

Project Title : Children's literature in English language teaching for primary students in Hong Kong (CLELT)

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Final Report

by

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Children's Literature in English Language Teaching for Primary Students in Hong Kong (CLELT)

Abstract

One of the important functions of children's literature is to engage young readers by allowing them to identify themselves on the pages of a book, and to know that they are understood and valued. Since an increasing number of English language children's books have appeared that portray the realities of everyday life for children in Hong Kong, they allow for the use of authentic materials in the English language classroom. The goal of this project is to utilize this potential by providing resources for primary English language teachers.

During the life of the project a corpus was built of children's literature written in English by English speaking Hong Kong authors, focusing on books that take Hong Kong as a backdrop for the story. Building on insights from narrative theory books have been analysed, in order to investigate the scope and the role of the Anglophone children's literature in Hong Kong's society and education, and to explore the benefits of using Hong Kong produced Anglophone Literature in English Language Teaching in primary schools in Hong Kong. The analysis, combined with surveys, was used to select ten books to be used in English Language Teaching in Hong Kong primary schools (P1-P6). Using relevant ELT methodology, teaching materials were developed for these ten children's books which are made available for Hong Kong primary school English language teachers through a designated website.

Keywords: children's literature, language and literacy, Hong Kong, ESL, primary education

Introduction

Learning English from an early age has been one of the major areas of focus in the compulsory primary education in Hong Kong. According to the Hong Kong Education Bureau, the English Language Education curriculum consists of two subjects, 1) English Language for all levels of school education from Primary 1 to Secondary 6 and Literature in English, and 2) English Language, an elective subject offered to students at the senior secondary level. However, this subject has traditionally been one of the most difficult ones for Hong Kong students, and their subject performance has been gradually decreasing over recent years. The situation has not changed much since John Biggs observed the learning of English in Hong Kong is such that “[s]tudents want to know English, which is good, but feel forced to learn it, which is not good. ... [they] know they should make good use of a large number of strategies for second language learning, but they don't; ... few take steps to improve their English although they see the need to do so. However, the 'stick', extrinsic motivation, leads to poor competence” (1998, p. 419).

Recent research has demonstrated the significance of literature in English language teaching and provided a number of approaches to teaching literature in language classrooms (Van, 2009). Literature in English in Hong Kong schools serves to “complement the subject of English Language and further enhance students’ English language proficiency by providing them with opportunities to interact with literary texts and explore the aesthetic, intellectual, cultural and emotional aspects of language learning” (CDC, 2017, p. 5). The perspective in this research shifts towards taking into consideration locally produced literary text as a teaching tool for the second language learning, especially in primary education. Young people find it easier to accept new information when this information is presented in the form of a story.

Motivation will be one of the principles for the selection of case studies for developing teaching materials. Motivation for students to become engaged with the literary text can be established based on the possibility of the literary text to show real feelings. If they are affected by the theme and the feelings presented in the literary text, students can access their personal experience and will be able to relate what they are learning to their own world, to what they know and feel.

Review of literature of the project

Although used as a common tool in teaching English in Inner Circle English speaking countries (UK, US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand), children's literature has not been as widely adopted in English language classrooms in Outer Circle and Expanding Circle languages (Hilgendorf, 2018, p. 478). However, since the mid-1980s, attempts have been made to reinstall literature into second/foreign language teaching curricula (McKay, 1982; Hill, 1986; Collie & Slater, 1987; Maley & Duff, 1989; Lazar, 1993; Carter, 2007), and researchers have come up with a multitude of different approaches to teaching literature in second/foreign language classrooms (Carter & Long, 1991; Van, 2009).

Lazar (1993) maintains that literature is a useful tool that can generate occasions for discussion, argument and critical thinking. Furthermore, Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002) propose three benefits of using literature in the second language classroom: 1) contextualization of language, 2) social and affective effects, and 3) natural and meaningful use of language. Through literature students can become accustomed to the language use in different situations. Similar to longer fiction, both picture books and short stories, contain social and affective elements embedded in the narrative, which makes them suitable for students with different

learning styles. Lastly, the ordinary and meaningful use of language accompanied by illustrations in literature represents another benefit for the second language classroom. Ghosn (2002) adds the function of literature as a change agent can “contribute to the emotional development of the child, and foster positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes” (2002, p. 173).

