Name: ███████████████

Candidate Number: ████

Topic Area: Language & Communication

Research Question: How does non-fluency in English influence children's social development in Hong Kong?

Centre Name: Island School Hong Kong

Centre Number: HK010

Date: March 2021

Word Count: 1300

Team Component

Topic Area	Language & Communication
Research Question	How does non-fluency in English influence children's social development in Hong Kong?
Aims & Objectives	• To gain insight into the effects of English non-fluency through undertaking primary and secondary research • To complete effective direct action by aiding local charity Young Women's Christian Association in developing local Primary Six students' English language skills • To successfully coordinate a six-week program for 5-10 children by creating high-quality online lesson materials, with reliable measures to gauge progression
Description & Evidence of Outcome	In collaboration with the YWCA, which endeavours to improve the social welfare of the disadvantaged in Hong Kong, we coordinated an online six-week English Mentoring Programme for Primary Six exam students over videotelephony software Zoom. We created and presented lesson materials weekly, aiding students in developing English language skills while preparing for their secondary school entrance exams.

Excerpts of our lesson materials

To gauge student progress and our programme effectiveness, we collected both qualitative and quantitative data by administering feedback surveys and placement tests at the onset and end of our action period. We then provided individualised feedback for each student, spurring improvement.
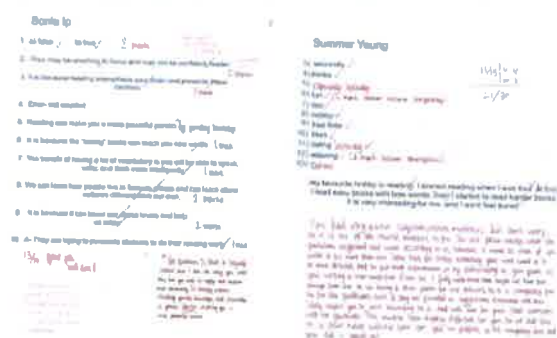
Individualised student feedback

Link to Cross-Cultural Research	Through secondary research, we discovered that English fluency is integral to Hong Kong students' academic success as it offers additional educational opportunities that culturally elevate socioeconomic status. Thus, children's social development is linked inextricably to academic prowess. This was confirmed by a YWCA social worker, who highlighted the importance of providing positive encouragement when learning, gravely noting that Hong Kong's stifling academics-oriented culture often neglects students' mental health. Thus, we decided to coordinate English language sessions incorporating at least one fun activity per lesson, placing emphasis on progression through enjoyment as opposed to the prospect of impending exams. This ranged from role-play to vocabulary games.

Personal Component

Strengths & Limitations of Outcome in Achieving Project Aims

Our original outcome incorporating direct, indirect and advocative approaches involved encouraging social interaction among local primary school students by holding English writing workshops with YWCA. We'd then planned to publish and publicly sell an arts anthology comprising workshop pieces, cultivating empathy while fundraising for local charities. However, faced with tight deadlines and as exam students shouldering academic responsibilities, we soon sadly realised its infeasibility. We hence redirected our efforts with teacher support to pursue simpler direct action, ensuring that we had sufficient time to produce high-quality workshop resources.

We'd initially confirmed three weekly lessons upon contacting YWCA. However, after recognising the limited impact of three hour-long lessons, we extended our programme's timeframe to include three additional lessons spanning six weeks in total, allowing for persistent, deliberate practice that catalysed progression. All but two students improved their placement test performance over our programme duration, with the largest improvement being 6%. Thus, I believe we achieved all three aims, directly combating the issue's effects while deepening our own understanding through service.

There were, however, outcome limitations. Though our small class size allowed us to employ individualised teaching approaches and hence spur individual improvement, we could've reached more programme participants and enlisted additional teaching volunteers to further our impact. Working with Island School's Community English service, for instance, would increase our volunteer base, ensuring that more children would receive the same level of detailed, individualised feedback. Fostering such collaborations escalates programme effectiveness and distributes vital research, furthering our aims.

