Project Title: Analysing English learners' experiences in the transition from senior secondary mainstream and shadow education to university studies

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Final Report

by

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Abstract

The study aimed to understand first-year university students' English learning experiences in their senior secondary school years, and the extent to which their English proficiency meets the language needs for university studies. First-year university students from the local curriculum in the University of Hong Kong were invited to respond to a questionnaire about their English learning background. Among the 1,016 respondents, 66 with diverse backgrounds were recruited to participate in two one-to-one semi-structured interviews. These participants reflected on their English learning experiences at school and, if any, private tutoring; and evaluated how such experiences impact their use of English at university. The findings reveal that students in general only slightly agreed the learning objectives in the secondary English language curriculum were met. Compared with school teachers, students perceived that private tutors were only better in helping them with examinations. A weak positive correlation was shown between students' secondary school English results and their university English course grades, and several challenges in learning English in the transition were found. One evident aspect is how to properly cite academic sources in writing and speaking. The participants struggled with selecting suitable texts from sources, paraphrasing them, and using them to support their arguments. They also perceived a need to abandon the formulaic expressions they recited for the secondary school examination in university. This study reveals gaps between secondary school English and university English and offers insight into what first-year students need when they transition from secondary school to university studies.

Keywords

Introduction

English is not only a language for global communication, but also an important learning tool for Hong Kong students to access knowledge from around the world and open opportunities for educational attainment. As stated in the *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6)*, one key objective of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) English language curriculum is to prepare learners for further studies in the English medium (Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007/2014). Learners will use English in wider contexts when they transition from secondary to higher education. They can no longer regard English just as a school subject that they need to pass in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination, but will use it in authentic situations, particularly in universities which promote internationalisation.

Being the "Asia's world city", Hong Kong has witnessed the necessity to promote itself as an internationalised and vibrant higher education sector (Oleksiyenko, Cheng, & Yip, 2012; University Grants Committee, 2004). The increasing number of non-local students on campus has made English a *lingua franca*, not only for academic and knowledge exchange in-class but also for everyday communication. This may create difficulties for students who speak English as a second language. A global survey conducted by the International Association of Universities listed language barriers as one of the greatest obstacles to internationalisation in the Asia-Pacific region (Egron-Polak, Hudson, & International Association of Universities, 2010). An important question is whether Hong Kong secondary school students are well-equipped with the necessary English proficiency when they complete secondary education and

start studying at university. Therefore, one of the objectives of the current study is to understand university freshmen's English learning backgrounds and experiences in the NSS curriculum in order to provide them with a smooth transition from secondary to tertiary education. By doing so, the effectiveness of the NSS curriculum in achieving its objectives can be evaluated from the learners' perspective, and its impact on their learning in English-medium university contexts can be explored.

Review of literature of the project

Despite the importance of investigating transition from secondary to tertiary education through learners' experiences, research of this kind is limited in Hong Kong. First, studies evaluating the recently implemented NSS English language curriculum are scarce. An ongoing case study by Carless and Harfitt (2013) explored Secondary Five students' views on its early implementation. The preliminary findings suggest that while students enjoyed learning English through the elective modules, they did not treat them seriously because the modules were not counted as part of the HKDSE. The study offers valuable insight into the effectiveness of the NSS curriculum, but a limitation is that the participants' perspective was confined to secondary education and they might not be able to critically and objectively reflect on their experiences from a wider context compared to university students, who have completed their secondary schooling. Second, few studies have bridged research between English learning in secondary and tertiary education. Lin and Morrison (2010) investigated the impact of the medium of instruction in Hong Kong secondary schools on tertiary students' academic vocabulary and found that students from Chinese-medium schools had significantly smaller academic vocabulary size compared to their counterparts from English-medium schools. The study by Evans and Morrison (2011) has also highlighted this problem, and further suggested that first-year students experienced particular difficulties with "understanding specialist vocabulary,

listening to lectures, writing in an appropriate academic style, and meeting institutional and disciplinary requirements" (p. 206). These studies have made important contribution to research in English language education in Hong Kong, but they are based on students from the previous education system. Those from the NSS curriculum may yield a different picture. More importantly, these studies have failed to consider students' English learning experiences out-of-class, which contribute a significant part to their whole language learning experience. Without taking these experiences into account, researchers, policy makers and school teachers, "would only see a partial picture of [students'] real English-learning experiences and proficiency" (Lee, 2010, p. 70) and miss "alternative perspectives on the meaning of, and social and cognitive processes involved in, language learning and teaching" (Benson & Reinders, 2011, p. 1). Therefore, the strength of the current study is to acknowledge the gaps in the field by addressing not only to English learning in mainstream schools but also out-of-school learning in both secondary and tertiary education.

Taking secondary school students' out-of-class English learning experiences into consideration, it is inevitable to focus on shadow education, which has been an important but long-neglected area in research and policy making (Bray, 2009; Bray & Lykins, 2012). In line with the dominant literature, the present study defines shadow education as fee-paying teaching of academic subjects supplementing mainstream schooling outside school hours. Bray (2013) comments that shadow education "has become a major phenomenon around the world" (p. 19) and the growth of research on this issue "reflected increased awareness of the importance of the phenomenon" (Bray, 2009, pp. 11-12). In spite of this, research specifically focusing on English learning is scarce (Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009; Lee, 2010). Yung (2011) explored 14 first-year university students' English learning experiences in shadow education, but he did not pay attention to the transition of such experiences from secondary to tertiary education. Considering private supplementary tutoring in language education research is important

because it has had a significant impact on the dynamic of teaching and learning of English in mainstream education.

To cater for their own learning needs, the majority of secondary school students seek help from tutors to whom they or their families pay money. In Hong Kong, Zhan, Bray, Wang, Lykins, and Kwo (2013) surveyed 657 Secondary Six students in 2011/12 and found that 71.8% had participated in different types of private supplementary tutoring within the previous 12 months. English was the most popular subject among others in tutoring, with 72.4% of the respondents who had received tutoring reporting that they had used English language tutoring services. In a positive sense private supplementary tutoring can cater for the diversified needs of learners, for example, helping slow learners to catch up with their peers in class. However, it can create tension with mainstream education which may be in conflict with the initiatives of the recent education reform (Kwo & Bray, 2014). For example, while the NSS curriculum emphasises inquiry-oriented and student-centred approaches in classroom teaching and learning, private supplementary tutoring tends to overemphasise learning for assessment and undermine the value of learning English as a language per se. This may produce negative backwash where English learning is for students "to 'pass the test' rather than to develop their proficiency broadly for university studies or their future careers" (Cumming, 2007, p. 474; see also Yung, 2015). As a result, first-year university students may have fulfilled the university entrance requirement but may not be well-equipped with the necessary proficiency for them to adapt to university study.