Using authentic children’s literature in the ELT classroom can offer extra motivation for young learners by contributing stories which are both meaningful and language rich. Ghosn believes that the ESL curriculum “that draws heavily on authentic children’s stories, provides a motivating medium for language learning while fostering the development of the thinking skills that are needed for L2 academic literacy” (2002, p. 172).

Whether students accept reading books as a learning tool depends significantly on “the teachers' knowledge of children's literature and their perceived awareness of how important reading as a worthwhile activity is as part of the curriculum” (Evans, 2011, p. 32). Designing thought-provoking teaching materials that motivate the students is one of the major challenges for language educators, and literature can help in this regard as it can be related to personal experience.

It is never too early to start reading to a child since reading aloud to children as young as 0 to 2 years of age is proven to be “a key precursor of later literacy achievements during the school years” (Ahrens, 2011, p. 78). In order to help not only parents but also early childhood teachers, Kathleen Ahrens provides guidelines how to seek short, well-written narrative texts which involve change and are developmentally appropriate and provides examples of picturebooks that follow this criteria. Lawrence Sipe, one of the leading scholar in literacy education, says

that the reading aloud should continue in the primary classroom as well. His research points out that “children as young as first and second grade can demonstrate impressive literary critical abilities” (Sipe, 2000, p. 273).

Theoretical and/or conceptual framework of the project

Researchers agree that literature and language are intrinsically related. Although considered an art form, one of the constituting elements of literature is language. Brumfit and Carter (1986) emphasized the role of children’s literature as “an ally of language”. Linguistic analysis can be utilized to engage with literature from a learner’s position. This method has been used in the past, and literature has been extensively used as a teaching tool in different settings of native language learning. Literary texts can provoke different interpretations and thus generate diverse opinions among the students which can further lead to genuine and self-driven interaction with the writing, peers and the English language teacher.

Another reason for selecting children’s literature to be the primary focus of this study is its potential to promote intercultural understanding. The study approaches fiction books for children as sites of representation that encourage empathy and understanding (Mar et. al., 2009). Literature undoubtedly has an impact on children, so it is quite natural that many theorists and critics intensively deal with the appropriateness of what young people read. In this strategy, the central place is given to the education system. Namely, schools perform a dual function - they not only educate individuals but also perform their integration into the community. The school helps the individual to overcome "their family, ethnic or customary frameworks and best to build a sense of belonging to a much wider entity, the nation, the republic ... offering him the opportunity to build a critical spirit and a selection of independent

thinking that only he would be fit among many different directions, the school leads to the second release of the individual" (Semprini, 2004, p. 37).

The shifting role of literature in the practice of English language teaching looks at reading fiction as an undoubtedly communicative activity since literary texts represent authentic examples of language use. Notably, there is no such thing as a specific literary language that exists only in books. On the contrary, literary texts make use of the everyday language with an elevated concentration of linguistic characteristics such as similes, metaphors, symbolism, etc., which exists in the language we use ordinarily (Lazar, 1993, p. 7). Through literature, students can become accustomed to language use in different situations. When this ordinary and meaningful use of language is accompanied by illustrations, literature offers yet another benefit for the language classroom, moving from just "telling the world to showing the world" (Kress, 2003, p. 137) and introducing visual literacy.

Lastly, of special importance for the communicative approach is the notion that literature can provide the students with cultural information about the society they are living in. Students' responses to the cultural aspect that are reflected in literary texts should be critical in the development of the teaching materials.

Methodology

Collie and Slater (1987) distinguish two methodological aspects to take into consideration when using literature in the English language classroom: provide genuine authentic material of language use, and motivating interaction with the text. Using children's literature in the English language classroom should support active participation from student and should put the literary

text in the focus. Teaching materials should promote students that are active and self-driven, and it should put them in the center the learning process.

In order to determine teachers' and librarians' opinion on the benefits of using Hong Kong produced Anglophone literature in English Language teaching in primary schools in Hong Kong, a survey of primary teachers and librarians was conducted during December 2018. The survey was designed and distributed using the SurveyMonkey software. A total of 52 responses were collected (see a detailed report in Attachment 2).

Additionally, interviews with stakeholders were conducted for several purposes. In order to discuss reception and popularity of books in terms of sales in Hong Kong, we met with Ms Shonee Mirchandani, Bookazine Manager. Bookazine is one of the biggest bookstores in Hong Kong, which puts special attention on Hong Kong produced literature for children, and promotes Hong Kong based authors. We also discussed the books in the corpus with Ms Mio Debnam, the Hong Kong Regional Advisor of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, one of the largest and most active organizations that involve Hong Kong based authors for children. HK based authors were also interviewed in order to establish their interest to participate in the project.