Strengths & Limitations of Work Process

We utilised many digital tools to foster collaboration, with organisation as a key strength. As my team's leader, I configured a Google Sheets timeline at our project's onset to fairly delegate responsibilities and to ensure deadline adherence. While the clear headings allowed us to fragmentise tasks into smaller, manageable chunks, spurring productivity, this ultimately proved ineffective. I now realise that this may have been overwhelming to utilise, perhaps due to the excessive detail included, resulting in a compacted design. A key personal weakness alongside this was procrastination. I'd occasionally neglected to update the spreadsheet, setting a bad team example and leading to further disuse. This resulted in rushed task completion due to unclear deadlines, which may have limited our ability to produce high-quality programme resources.

Sustaining team engagement through effective communication is vital to improving. Though we opted for WhatsApp Messenger group chat communication rather than email, optimising accessibility, my long messages were tedious to read and were often ignored, further delaying task completion. Hence, in addition to penning succinct instructions, I'd also collaboratively establish a team 'contract', ensuring frequent communication to accentuate accountability and responsibility.

Benefits & Challenges of Teamwork

Teamwork entailed multiple benefits, including catalysing skill development. Through team discussions during cross-cultural research, for instance, I believe we developed citizenship skills, deepening empathy and stimulating creativity when proposing innovative outcomes—I'd even recruited a team member into performing community service long-term! We also, however, faced difficulties, especially in ensuring even contribution. As some members prioritised other commitments over project completion, others compromised by undertaking additional tasks. Certain team members hence relied on others to polish unfinished work, hindering team progress. To prevent this in future collaborations, I would impose clearer, stricter deadlines while offering consistent

encouragement to foster enthusiasm, generating outcomes of higher quality to enable greater success.

Strengths & Weaknesses of Own Performance as a Team Member

Above all, teamwork highlighted the importance of delegation. Numerous exams forced me to abandon my micromanaging tendencies, subsequently enabling my team members to flourish when given the opportunity to lead lesson material production. Though I was initially unwilling, I now realise that, had I maintained such micromanaging perfectionism, my team members would've lost valuable contribution and skill development opportunities. Instilling trust also strengthened our bond, resulting in smoother communication and their greater willingness to complete tasks.

My greatest weakness, however, was suboptimal time management. An accumulation of poor work and life habits, excessive extracurricular responsibilities and low prioritisation of my personal wellbeing meant that I'd often neglected checking up on my team members, resulting in inaction. Hence, my lackadaisical behaviour as group leader and a role model hugely impeded us from pursuing our original ambitious outcome. After receiving teacher guidance, however, I now understand the notion of "less is more"—small-scale, high-quality outcomes triumph over large-scale yet poorly executed ones. Thus, to improve, I must actively implement delegation in my general leadership responsibilities, lessening my personal workload while uplifting others. This is integral to improving time management, ensuring the possibility of me implementing larger future outcomes.

Insight Gained on Cultural Perspectives

Cross-cultural research allowed me to grasp the importance of English fluency in Hong Kong's academics while highlighting the relationship between academics and children's social development. Despite Cantonese being spoken by roughly 90% of Hong Kong's population (GovHK, n.d.), English is surprisingly the primary medium of instruction in

tertiary education (Ng et al., 2017). 75% of our programme participants also consider English fluency essential for societal integration. Yet English education in local schools are exam-driven and lack interactiveness (Lhatoo & Yau, 2015), leading to intense competition among students that lowers self-esteem, neglects wellbeing and discourages social interaction (Wong, 2021). Hence, I also advised my team to informally interact with programme participants when teaching, maximising enjoyment during learning to effectively propel improvement.

I also discovered that ethnic minority children face language barriers in both English and Cantonese, which further impede social integration and educational attainment (Yeo, 2019). We could've expanded our programme to include ethnic minority children, combating the issue further.

Practical Skills Developed

I developed numerous transferable skills throughout this project, most notably in digital graphic design. As we'd endeavoured to produce high-quality graphics to increase visual appeal for children, I utilised presentation design platforms such as Google Slides and Slidesgo to experiment with visual concepts including negative space while also customising animations from graphic resource site Freepik. This provided me with an alluring taste of professional graphic design, inspiring me to master technical software such as Adobe Illustrator to produce original graphics—a feat especially useful as a student organiser involved in school media and communications. I now strive for continuous learning and self-improvement. Undertaking this project served as my spark.

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