy or appropriateness. Such an approach is understandable where, until recently, very little attention has been given to the relationship between content and language in teacher education programmes and where teachers themselves are not taught how to model and present language items essential for the appropriate discussion of subject content.

Many teachers tend to shy away from exposing their students to substantial amounts of written or spoken English. They tend also to ask questions and devise tests which elicit minimal language responses. More research needs to be carried out to determine whether it is these minimal language teaching strategies or the use of mixing codes itself which is responsible for the perceived lack of English language proficiency in students from English medium schools. Certainly, the use of these language minimising strategies result from the students' poor language proficiency and they undoubtedly do not help develop it. However, the problems may stem from the reluctance or inability on the part of teachers to exploit teaching/learning strategies which are rich in language and capable of eliciting complex and coherent language responses, rather than from the actual mixing of codes themselves.

This situation has led the Government to "strongly guide" non-complying English medium schools to use Chinese medium instruction only. But need the corollary to this be that the 114 permitted English medium schools use only English medium. As has been shown above, the shift away from diglossia to emergent bilingualism in Hong Kong has led to the emergence of the use of "high" Cantonese in new domains, as well as the growing use of code switching among the professional and middle class. We should at least be open to the acceptance of bilingual teaching in Hong Kong schools as well.

Bilingualism as a teaching resource

Some educators have felt that code switching is justified, given the low English language proficiency of the pupils. Li (1996) sees code mixing in both speech and writing as indicative of the rich linguistic repertoire available to bilinguals in Hong Kong and a useful functional, as opposed to standard, variety. He sees it as serving a constructive purpose both in and outside the classroom. He cites So (1992) and views mixed code as "a building block rather than a stumbling block" He feels that though there is a societal expectation for a divergence in languages in formal settings, nonetheless there is the psycholinguistic fact of convergence. He gives the example of the corridors of the English department at the City University where one domain specific terms like *curriculum*, *discourse*, *role-play* interspersed into the students otherwise Cantonese conversation. This manifestation of bilingualism he sees as "unstoppable". He further urges that this fact should be recognised and accepted thus removing the sense of guilt associated with mixing languages; this sense of guilt itself being one of the factors contributing to poor language proficiency. Mixed code could then be seen as a constructive resource in support of monolingual norms.

Though Li (1996) stops short of using the word "interlanguage" in describing the particular form of mixed code used by Hong Kong people when using spoken English, he does postulate the possibility of giving it formal recognition. It could thus be used as a standard by which teachers and students could measure substandard performance against monolingual norms, raising the students' consciousness of the source of their errors and illuminating how they can be corrected systematically. This would have the advantage of reducing the pressure students feel in improving their English.

Johnson and Lee (1987) in a survey of teaching strategies and student attitude found that the majority of students preferred "the bilingual mode" to English only. They concluded that:

The general impression gained from this study of bilingual teaching was that it was effective. In the hands of sensitive teachers it could be adapted to the ability, needs and aspirations of the full range of pupils entering Anglo-Chinese schools. It seemed clear from our observations that the bilingual code was sociologically desirable, even in classrooms that had a high level of English proficiency. It served to "humanise" the classroom climate. For the less motivated students, a monolingual English mode of instruction from the teacher would have been inconceivable. (Johnson and Lee 1987: p107)

Indeed, Johnson later echoes Pennington's words:

The research question of the future is not whether to code-switch, but when and how code switching can best be employed in achieving the goals of education Hong Kong (Johnson, 1998: p.266).

Chan (1998) has shown that:

"...in most cases, the matrix language of Cantonese-English is

Cantonese, the first language of the speakers... with English constituents embedded into such a structure. Sometimes, English may become the matrix language, and the roles of Cantonese and English are reversed, but these are relatively marked cases'. It is reasonable to suppose that such is the case in English medium instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools. There are of course, grounds for concern, where the bilingual teacher lacks proficiency in the matrix language, as may be the case with some English medium teachers in secondary schools. The resulting medium of instruction in such cases is woefully inadequate, having the characteristic described by Johnson above (1997, p. 177).

As well as the above approach based on structural analysis of mixed code utterances, and discourse specific lexical insertions, Pennington (1998) describes one based on bilingual instructional genre. According to this pattern, the content of the lesson is presented in English and explicated through examples, definitions and further elaboration in Cantonese. This is followed by restatement, conclusion, or transition to a new topic in English.

A genre sensitive approach to code switching could be a fruitful direction in such research. The term "English medium of instruction" implies genre sensitive selection in that it characterises English as the code used specifically for *instruction*, though this may not be the interpretation given by all school principals. Such an approach allows code-switching decisions to be taken by the teacher. The starting point for code switch decisions can be based on language functions most closely related to the subject content, such as definitions, cause and effect, sequencing, classification etc. The English medium subject teacher who is language sensitive can be careful to present and model these functions in English when presenting teaching material in such a way that they can be assimilated into the students' own language production. This gives the teacher and student a clear rationale and focus for selecting one code over the other. It also empowers the teacher with choice. Many teachers, not unnaturally, feel that directives to use English at all times reduce their professional decision making capacity and reduce them to implementers of policy rather than fosterers of student learning who respond to student needs.

Research in English medium tertiary education, (Walters and Balla, 1998) shows that the reality is that where lectures and students have recourse to two languages they use them both. Here again certain strategies are used which suggest code switching is often a product of sensitivity to instructional domains. The research indicates a move from greater use of English in lectures to a greater use of Cantonese in tutorials, where a greater understanding in detail is required. However, most textbooks and written materials are presented in English and assessed through English. This domain sensitive code switching probably reflects what takes place in English medium secondary school classrooms as well. This is a possible area for research into its effective use involving the judicious switch between languages at the presentation stage, student/teacher and student/student interaction and then with student feedback.