In order to provide teachers with options to use children's literature in their English language classroom we selected 10 books to serve as case-studies. The use of case studies allows for detailed background analysis of a larger number of actions and conditions and their mutual relations. As a research method that is used across disciplines, the case study may be considered to be an empirical examination that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and

context are not clearly evidenced” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The procedure for the selection of cases may be governed by many factors, focusing on typical, distinct, extreme, deviant, influential, similar or most diverse cases. As a strategy of selection in this research I have chosen the method “diverse cases” in order to provide a selection of cases that can be seen as representative for a wide scope of variations. This will increase the representation of the selected sample, since the method of diverse cases has probably the most chances to be representative in all small sample methods (including the typical case).

For the selected books we developed teaching materials to motivate teachers to use in their English language classroom and to provide examples for the use of Hong Kong related children literature for language learning. A sample of the teaching materials was tested in three trial sessions in order to understand the potential for the material to be implemented in classroom setting in Hong Kong primary schools, students’ reaction to the material and effectiveness of materials developed. This was achieved by using three approaches: (1) class observation, (2) analyzing students’ work, and (3) interviews with teachers. Teachers were given the materials to implement in class, but have not receive any guidance of how to use the materials in order to simulate a typical situation in the future.

- 1) During the trial observation, a project representative has taken observation notes using a trial observation form. After the observation, notes were discussed with the teacher and a final report has been developed. All information is confidential and will not be used for evaluation or performance appraisals.
- 2) Additionally, students’ work has been collected for further analyses in terms of the effectiveness on student involvement/participation, increased interest in literature and improved English language skills.

- 3) Finally, we have conducted interviews with English language teachers involved in the trials to get their detailed feedback.

The findings were used to modify lessons plans and design the website to fit the needs of the teachers.

Data collection and analysis

During the project period we compiled a list of about 70 books (for a full list please refer to Attachment 1) with the following criteria:

- Time period 1997-2017. The year 1997 is selected as a starting point for the research since it indicated the handover of Hong Kong from the British colonial rule to China,
- Literary works of fiction. Fiction is a broad category including several different genres. When talking about children's literature we have to take into consideration not only novels, but also short stories, picture books, stories in verse, and creative non-fiction,
- Books written by an author who has worked or lived in Hong Kong or has Hong Kong heritage,
- Books intended for child readers from the age of 6 to 12. This age group was targeted as the corpus is directed towards primary school children in Hong Kong P1-P6.

The corpus was developed by collecting information from sources such as various existing databases, Hong Kong Public Library, and author's websites. We have liaised with associations of Hong Kong writers (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and Hong Kong Writers Circle) as well as publishing houses registered in Hong Kong (Blacksmith Books and Bookazine) to find books that meet these criteria. The Hong Kong Public Library was also used

as a source of information on both books and opinions for suitable stories for selection. The books that were collected were analyzed in order to produce a selection of books which are most suitable to be used in English Language teaching in Hong Kong primary schools (see Attachment 1).

The final selection of 10 books covers all KS1 and KS2 stages (P1-P6) (see Attachment 4). For all of these books, we have received authors' agreement for participation in the project, and where applicable permissions to use some of the illustrations.

Results and Discussion

The schools in Hong Kong are advised to use literature in their English language curriculum. For this purpose the Education Bureau, and its Native-speaking English Language Section have developed several independent programmes for promoting reading and writing skills (personal communication). These programmes usually suggest using English language books that are challenging and stimulating for students with complex and multi-layered narratives written and published outside of Hong Kong such as *Voices in The Park* by Anthony Browne, *Monkey and Me* by Emily Gravett, *My Mom* by Anthony Browne, and others. Another programme developed by the Education Bureau is the Space Town Literacy Programme and it suggests about 18 titles for Reading Aloud in Key Stage 1. These materials include several stories developed by English Language Teachers for the purposes of the curricula. The Space Town Literacy programme also proposes the use of especially designed textbooks or GE Support Packages with activities to promote reading and language learning. However, all these books were produced for classroom use, while the use of authentic Hong Kong related children's literature for general consumption has not been included in the suggested materials

so far. This study builds on these programmes of the Education Bureau and proposes the use of books for children that can be useful in the classroom.