Conceptual framework of the project

The study is framed by the analysis of students' reflections on their English learning experiences during the transition from secondary to tertiary education. Understanding such experiences is crucial for English teachers in both secondary and tertiary sectors.

Retrospectively, learners' reflections on their experiences about the teaching and learning strategies that they perceive effective in their secondary schooling can offer pedagogical implications for secondary school teachers to improve classroom practices to better prepare their students for university studies. Recent research in language learning has suggested the growing importance of using narratives of learner experiences as a research tool, providing researchers, policy makers and teachers with authentic data from the learners' insider perspective and useful insights for curriculum planning and teaching (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). These insights are particularly valuable in teachers' professional development and pre-service teacher training under the notion of "teachers as learners" as a commitment in professionalism (Kwo, 2004a, 2004b, 2010). Prospectively, university teachers and course developers can make informed decision on how to support first-year students with their language needs in an English-medium and globalised university context. As previous studies have indicated (e.g, Evans & Morrison, 2011; Hyland, 2014; Lin & Morrison, 2010), first-year university students in Hong Kong encounter difficulties with their learning in an English-medium university because of the lack of English proficiency. Some may lack English learning motivation because they no longer need to take English public examinations (Yung, 2013). Therefore, it is important, as Benesch (2007) suggests, that the educational backgrounds of undergraduate students be "taken into account when carrying out research and developing teaching materials" (p. 655). Considering that the ultimate goal of this project is to enhance the English proficiency of students in Hong Kong, the major pedagogical contributions of this study are to provide useful data for English course developers in both secondary schools and universities for course planning and classroom practices. It is crucial to prepare English course developers in both sectors to make informed decisions on curriculum development to address the learning needs and expectation of different English learners.

In light of the gaps discussed above, this study investigated the extent to which first year undergraduates' English learning experiences in senior secondary schooling in mainstream and shadow education influence their English learning at university. To achieve its research objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What English learning experiences do first-year university students have in their senior secondary school years in mainstream schooling and private supplementary tutoring?

2. Reflecting on their learning experiences, how do first-year university students perceive the effectiveness of the teaching practices from their school teachers and tutors in preparing them for university studies?

3. To what extent can the English proficiency of first-year university students meet their language needs for university studies?

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were the students of the Core University English (CUE) Course, which is the biggest course in the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and is compulsory for first-year undergraduates. There were around 3,000 intakes in the academic year of 2014/2015. About 2,000 students of them were local students who sat for HKDSE and were admitted through the JUPAS scheme. The current study targeted at local year one university students enrolled in CUE in the first semester. They were invited to respond to a questionnaire administered in their first week of semester. One-thousand-sixteen students completed the questionnaire. Half of the respondents were male and half were female, and they came from a wide range of faculties. Among them, 66 consented to participate in the two interviews. These participants were selected from a variety of backgrounds e.g. different disciplines of study,

English proficiency, medium of instruction in secondary school and experiences in receiving English private tutoring (EPT).

Background of Core University English

CUE is a 6-credit compulsory English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course and runs over 12 weeks within a semester. Students are required to take the course in the first or second semester of their first year of study unless they are granted exemption. CUE aims to help Year One undergraduate students develop the academic English language skills they will need to complete their university degree. The course develops students' ability to understand and produce spoken and written academic texts, express academic concepts clearly and use academic sources of information in writing and speaking. The skills are essential to help students study in an English-medium university environment and give them more confidence to complete their assignments for the compulsory Common Core Curriculum in the university study.

Methodological approach

Narrative inquiry was used as the approach in the study to explore the experience of learners in NSS. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, "[e]xperience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (pp. 18-19). Webster and Mertova (2007) add that "narrative inquiry… is well suited to addressing the issues of complexity and cultural and human centredness in research" (p. 3). The use of narrative inquiry in English teaching and learning has been emphasised by Bell (2011), who states that narrative allows researchers and teachers "to reach a richer understanding of the teaching and learning process" (p. 580), and "narrative inquiry has a great deal to offer the field" of second language teaching and learning (p. 583).

The study utilised a mixed-method approach, based on three main instruments – questionnaire survey, one-to-one semi-structured interviews and student writing. In addition to collecting background information about the learners for research data, the questionnaire was used as an instrument to recruit interview participants, and the student writing was used as a tool for the interviewers to assess the participants' English proficiency during and after the transition from senior secondary to university education. Details of data collection and analysis are presented in the following section.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection

Questionnaire: A survey was conducted at the initial stage of the data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to all local first-year undergraduates taking CUE via Research Assistants to solicit students' perceptions of English learning experience. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), through questionnaire survey, researchers can obtain three types of data about the respondent: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal, which is suitable for a preliminary information of learners background, their learning practices, and their beliefs of English teaching and learning. The questionnaire was written in English since the participants should have enough proficiency to understand the words in the questions. The first part of the questionnaire was an introduction of the study. It assured the participants of the confidentiality of their information provided. The students invited could choose to participate in the whole study, including follow-up interviews, or only respond to the questionnaire (see Appendix 1).

Before responding to the behavioural and attitudinal questions, the participants were asked to provide background information, including their gender, the medium of instruction (MOI) at school, self-efficacy of their English proficiency and their grade at the HKDSE English examination. Their HKDSE results were used to correlate whether they participated in

English private tutoring. Then, they proceeded to give their opinions about the importance of learning English in NSS and university, and evaluate the extent to which the NSS curriculum facilitated their learning. Most of the statements related to NSS they need to rate are adapted from the "Rationale" and "Curriculum Aims" sections in the *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide* (Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2007/2014, p. 2). Respondents also indicated their reasons for having participated or not having participated in EPT and compared their learning in EPT with mainstream schooling. Some questions about private tutoring were adapted from the GRF project led by Bray in which the Principal Investigator and one of the Co-Investigators were involved (Bray, Kwo, Zhan, Lykins, & Wang, 2011-2013).