A very interesting approach is taken by Lin (1990) based on an analytic framework used in conversational analysis. She examines the reasons for code switching based on language function. She gives examples of how code switching is used to contextualise a change in discourse topic, as from switching between teaching and disciplining a child. She also illustrates the process of negotiation between teacher and student in issues like homework and how code switching allows "the effective communication of and negotiation of meanings that were otherwise difficult to express explicitly" (Lin, 1990, p114). In this regard she goes beyond an analysis based on solidarity and distancing implicit in the use of mother and foreign language, to illustrate how the effective teacher can shift roles between classroom arbitrator, care-taker English speaking teacher, bilingual helper and playful friend. Outlined above are possible approaches to research into how the "sensitive teacher" might best adapt code mixing and switching to the ability, needs and aspirations of the full range of pupils entering English medium schools.

Where does that leave English medium schools?

Though the mandatory policy has been implemented to promote mother-tongue education, the people of Hong Kong have demonstrated that they want to maintain English medium schools. However, the Anglo-Chinese schools developed in an era when English and Chinese were in functional complementarity to each other, with the "high" functions of language served by English and the "low" reserved for Chinese, particularly Cantonese. As we have seen, this situation is breaking down and Cantonese is assuming many "high" functions and increasing bilingualism is fostering mixing and switching of language codes at many domains in society. A system of monolingual elite schools may not serve Hong Kong's multilingual needs. These schools, orphaned since the demise of diglossia in Hong Kong and the departure of a monolingual administration, should consider embracing the needs of a bilingual Hong Kong.

There is no doubt of the need for English proficiency in Hong Kong. But is immersion language teaching the right model? Immersion models developed in Wales, Canada and elsewhere suggest that immersion schools can ensure a high level of proficiency in two languages in a bilingual society. However, Hong Kong is not a bilingual society in the sense of having two large speech communities. Hong Kong does not have an indigenous English speaking community of any size, neither are the higher language functions any longer exclusive to English. Maintaining a system of 114 English immersion schools does not reflect this and gives English a disproportionate status in society. There may be room for some immersion schools that are properly staffed and resourced, but surely it would be better for the remaining English medium schools to go the bilingual way.

The last words can be left to David C.S. Li, who appears to use the term "mixed code" to cover the bilingual code in general:

For a long time I had been trying hard to separate English from Cantonese, often at the price of sluggish delivery, to the extent of

sounding a little bookish to my former classmates and present students, sometimes triggering metalinguistic comments from them. In spite of active self-monitoring, like many other purists, my efforts often ended in vain. In fact this was one impetus behind my present study: I wanted to tease out the reasons and the forces at work in code-switching which are to be found in the interaction of the language systems and which make code mixing irresistible even to a purist (1998, p.184).

and,

It seems to me the only rational solution is to: (a) recognise that code-mixing is a natural consequence of languages in contact; (b) jettison the unnecessary negative attitude and shameful feelings associated with code-mixing; and (c) explore ways to turn code-mixing speech and writing into a useful resource, to help maintain monolingual written language forms (1998, p. 185).

References

- Afrendas, A.A. (1998). The onset of bilingualism in Hong Kong: Language Choice in the Home Domain. In M.C. Pennington (Ed.). *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Bacon-shone, J. & Bolton, K. (1998) Charting multilingualism: Language Censuses and Language Surveys in Hong Kong. In M.C.Pennington (Ed.). *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Chan H.S. Brian, (1998) How does Cantonese-English Code-Mixing Work? In Pennington (Ed.) *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End*, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press
- Education Research Section. (1998). *Report on the Evaluation study on the implementation of the medium of instruction grouping in secondary schools*, Hong Kong, Education Department
- Hong Kong Education Department (1997). *Medium of Instruction - Guidance for Secondary Schools*. Hong Kong Government Printer.
- Johnson, R.K. & Swain, M, (Eds.) (1997). *Immersion Education: International Perspectives*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, R.K. (1997). The Hong Kong Education System: Late immersion under stress. In R. K. Johnson & M. Swain (Eds). *Immersion Education: International Perspectives*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Johnson, R.K. (1998) Language and Education in Hong Kong. In M.C. Pennington (Ed.). *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Johnson, R.K. and L.M. Lee, Paul. (1987). Modes of Instruction: Teaching Strategies and Student Responses. In R. Lord & N.H. Cheng, *Language Education in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Lai M.L. (1998). Mother-tongue education after the change of sovereignty – Tension between the Government, schools and parents: Hong Kong. English Department, Hong Kong Institute of Education. Unpublished

- research paper
- Li, David G.S. (1996). *Issues in Bilingualism and Biculturalism: A Hong Kong Case Study*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing
- Lin, Angel M. Y., (1990). Teaching in two tongues : Language alternation in foreign language classroom. Hong Kong: City Polytechnic of Hong Kong
- Luke K.K. and Richards J.C. (1982). "English in Hong Kong: Function and Status" *English Worldwide* 3(1): 47-64, (cited in "The Hong Kong Education System: Late immersion under stress" In R.K. Johnson. & M. Swain (1998) (Eds.) *Immersion Education: International Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennington, M.C. and Balla, J. (1998). "Our future English teachers: Language use among graduate and undergraduate TESL Students in Hong Kong, *Language in Hong Kong at Century's End*, Hong Kong University Press: Hong Kong.