According to our research, schools and language teachers in Hong Kong are rarely familiar with the local Anglophone picturebook production. Recently, a number of authors (including Matthew Cooper, Blair Reeve, Sarah Brennan, Theadora Whittington, Nury Vittachi, Ellen Leou, Ellen Ng and Anjali Mittal, to name just a few) living and working in Hong Kong have published books for children of different age groups using the city as a setting, and as their inspiration. However, language teachers in local Hong Kong schools rarely use authentic Hong Kong based literature in the English language classroom because detailed guidelines for use are not provided in the prescribed curriculum and because principals and parents prioritize performance exams and consider literature not relevant to this outcome. Language teachers are often left on their own to select books that are interesting and that appeal to the students both culturally and linguistically. For this purpose, a corpus of children's literature by English speaking Hong Kong authors was built and made available to teachers (<https://sites.google.com/view/clelt/about-the-project/more-books>). The corpus focuses on books for children that take Hong Kong as a backdrop for the story (for detailed selection criteria see Data collection and analyses).

Book selection

After the analyses of the whole corpus, ten books were selected as case-studies for our project since they represent a diversity in genres and topics they cover, as well as grade levels and readability levels (see Attachment 3). In making the selection of 10 case studies we endeavoured to choose books that were well written (i.e. are easy to read aloud and grammatical) and had a natural and engaging story arc with character change/development and

also were able to align with the EDB curriculum as we wanted to help teachers get students reading actively in the classroom and help them teach in the various areas of the curriculum. In addition, we also had to seek the permission of the authors and publishers involved, so there were some books we wanted to include but could not for reasons outside our control.

In terms of form all of the selected books contain illustrations. Most of the books in the corpus are picturebooks, one is a collection of three short stories and one is a graphic novel. Although traditionally **picturebooks** have been produced for the very young learner, nowadays there are titles that are appropriate for children of nine years old and above. These texts “challenge young learners to search for, and in the classroom negotiate for, understanding and meaning” (Bland, 2013, p. 32) and “provide realistic opportunities for interaction and talk, instinctive in children at this age” (Halliwell, 1992, p. 5). Children can be exposed to “picturebooks that challenge the child reader by dealing with often censored subject matter such as sex, death, adoption, suicide, disability etc.” (Evans, 2011, p. 35) or picturebooks that deal with philosophical questions (Evans, 2016, p. 60). Even P5 or P6 school children can benefit from being exposed to picturebooks with appropriate complexity for their age. Examples can be found among picturebooks in which the storyline can be used to teach such notions as intertextuality and symbolism. Plots in these picturebooks are not necessarily linear and there are multiple storylines that are intertwined. At the same time, the illustrations in picturebooks can be used to teach visual literacy and how to use context in order to find out the meaning of certain words. The combination of text and illustrations, and the fact that they are shorter in form than non-illustrated books allows children, especially English language students, comprehend concepts quicker and easier.

Additionally, visual narratives allow for the inclusion of reluctant learners because of the flexibility offered by the visual format, capable of rendering accessible even those stories that might be far more complex and conceptually challenging if presented discursively. In order for picturebooks to offer effective assistance for use with students with reading difficulties, they need to be similar to picturebooks for youngest readers, in terms of combining interesting storylines and absorbing characters with a narrative presented in short sentences and well supported by illustrations.

Teachers of English as a second language mostly use in their classes “concept books that contain predictable and repetitive, sometimes cumulative refrains, and pictures that please the eye but give little extra information” (Mourão, 2015, p. 200). However, picturebooks can be used “as tools to move beyond the initially tedious process of decoding a foreign language, into a world of images and meanings created individually, [allowing] the child to engage immediately with the visual text” (Enever 67).

Based on the above we have selected mostly picturebooks for both younger and older readers, adding to the list one illustrated collection of short stories and one graphic novel, as a fairly new visual genre that is gaining interested and popularity among young readers.

The second major concern identified by English language teachers was the **readability level** of the book, and making decision about the suggested grades for each book. Based on the recommended scales used by the NET section and different school are we have obtained access to the Lexile Professional tool and done detailed analyses of the full text for all ten books separately. We have supplemented this with the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level reading Test. Out

of the ten selected books, two books are suggested for P1 level, two books for P2 level, one book for P3 level, two books for P4 level, one book for P5 and one book for P6 level.