Interviews: The interviews were conducted in a one-to-one, face-to-face format because the study focused on individual experiences of learners instead of commonalities in larger groups. With face-to-face interviews, participants' reactions could be noticed, showing when they are enthusiastic or otherwise about a particular point in the. The interviews were semi-structured with broad questions developed in advance, so that the depth and breadth of respondents' story were not limited. The questions were designed to encourage the interviewees to talk freely (see Appendix 2). Each interview lasted for 30 to 40 minutes and was audio-recorded to avoid any distraction by the taking of notes. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese, the interviewer's and interviewees' mother tongue, so that they could talk more comfortably. All the data were transcribed verbatim after the interviews for analysis. Excerpts pertaining to the research questions were translated into English. Every effort was made to keep the English translation as close to Cantonese as possible.

Student writing: Selected participants handed in to the interviewer a piece of diagnostic writing they needed to submit in the first week of CUE. They discussed the language use in the writing with the interviewer, for example, where they learnt the phrases and vocabulary and why they wrote it in a particular style. This allowed the project investigators to identify the strengths and weaknesses in areas such as writing style, argumentation, grammar, vocabulary and organisation among first year undergraduates before they received any training in academic English at university. The participants then produced another piece of academic writing at the end of CUE which was used to compare with their diagnostic writing. The comparison showed what the participants learnt throughout the course and how it was similar or different from what they had learnt in their secondary school years.

Data analysis

The questionnaire data were input into Excel and analysed through SPSS 24. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were run to analyse the data for different research questions. The qualitative data were analysed through coding using NVivo 11, determining themes and constructing arguments to answer the research questions. First, the data of each participant were sorted chronologically according to their English learning experiences at different stages and contexts during senior secondary schooling. The transcripts were read, and key words were be identified. These key words were recorded and sorted into thematic nodes. Then the participants' narratives were compared and contrasted according to these themes. These themes were grouped into categories and they gradually became the basis for the findings. Excerpts pertaining to these themes were identified. The transcripts were revisited multiple times to reassess the data and refine or change the themes. A research diary was kept throughout the whole process to maintain "an ongoing dialogue between collecting data, writing and analysis" (Holliday, 2010, p. 102).

Having the same cultural background with the interviewees and understanding the general state of the local English Language curriculum and EPT in Hong Kong, the project investigators were able to interpret the participants' experiences more accurately and minimise any cross-cultural misinterpretation (Bell, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Moreover, adopting Breen's (2007) theory on negotiating the insider-outsider dichotomy, the Principal Investigator could be considered to be in a continuum between an insider of EPT as a former tutor and an outsider as a current researcher. As an insider, who had engaged in full-time tutoring for several years, he had enough knowledge about the context of EPT to understand the situation of teaching and learning. As an outsider, who had left the tutoring industry, the data could be analysed and interpreted with a reasonably objective lens, generating a more complete picture of learners' experiences. Moreover, the Co-Investigators' experiences and backgrounds in teacher training and curriculum development and research in English Language Education in secondary school and university sectors facilitated data analysis from multiple perspectives.

Results and Discussion

In this section, results which address the three research questions are presented and discussed. Based mainly on the questionnaire findings, research questions 1 and 2 give an overview of students' learning situations in secondary school and their reflections on their learning experiences in mainstream schooling and EPT. Answers to research question 3 reveal the main findings for this project about the challenges of students' transition from secondary school to university studies based on both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Research question 1: *What English learning experiences do first-year university students have in their senior secondary school years in mainstream schooling and private supplementary tutoring?*

This research question aimed to investigate the situation of students participating in EPT during Form 6 and their reasons for doing or not doing so. Results from the survey show that slightly more than half of the students received some kind of EPT in the past 12 months (Table 1).

Table 1 Enrolment rate in English private tutoring

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Without Tutoring	460	45.4	45.5
	With Tutoring	551	54.4	54.5
	Total	1011	99.8	100.0
Missing	System	2	.2	
Total		1013	100.0	

This result shows a lower enrolment rate of EPT among Form 6 students than the situation found in the study by Bray et al. in 2011-2013 (see Zhan et al., 2013). This is probably because of the sampling of university students in the current study instead of the secondary school students, some of whom may not have the chance to pursue higher education. We also asked the respondents to indicate why they participated (Table 2) or did not participate in EPT (Table 3) during Form 6. The results indicate that students subscribed to an EPT course mainly because they wanted to improve their exam scores in secondary school. One-third of the respondents wanted to learn English better through EPT and one-fourth would like to get more resources for studying. For those who did not receive EPT, they tended to think that tutoring was not worth the money, and some did not like the nature of learning in tutoring.

Table 2 Reasons for participating in English private tutoring

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
2. I wanted to improve my exam scores.	512	50.5
1. I wanted to learn English better.	331	32.7
10. I wanted more resources for studying	269	26.6
11. sense of security	154	15.2
7. my teachers taught badly.	111	11.0
5. many friends were doing it.	109	10.8
9. I wanted to be the top in class.	108	10.7
8. I lagged behind.	44	4.3
4. my parents chose it for me.	24	2.4
3. I was attracted by advertisements.	20	2.0
6. my teachers recommended it.	14	1.4

Table 3 Reasons for not participating in English private tutoring

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
9. It didn't seem worth the money.	198	19.5
3. I didn't like the nature of learning in tutoring	178	17.6
1. I did well enough in school.	131	12.9
8. my teachers were knowledgeable enough.	128	12.6
2. studying English was not my priority.	114	11.3
6. I didn't have time.	106	10.5
7. I didn't have the money.	86	8.5
4. none of the available private tutoring seemed to suit my needs	66	6.5
5. not many of my friends were doing it.	31	3.1
10. people around discouraged me from joining.	7	0.7

We also compared the HKDSE English Language results of students who received EPT during Form 6 and those who did not. We compared their grades in the four papers and their overall grades. The results show that both groups received very similar grades in all four papers and overall (Table 4). The result from independent samples t-test also shows no significant difference in grades between the two groups ($p < .05$) (Table 5).

