

**Project:** Literacy Challenges and Students' Strategic Language Learning Efforts During the Primary-Secondary Transition

**Grantee:** The University of Hong Kong

**Principal** Xuesong(Andy) Gao

**Investigator:** School of Education  
The University of New South Wales

**Co-investigators:** Yongyan Li  
Faculty of Education  
The University of Hong Kong

Jingjing Hu  
School of Foreign Languages  
Sun Yat-Sen University

**Abstract:**

Under the fine tuning of Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy in Hong Kong's secondary school, many primary school leavers are expected to learn subject knowledge with and through English after admission to secondary schools. This change of MOI poses significant language demands on Form 1 students, who may not necessarily develop effective learning strategies to cope with them. Therefore, this project examined the literacy challenges that secondary Form 1 students have and self-regulated learning strategies they use during the transition year. Two secondary schools and four primary schools were involved in this project while Integrated Sciences and Math were the EMI subjects in our investigation. We collected a variety of data including lesson observations, interviews, and material artefacts such as students' textbooks, homework, notebooks and test papers. We also conducted interviews with teachers and parents and surveyed on a large number of students. Systematic analysis was performed on the data we believe yield most significant insights. So far, we found that the underachievers involved in this project experienced challenges in learning subject content in English. The language challenges include technical and non-technical terms, dense noun phrases, difficult conjunctions/propositions/pronouns, implicit logical relationship, and unclear questions. Differences were also identified between the underachievers and the high achievers in terms of the type of resources and the processes they use. Suggestions were provided to the teachers about ways to facilitate students to overcome the literacy challenges and to develop their self-regulated learning ability.

**Keywords:**

English-Medium Instruction; academic studies; language demands; bilingual education; self-regulated learning; sociocultural theory