Thirdly, major emphasis of our book selection was the use of **language across the curriculum** (LaC). As stipulated in the English Language Education: Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 3), “schools can promote LaC through encouraging students to read across the curriculum. Time can be allocated for cross-curricular reading within and outside lessons. Collaboration among different stakeholders including language and content subject teachers, teacher-librarians and parents is crucial in developing students’ interests and habits in reading a variety of texts” (CDC, 2017, p. 7). Some of the strategies for development of the new 2017 curriculum have been focusing on cross-curricular learning experiences. This is further exemplified in the General Studies Curriculum Guide for Primary Schools (Primary 1 – Primary 6) (CDC, 2017). The GS curriculum sets out the learning targets and learning objectives for the development of students’ construction of subject knowledge, as well as development of generic skills, positive values and attitudes under the following six strands: 1) Health and Living; 2) People and Environment; 3) Science and Technology in Everyday Life; 4) Community and Citizenship; 5) National Identity and Chinese Culture; and 6) Global Understanding and the Information Era.

Hong Kong history

Interestingly, one of the most common strands for both KS1 and KS2 readers that can be linked to the books in the corpus is the one on learning about history. Hong Kong’s history have been the subject of several books for children of different age groups. Ellen Leou’s *Lulu the Hong Kong Cat: The Hong Kong Time Machine* uses both language and illustrations to make the past

of Hong Kong accessible for young readers. On the other hand, *Music on the Bamboo Radio* by Martin Booth tells a story of courage and perseverance during the Japanese occupation during World War II. The autobiographical novel in verse *Tofu Quilt* by Russell Yeung Ching is based in Hong Kong at the beginning of the 20th century. Jane Houngh has recently created a non-fiction work related to Hong Kong's history and important figures, as well as creative fiction book *The Hong Kong History Girl*.

For the purposes of our case studies we have selected the picturebook for older readers *Three Years and Eight Months* (East West Discovery Press, US, 2013) written by Icy Smith and illustrated by Jennifer Kindert. Picturebooks can help present war and violent conflict in ways that render the immensity of these traumatic experiences accessible to young readers and help them develop empathy for the characters experiencing “the realities of war in a variety of cultural settings” (Suzuki et al., 2015, p. 57). The theme of this book is the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in 1941 during the Second World War. A ten-year-old boy, Choi and his friend, lose contact with their mothers and must fend for themselves in a city that is ravaged with hunger, fear and death. This touching story is based on true events and chronicles the horrors of war as seen through the eyes of a young child. It is a moving tale of friendship, bravery and human resilience. The book is suitable for P6 level, and connects to Hong Kong Curriculum: English Language, Language Education KLA values including National Identity, Perseverance, Responsibility, Integrity; and modules including, we love Hong Kong, Changes, Relationships. In terms of the General Studies Curriculum this book can be used to teach Community and Citizenship.

Another book dealing with Hong Kong's history, suitable for younger readers, is *Teacher's Pet* (HongKongGong, Hong Kong, 2017) written and illustrated by Jason Li. This is a graphic

novel about growing up in the Hong Kong of the 1960s. It is based on the biography of Jason Li's mother and follows the story of Ann, a diligent but clumsy young girl, as she runs chores around town, gets into trouble at school, and tries to win her parents' approval. Based on the stories of the author's mother about her childhood. It's the first book in a longer series titled *The House on Horse Mountain*. The novel covers issues of growing up, school life and poverty. It connects to Hong Kong Curriculum for English Language values of care for others, and honesty; as well as modules of we love Hong Kong, and me, my family and friends. In terms of General Studies Curriculum this story connects to the topics of Community and Citizenship, Health and Living, and Science and Technology in Everyday Life.

Chinese folktales and fairy-tales

Another genre that has started to develop anew and gain interest among authors is the folktale, and contemporary takes on the old folk tales. Children's literature in particular can be said to have its roots in collections and anthologies of folktales. Researchers often propose using fairy-tales in an ESL classroom because of the fact that they can be used to discover traditional wisdom, discuss its application in the contemporary society. Familiarity with context may assist in reducing the stress related with acquisition of new vocabulary and reading practices in English as a second language (Teranishi and Nasu 2016:186). Additionally, the background knowledge can be used in developing writing skills in English as students will find it easier to express themselves creatively when they are familiar with the topic. The corpus provides abundance of examples of folktales and their retellings. For example, for younger readers, Sarah Brennan has written a collection of 13 separate picturebooks that retell old folktales under the common title *The Chinese Calendar Tales*, illustrated by Harry Harison. Jane Houg's *Pun Choi: Chinese Folk and Fairytales* contain more than 50 Chinese folktales and fairytales retold in English for older readers.