Table 4   Comparison of HKDSE English Language results between English private tutoring recipients and non-recipients

Group Statistics

GTutorialCode		N	Mean[1]	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
DSE Overall	Without Tutoring	443	4.88	1.052	.050
	With Tutoring	527	4.95	.986	.043
DSE Reading	Without Tutoring	456	5.28	1.261	.059
	With Tutoring	544	5.35	1.248	.054
DSE Writing	Without Tutoring	454	4.66	1.129	.053
	With Tutoring	544	4.83	1.138	.049
DSE Listening	Without Tutoring	455	4.86	1.271	.060
	With Tutoring	544	4.86	1.204	.052
DSE Speaking	Without Tutoring	455	5.13	1.285	.060
	With Tutoring	545	5.13	1.117	.048

This is an interesting finding in that students enrolled in EPT would expect to have their English language grades improved, but the results show otherwise. However, it could also be argued that, as mentioned by many participants in interviews, those EPT recipients would have received lower grades if they had not participated in EPT.

Research question 2: *Reflecting on their learning experiences, how do first-year university students perceive the effectiveness of the teaching practices from their school teachers and tutors in preparing them for university studies?*

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[1] The mean scores are calculated in this way: Level 1 = 1; Level 2 = 2; Level 3 = 3; Level 4 = 4; Level 5 = 5; Level 5* = 6; Level 5** = 7.

Table 5 Correlation between HKDSE English Language results of English private tutoring recipients and those of non-recipients

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
DSE Overall	Equal variances assumed	9.286	.002	-1.165	968	.244	-.076	.066	-.205	.052
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.159	915.763	.247	-.076	.066	-.206	.053
DSE Reading	Equal variances assumed	.061	.804	-.861	998	.389	-.069	.080	-.225	.088
	Equal variances not assumed			-.860	964.065	.390	-.069	.080	-.225	.088
DSE Writing	Equal variances assumed	.010	.922	-2.304	996	.021	-.166	.072	-.307	-.025
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.305	966.904	.021	-.166	.072	-.307	-.025
DSE Listening	Equal variances assumed	1.137	.287	.035	997	.972	.003	.078	-.151	.157
	Equal variances not assumed			.035	945.817	.972	.003	.079	-.152	.157
DSE Speaking	Equal variances assumed	16.587	.000	-.027	998	.978	-.002	.076	-.151	.147
	Equal variances not assumed			-.027	906.462	.978	-.002	.077	-.153	.149

To address this question, we asked the students to evaluate whether they thought some of the learning outcomes listed in the *English language curriculum and assessment guide* (CDC & HKEAA, 2007/2014) were fulfilled. Table 6 shows their responses based on their rating in Likert scale, with the mean scores ranked from the highest to the lowest.

Table 6 Students' evaluation of the learning outcomes in the senior secondary English language curriculum

The Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum…	Mean
18. made me learn other subjects better.	3.63
12. developed my skills of learning independently.	3.58
10. prepared me for using English in my university studies.	3.50
15. increased my ability to use English for leisure/entertainment.	3.49
11. prepared me for using English in the digital world (e.g. internet).	3.48
13. helped me use English in daily life.	3.46
9. provided chances for my personal development.	3.39
16. increased my critical thinking.	3.32
14. increased my interest in English.	3.16
17. promoted a culture of reading.	3.10
8. helped me experience the cultures of other people.	2.86

The item with the highest score is "made me learn other subjects better". This can probably be attributed to the fact that the majority of students admitted to HKU came from English-medium schools (84.8%) where they used English to study other subjects. The item which is ranked the second "developed my skills of learning independently" may be a result of the promotion of autonomous and self-access language learning in secondary schools. The third item "prepared me for using English in my university studies" is related to the transition from secondary to tertiary education. As shown in the interviews, participants tend to suggest that while learning

English in secondary school may have enhanced their English proficiency to study at an English-medium university, and getting satisfactory results is a prerequisite to pursue higher education, they realised that a lot more features need to be learnt for academic English (as discussed in the next section). Overall, the average rating of all the listed items is between 2.86 to 3.63, which means that students tend to be neutral or only slightly agree that secondary schooling have helped them achieve the learning outcomes stipulated in the curriculum guide. What is worth noting is that they slightly disagreed that learning English in secondary school helped them experience the cultures of other people. This was also reflected in interviews that the students may have difficulties interacting with non-local students. This may also lead to challenges for internationalisation in higher education (see Yung, 2016).

We also asked the participants to evaluate the extent to which their school English teachers and tutors could help them in various areas. Those who did not participate in any tutoring rated the items based on their perception of EPT. The paired sample t-test showed that there are significant differences between the rating of tutors (TUT) and school teachers (SCH) in all nine items (p values are .000; p < .05) (see Table 7). Private tutors received a higher rating only in 23a (improved my examination grades) and 23d (increased my confidence in examinations), and school teachers were rated higher in other items (e.g., 23b. increasing English ability for daily life; 23c. increasing English learning motivation; 23e. enhancing independent learning skills; 23f. being more knowledgeable in English teaching; 23g. more interaction with students; 23h. more extra support out-of-class; and 23i. increasing confidence in using English in daily life). This findings suggest that students perceived private tutors better than school teachers only in preparing them for examinations.

Table 7a Comparing private tutors and school teachers in helping students with English learning

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
				Std.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Std.	Error					
		Mean	Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	23a TUT - 23a SCH	.202	1.471	.046	.112	.293	4.379	1012	.000
Pair 2	23b TUT - 23b SCH	-.541	1.382	.043	-.626	-.456	-12.463	1012	.000
Pair 3	23c TUT - 23c SCH	-.283	1.418	.045	-.371	-.196	-6.361	1012	.000
Pair 4	23d TUT - 23d SCH	.321	1.414	.044	.234	.408	7.223	1012	.000
Pair 5	23e TUT - 23e SCH	-.543	1.338	.042	-.625	-.460	-12.916	1012	.000
Pair 6	23f TUT - 23f SCH	-.166	1.384	.043	-.251	-.081	-3.814	1012	.000
Pair 7	23g TUT - 23g SCH	-1.065	1.955	.061	-1.186	-.945	-17.337	1012	.000
Pair 8	23h TUT - 23h SCH	-.467	2.107	.066	-.597	-.337	-7.054	1012	.000
Pair 9	23i TUT - 23i SCH	-.331	1.301	.041	-.411	-.250	-8.087	1012	.000

Research question 3: To what extent can the English proficiency of first-year university students meet their language needs for university studies?

Table 7b Comparing private tutors and school teachers in helping students with English learning

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	23a TUT	3.64	1013	1.181	.037
	23a SCH	3.43	1013	.901	.028
Pair 2	23b TUT	2.98	1013	1.175	.037
	23b SCH	3.52	1013	.853	.027
Pair 3	23c TUT	2.92	1013	1.179	.037
	23c SCH	3.21	1013	.955	.030
Pair 4	23d TUT	3.71	1013	1.196	.038
	23d SCH	3.39	1013	.878	.028
Pair 5	23e TUT	2.85	1013	1.173	.037
	23e SCH	3.39	1013	.863	.027
Pair 6	23f TUT	3.38	1013	1.203	.038
	23f SCH	3.54	1013	.889	.028
Pair 7	23g TUT	2.67	1013	1.639	.052
	23g SCH	3.74	1013	.949	.030
Pair 8	23h TUT	3.07	1013	1.875	.059
	23h SCH	3.53	1013	1.025	.032
Pair 9	23i TUT	3.12	1013	1.178	.037
	23i SCH	3.45	1013	.886	.028

To find out the gap between secondary school English and university English, we first tried to find out whether the higher level the participants obtained in HKDSE English language would give them an advantage in getting better results in CUE. We compared the participants' HKDSE levels and their final scores in CUE (Table 7). Based on the valid data of 960 respondents, a weak linear positive correlation between the two was found (Pearson's R = .314, $p < 0.01$). The coefficient of determination R^2 is .098 (see Figure 1). In other words, HKDSE results only explain 9.8% of the students' performance in CUE; the other 91.2% need to be explained by other factors.

Table 8 Correlation between HKDSE overall level and CUE final score

		HKDSE Overall	CUE Final Score
HKDSE Overall	Pearson Correlation	1	.314[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	923	960
CUE Final Score	Pearson Correlation	.314[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	960	962

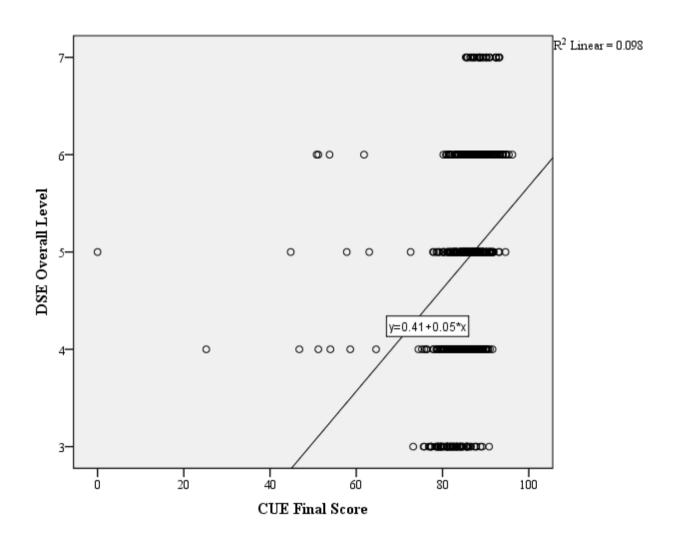[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2 Correlation between HKDSE overall level and CUE final score

We also tried to see the distribution of CUE grades of the different groups of students with different HKDSE results (Table 8 and Table 9). Among the valid data, the mean score for the 34 Level 5** students in CUE is 89.3, which is 3.6 higher than the mean score of all respondents (85.7, N = 960) (see also Figure 1 for the grade distribution). Based on the CUE calculation policy (see Appendix 3), there is only one sub-grade difference (B+ and B). Interestingly, no Level 5** students got the highest grade in CUE in the cohort (i.e. A). Those who got A in CUE were eight Level 5* students and one Level 5 student. The quantitative data show only a very weak relationship between HKDSE and CUE results and that higher levels in HKDSE did not necessarily help students perform better in the EAP course.

In the questionnaire, we asked the students to indicate which language skills they needed to improve when they transitioned to university. We analysed the valid data from the whole sample (N = 1,013) in two groups, one attaining Level 5** in HKDSE English Language (N = 35) and one below Level 5** (N = 978). Table 10 presents the responses ranked from the most selected items to the least among the 35 Level 5** participants, compared with those in the rest of the whole sample. Results show that the first half of the most selected items for both groups are citation, writing, oral presentation, speaking, vocabulary and discussion; while other aspects such as listening and reading are considered less necessary for improvement. Among the Level 5** participants, citation was selected to be the skill that they needed to improve most, while those in another group ranked it fifth. A possible reason is that students with high English proficiency already possess solid English foundation in writing and speaking to master their assignments in terms of language use. However, they did not learn citation in secondary school, so they considered this new skill more necessary for improvement.

Table 8 HKDSE Overall results vs Course Final Grade

						Course Final Grade					
		N	D	D+	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	Total
HKDSE Overall	3 Count	0	0	0	1	7	30	29	8	1	0	76
	% within DSE Overall	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	9.2%	39.5%	38.2%	10.5%	1.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	32.6%	9.7%	2.0%	0.7%	0.0%	7.9%
	4 Count	4	1	1	0	6	35	120	94	8	0	269
	% within DSE Overall	1.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	2.2%	13.0%	44.6%	34.9%	3.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	40.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	42.9%	38.0%	40.0%	23.9%	5.9%	0.0%	28.0%
	5 Count	3	0	1	1	1	20	99	144	31	1	301
	% within DSE Overall	1.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	6.6%	32.9%	47.8%	10.3%	0.3%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	30.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	7.1%	21.7%	33.0%	36.5%	23.0%	11.1%	31.4%
	5* Count	3	1	0	0	0	7	48	132	81	8	280
	% within DSE Overall	1.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	17.1%	47.1%	28.9%	2.9%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	30.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%	16.0%	33.5%	60.0%	88.9%	29.2%
	5** Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	16	14	0	34
	% within DSE Overall	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	4.1%	10.4%	0.0%	3.5%
Total	Count	10	2	2	2	14	92	300	394	135	9	960
	% within DSE Overall	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1.5%	9.6%	31.3%	41.0%	14.1%	0.9%	100.0%
	% within Course Final Grade	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 9 Distribution of CUE final scores among different HKDSE overall levels

Course Final Score

DSE Overall	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation	Mean	N
3	73.2	90.8	3.4	82.1	76
4	25.2	91.6	6.2	84.1	269
5	.0	94.6	6.6	85.8	301
5*	50.8	96.2	5.0	87.9	280
5**	85.4	93.2	2.4	89.3	34
Total	.0	96.2	6.0	85.7	960

Table 10 Skills that need to be improved

	Level 5** (N = 35)			Below Level 5** (N = 978)		
Skill	n	%	Rank	n	%	Rank
Citation	23	65.7	1	410	41.9	5
Writing	15	42.9	2	630	64.4	1
Oral presentation	12	34.3	3	455	46.5	3
Speaking	10	28.6	4	503	51.4	2
Vocabulary	10	28.6	5	431	44.1	4
Discussion	9	25.7	6	346	35.4	6
Note-taking	8	22.9	7	177	18.1	11
Intercultural communication	5	14.3	8	238	24.3	9
Listening	4	11.4	9	243	24.8	8
Grammar	3	8.6	10	314	32.1	7
Reading	2	5.7	11	235	24.0	10

Our qualitative findings also show that the participants were most concerned about citing sources from academic texts in writing and speaking. They regarded citation as the skill they lacked. As Oliver mentioned, "Writing is challenging because I didn't learn how to cite

sources in secondary school" (Interview I). This can be attributed to the fact that questions in the HKDSE Writing paper tend to ask candidates to express views based on their personal experience and logical argumentation instead of academic sources. This is considered a significant difference between secondary school writing tasks and what is required in university:

> I remember in HKDSE, questions were rather personal. They asked you to write your personal experience, so I feel weird when I study at university. It seems that I need to be more objective. (Elaine, Interview 1)

> I can't handle writing an essay based on so many source texts. I didn't learn English like this. I can't handle when I am suddenly asked to do this. (Bonny, Interview I)

Some participants mentioned that in HKDSE Paper 3 Listening and Integrated Skills, they did need to use sources in the data file to write articles, but the way they wrote was different from the source-based academic writing in university:

> In Paper 3, the listening test would provide you with information which you needed to use to write your articles. But the difference is that the required information was very obvious in secondary school, so you could even copy different parts into your own writing and then you got the scores; but this can't be done in university because you have to paraphrase. In secondary school, the marking scheme would count those points which could be easily copied and moved into our writing. I think I can improve gradually as CUE teaches us how to paraphrase. (Pauline, Interview II)

Apart from the use of sources and the skills of citation, language use in academic writing was also considered a challenge. Some participants admitted that the way they learnt English in secondary school was driven by HKDSE. They were provided with clear guidance in school or tutorial classes, and might recite formulaic expressions to impress markers in the examination. This assessment washback may have created challenges for them to learn EAP:

25

I think in secondary school, we aimed at getting high marks, so we usually used many long and difficult words or phrases. Then we could make our writing look grand, but we normally didn't use any references. It was like our personal opinions, without the need to cite every sentence. But when we do academic writing in university, we don't need to use those difficult words or very complex grammar, or use so many different kinds of sentence structures, but we need supporting evidence. (Christine, Interview II)

I don't actually know how to do academic writing. As I was accustomed to the rigid style used in [secondary school] exams, I find it hard to express myself when there are no clear guidelines. […] So I couldn't handle the [diagnostic] writing. (Bonny, Interview I)

The participants also suggested that in secondary school writing, students needed to use "beautiful vocabulary and structure" (Jenny, Interview I), where were learnt also in tutorial schools. Some examples can be seen in the introduction of Christine's diagnostic writing:

The insufficient quota in higher education of Hong Kong has always been a big concern of the education system. *To combat the problem at its roots*, expanding higher education was *suggested by scholars and experts*. Yet, when some pious advocates of the expansion *praise it with compliments*, some critics *point their fingers at* the potential risks might be brought after the increase. *It's high time for us to delve into their points*.

Should we expand higher education in Hong Kong? In the writer's view, the answer is positive due to the following reasons. (Christine, Diagnostic writing, emphasis added)

Christine's writing demonstrates some features of "secondary school English" such as the use of rhetorical questions and idiomatic expressions, and the acknowledgement of views from different people without concretely showing who those scholars and critics are. When we asked her why she wrote some of the expressions in the first interview, she explained:

My secondary school teacher had made a small booklet with many similar phrases inside, like "point the fingers at", and then he used these phrases to make quizzes… I remember during

the beginning of Form 4, he gave us many similar booklets and we did some tasks in class to see if anyone knew the meaning, and also we discussed what we had to fill in, so, I have learnt many phrases like this for composition. (Christine, Interview I)

However, like other participants, Christine realised that those expressions she recited or learnt in tutorial schools might not be appropriate for academic writing.

Overall, the main challenges encountered by high-proficiency English learners were beyond grammar and vocabulary, but the need to properly cite sources to make their own arguments with effective paraphrasing and academic language. These aspects were considered missing in secondary school, which created a gap between secondary school English and EAP. Bonny, after completing CUE, made a clear comparative summary:

Bonny: They have different requirements. For writing, we just had to answer the question in our own opinion in the secondary school, while we have to understanding the reading texts and conclude the sources to back up the stance in university. We have to do citation properly, and paraphrase well. In secondary school when we expressed our stance, we just needed to expand it. Now we have to think about, like, language-wise, we cannot be too extreme. We need to hedge. We need a good transition between paragraphs. In the past, we only focused on the content. That was it.

Interviewer: You don't think the secondary school provided these trainings, do you?

Bonny: No, they didn't even teach us how to write. It was just about how to structure a letter to the editor. The tone should be formal, and we couldn't write in short form, something like that. That was it, and then we needed to write on our own. Now in the university, I know more clearly about how to structure an academic text, like how to write a report and an essay.

(Bonny, Interview II)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Regarding the relationship between first-year students' HKDSE English Language levels and their results in CUE, the quantitative data show a very weak positive correlation between the two. A key reason is that what HKDSE is testing is fundamentally different from what is required in CUE. In HKDSE, candidates are mainly tested on their general competence in the four language skills; while university English focuses on students' ability to structure an academic text, express academic arguments, accurately cite and reference ideas, and communicate in academic discussion with the support from sources, in addition to the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary in both writing and speaking. What is demanded in university English is beyond students' general English proficiency. Level 5** students may have higher grammatical accuracy and a wider range of vocabulary, but these only contribute to a limited proportion of the assessment criteria in CUE. This finding needs to be brought to light because it has always been assumed that English learners with high English proficiency, which is usually based on their public examination results, already possess the necessary skills for academic success (see Callahan, 2005; Graham, 1987) and therefore can be exempted from taking an EAP course. In reality, however, this group of students do not necessarily outperform students with lower HKDSE English Language results.

The findings reveal that citation, writing, oral presentation and speaking were the skills students perceived to need improving most; whereas reading and listening ranked the lowest. This finding is consistent with previous studies which show that productive skills are perceived to be more challenging than receptive skills in EAP (Evans & Green, 2007; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011). What is unique about the Level 5** students is that they ranked the specific skills of citation and oral presentation higher than the generic skills of writing and speaking. This may be due to their outstanding performance in the HKDSE English Language which focuses on the four generic language skills, so they need to learn the new

skills specific to university studies; while other students may still struggle with the general use of English for writing and speaking. In fact, findings from interviews and student writing show that despite their accurate grammar and wide range of vocabulary, Level 5** students struggle with the effective use of academic sources in their writing and speaking and how to cite them properly. In secondary school, students are merely asked to share personal opinions and make claims based on logical argument in the Writing paper, and they only need to copy information from sources in the data file without citation in the HKDSE Listening and Integrated Skills paper. In university, however, the lack of skills to paraphrase and cite sources properly may lead to the reliance on direct quotations, the engagement in patchwriting, or even the commitment to plagiarism in source-based academic writing (Bruce & Hamp-Lyons, 2015; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Li & Casanave, 2012).

The findings also reveal the differences in the expected language use between secondary school English and EAP as one of the challenges in the transition. As the participants pointed out after completing the EAP course, some "beautiful" expressions and idioms they recited in secondary school which may have helped them attain a higher level in the HKDSE Writing paper may no longer be suitable for academic writing and speaking at university. They also lack the language for reporting views from academics, linking arguments from sources to their own writing, and hedging their claims. These have been listed by Hyland (2017, p. 27) as some of the areas that a bridging EAP course needs to focus on.

A recommendation is that universities make EAP courses a necessary component in first-year students' courses, and no one should be exempted. In this regard, it is important for EAP centres to promote their courses within the university. This requires close collaboration with faculty members, who need to see the value of EAP and hence encourage their students to enrol in an EAP course at the beginning of their university studies. Senior management in universities also need to understand that EAP is not a remedial general English course only for

students with low English proficiency, but a course that is necessary for all first-year undergraduates to bridge the gap between secondary school and university English. General English courses may also be offered to students who are admitted with lower English scores or still struggle with the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary so that their English foundation can be consolidated before enrolling in an EAP course.

Pedagogically, secondary school teachers should try to understand students' learning experience out-of-school, particularly in private tutoring, and explore how they should prepare their students for university studies. They may make students aware of whether and how the formulaic expressions they have learnt can be transferred to other contexts. Moreover, since students rate understanding the cultures of others the lowest when they evaluate the extent to which the learning outcomes in the NSS were met, teachers may strengthen this aspect by maximising the teaching of intercultural communication. This may also facilitate the communication between local and non-local students at universities which have been promoting internationalisation.

Regarding transition from secondary school writing to academic writing, secondary school teachers may enhance students' skills in paraphrasing and summarising ideas from reading texts which they may need to cite for their writing (e.g. Integrated Skills in HKDSE Paper 3). EAP practitioners at universities also need to understand students' background of what they have learnt in secondary school and what can and cannot be transferred to university. In this regard, as Campion (2016) suggests, both similarities and differences between general English and EAP should be emphasised to students when they design materials and deliver the lessons. It would therefore be helpful for EAP course designers and teachers to be familiar with the local secondary curriculum. More importantly, as Evans and Green (2007) observed, since students particularly those high achievers already possess "a substantial foundation of

knowledge in the language" when they enter university, they need help in "applying what they know in academic contexts; that is, in becoming academically literate" (p. 14).

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 7

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Analysing English learners' experience in the transition from senior secondary mainstream and shadow education to university students

About the project

Aim: to understand how your English learning experiences in senior secondary school might affect your state of learning in your first-year at university.

Research procedure: 1) questionnaire (take around 10 minutes to complete); and/or

2) two individual interviews.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Kevin Yung by email (wyunghku@hku.hk). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Faculties, HKU (2241-5267).

Informed consent for research participants

This is to bring to the notice of research participants about information collection in the questionnaire part of the research project. You should understand that your participation is entirely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw at any time without affecting your grades in Core University English (CUE) course. **You should also understand that by doing the questionnaire, you have granted permission for the project investigator(s) to use**

- **the information provided in the questionnaire;**

- **your writing for CUE; and**

- **CUE course grades.**

All the information obtained will be anonymized and kept in strict confidence. All participant identifiers and data collected will remain confidential throughout the study and will be kept for a maximum of 3 years after publication of first paper.

Centre for Applied English Studies, The University of Hong Kong

Questionnaire on English Learning Experiences

Tick your answers **INSIDE** the boxes with a pen or pencil, mark like this: ☑.

I Background information

1.   Your UID: _____

2.   Your Faculty:
☐ Architecture   ☐ Arts   ☐ Business and Economics   ☐ Dentistry
☐ Education   ☐ Engineering ☐ Law   ☐ Medicine
☐ Science   ☐ Social Sciences

3.   Gender:
☐ Male   ☐ Female

4.   What is the medium of instruction in your secondary school?
☐ Chinese   ☐ English   ☐ Other *(please specify _____)*

5.   How would you rate your current English standard?
Very bad   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   Very good

6.   In which year did you take HKDSE? *(You may tick more than one)*
☐ 2016   ☐ 2015   ☐ 2014 or before

II HKDSE and the senior secondary English curriculum

7.   What are your HKDSE English language results (highest)?

Overall English language level	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐5* ☐5**
Paper 1 Reading	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐5* ☐5**
Paper 2 Writing	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐5* ☐5**
Paper 3 Listening & Intergrated Skills	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐5* ☐5**
Paper 4 Speaking	☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐5* ☐5**

*To what extent has your **secondary schooling** (F.4 – F.6) fulfilled the following (Please **tick ONE each** based on the 1-5 scale. Do not leave out any items):*

The Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum (F.4 - F.6)	Strongly disagree / Strongly agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	
8. helped me experience the cultures of other people.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
9. provided chances for my personal development.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
10. prepared me for using English in my university studies.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
11. prepared me for using English in the digital world (e.g. internet).	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
12. developed my skills of learning independently.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
13. helped me use English in daily life.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
14. increased my interest in English.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
15. increased my ability to use English for leisure/entertainment.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
16. increased my critical thinking.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
17. promoted a culture of reading.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5
18. made me learn other subjects better.	☐1	☐	☐	☐	☐5

III Experience in English private tutoring*

* English private tutoring is the additional support in English as an academic subject which is received in exchange for payment.

19. Had you participated the following types of English private tutoring ***in the past 12 months***?

<table>
<tr>
<td>

 a. No.

☐ I had not participated any <u>English</u> private tutoring in the past 12 months.

(Please answer Q.20)

</td>
<td>

b. Yes. *(can tick more than one)*

☐ Private one-to-one
☐ Small group (2-7 students)
☐ Lecture style by tutors (live)
☐ Lecture style (video)
☐ Other *(please specify _____)*

(Please answer Q.21 onwards)

</td>
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20. Why **didn't** you take English private tutoring **in the past 12 months**? (can tick more than one)

I did not take any, because:

☐ I did well enough in school.
☐ studying English was not my priority.
☐ I didn't like the nature of learning in tutoring.
☐ none of the available private tutoring seemed to suit my needs.
☐ not many of my friends were doing it.
☐ I didn't have time.
☐ I didn't have the money.
☐ my teachers were knowledgeable enough.
☐ It didn't seem to worth the money.
☐ people around discouraged me from joining.
☐ Other *(please specify _____)*

(Please answer Q.23)

</td>
<td>

21. Why **did** you take English private tutoring **in the past 12 months**? (can tick more than one)

I took some, because:

☐ I wanted to learn English better.
☐ I wanted to improve my exam scores.
☐ I was attracted by advertisements.
☐ my parents chose it for me.
☐ many of friends were doing it.
☐ my teachers recommended it.
☐ my teachers taught badly.
☐ I lagged behind at school.
☐ I wanted to be the top in class.
☐ I wanted more resources for studying.
☐ I wanted a sense of security.
☐ Other (please specify _____)

22. How long had you participated in English private tutoring **in the past 12 months**?

☐ 1 month or less
☐ 1 month to 3 months
☐ 4 months to 6 months
☐ 7 months or more

</td>
</tr>
</table>

23. To what extent do you agree that your English private tutor(s) / school English teacher(s) can help you in the following areas? *(If you didn't participate in any English private tutoring, please rate based on your perception.)(Tick ONE each)*

24.

English private tutors/ school English teachers...		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
a. improved my examination grades	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
b. increased my English ability for daily life	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
c. increased my English learning motivation	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
d. increased my confidence in examinations	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
e. enhanced my independent learning skills	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
f. were more knowledgeable in English teaching.	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
g. had more interaction with me.	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
h. provided extra support **outside tutorial/school lesson time**.	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
i. increased my confidence in using English in daily life.	Private tutor(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5
	School Teacher(s)	1 ☐	☐	☐	☐	☐ 5

IV Expectations on University English studies

25. What English language skills do you think are **necessary for your study at university**? (You can tick more than one box)

☐ Listening ☐ Reading ☐ Writing ☐ Speaking ☐ Oral presentation

☐ Intercultural communication ☐ Grammar ☐ Vocabulary

☐ Discussion ☐ Citation (acknowledge the use of sources) ☐ Note-taking

26. Which of the English language skills below do you think **you need to improve most**? (You can tick more than one)

☐ Listening ☐ Reading ☐ Writing ☐ Speaking ☐ Oral presentation

☐ Intercultural communication ☐ Grammar ☐ Vocabulary

☐ Discussion ☐ Citation (acknowledge the use of sources) ☐ Note-taking

V Participation in the 2nd part of the research

If you would like to participate in the project, please put a tick in the following box, **provide your information and sign.** (Participation in Part 2 is subject to invitation based on your information provided)

☐ I would like to participate in the 2 interviews.

Name: _____ Email: _____ Mobile: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Only _selected_ participants will be contacted.

- End of Questionnaire -

Appendix 2 Interview probes

Interview I

1. *Questionnaire follow-up*

Background and English learning experiences
2. Can you talk about your background, e.g. your school, family, social life?
3. Can you describe your English learning experience during F.4 to F.6, both in formal schooling and private tutoring (if any)?
4. Why did / didn't you participate in English private supplementary tutoring?
5. What did you expect to get from the tutor? Was tutoring effective? Can you compare your school teacher and tutor in terms of teaching strategies, motivational strategies, etc?

Values, attitudes and beliefs of teaching and learning English
6. Why is studying English important to you now? What is your goal? How about before when you were in F.4 to F.6?
7. How do you think English should be taught and learnt? How have your secondary school and schoolteachers influenced the way you learn English? Any effective and less effective practices? To what extent did they prepare your English needs for university studies?
8. What do you think about the teaching and learning of English in NSS and university?
9. How could English learning have been more motivating and effective to you in NSS? How about learning English at university?
10. How do you see yourself using English in university?
11. What else can you think of which may help me to understand your English learning experience better?

Interview II

English learning experiences in university
1. Can you tell me your results in CUE? What do you think about this result?
2. Can you describe your English learning experience in this semester?

Transition from secondary to higher education
3. Have you encountered any difficulties in English learning at university?
4. To what extent did your secondary school experience help you learn English at university?
5. Can you compare your English learning experiences in NSS and those at university?
6. Can you see how the two experiences are connected or related?
7. How do you think English should be taught and learnt in secondary school and university?
8. How could English learning have been more motivating and effective to you in university?
9. How do you see yourself using English in university?
10. What else can you think of which may help me to understand your English learning experience better?

Appendix 3 Grade calculation policy for Core University English

Grades should be calculated using the following two tables:

Table One	
A+	100
A	96
A-	92
B+	88
B	84
B-	80
C+	76
C	72
C-	68
D+	64
D	60
F	48
N	0

Table Two	
98 - 100	A+
94 – 97.9	A
90 – 93.9	A-
86 – 89.9	B+
82 – 85.9	B
78 – 81.9	B-
74 – 77.9	C+
70 – 73.9	C
66 – 69.9	C-
62 – 65.9	D+
58 – 61.9	D
24 - 57.9	F
0	N