The Shadow in the Moon – How the Mid-Autumn Festival Began (Mooncake Press 2014) written by Christina Matula-Hakli and illustrated by Pearl Law is a story about two sisters and their grandmother celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival along with a popular Chinese tale of Hou Yi and his wife Chang'E – the lady in the moon. It makes connection to Hong Kong Curriculum for English Language values: identify, care for others and the module of Relationships. In terms of General Studies Curriculum the book can be used to talk about Community and Citizenship, National Identity and Chinese Culture.

In the book *Chopsticks* (Oxford University Press 2005), the writer and illustrator Jon Berkeley uses the fairy-tale format to talk about friendship between a mouse and a dragon. The dragon is carved out of wood and is wound around a towering pillar of a floating restaurant in Hong Kong. The dragon longs to soar into the sky and see the world. One day, he enlists the help of his new friend, a tiny mouse who lives in the restaurant. The mouse, whose name is Chopsticks, learns the secret to set the dragon free and on a moonlit night when the moon was shining round and bright, the two friends take to the skies and start their journey into the unknown. Connection to Hong Kong Curriculum: English Language values of care for others, honesty, as well as the modules of perseverance, respect for others. In terms of General Studies Curriculum this story connects to the topic of Community and Citizenship.

Hong Kong sites and diversity

One of the potential values of literature education lies in its capacity to “foster young people’s reflections on how they position themselves in the world with respect to others” (Schrijvers et al. 2019, p. 38). As Bruno Bettelheim (1986) has argued, by offering insight into how and why other people act and feel in a certain way, literature can help young readers develop a sense of

their self-identity as well as their place in the complex web of interpersonal and social identities that make up social life. This knowledge of self and others sets the stage for acceptance of difference which is key to peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution.

Reading aloud starts very early in the child's life and it is beneficial to the youngest readers "not only for purposes of language and literacy acquisition, but also so that infants may begin to join in one of the benefits of being part of the human race" (Ahrens, 2011, p. 87). By reading appropriate literary works and engaging in writing activities dedicated to "activating, annotating, and reflecting on personal experiences in relation to fictional texts and themes", young learners can become more self-aware as well as developing a sense of shared humanity (Schrijvers et al., 2019, p. 38). Irma Ghosn discusses the function of literature as a change agent and its potential to "contribute to the emotional development of the child, and foster positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes" (2002, p. 173).

Found in Hong Kong: A Counting Adventure (Peak Publishing, 2015) written by Joanna O'Callaghan and illustrated by Kori Song is primarily a book about numbers and counting. However, it is also a book about Hong Kong and about friendship. It follows the adventures of the two friends as they journey across the city of Hong Kong counting along the way the delectable steamed dumplings and scenic cable car rides in this quintessential city. The friends are a boy and a girl, and although we don't learn their names we can guess from the illustrations that they belong to two different ethnic groups. Additionally, the book allows the reader to revisit famous Hong Kong sites like the Peak, The Ocean Park, street markets and the beach. It connects to Hong Kong: English Language Curriculum values of numeracy, and modules of places and activities. In terms of General Studies Curriculum it can be used to make connections with the topic of community and citizenship.

In *Celebrate Hong Kong* (Muffin Books, 2017) written by Matthew Cooper and illustrated by Stephanie Suen homesick Oskar who lives in Hong Kong wishes he were back in Finland to celebrate the midsummer festival. With the help of some new friends living in Hong Kong, Oskar experiences interesting festivals that he never thought about. The book shows the diversity of Hong Kong in terms of ethnic minorities and nationalities that live in the city. The story connects to Hong Kong English Language Curriculum values of respect for others, and modules of the world around us, and me, my family and friends. The connection to the General Studies Curriculum is in terms of developing global understanding.

Cat Soup and Other Short Stories (QX Publishing Co., 2016) written by Jane Houngh and illustrated by Stephanie Lin collects three separate short stories all set in Hong Kong. For the purposes of our project we selected the story entitled Twinkle Toes in which Twinkle is a Hong Kong Eurasian girl off school after a foot operation. When she is given a pony for her tenth birthday, she meets new friends and has exciting adventures at her dad's place on Lantau Island. Some of the major themes of this story are family relations, especially in a biracial family, as well as disability. The story connects to Hong Kong English Language Curriculum values of identity, responsibility, respect for others, and the module of relationships. In terms of General Studies Curriculum it connects to the topic of community and citizenship.

Social issues

Another reason for using literature in a language class is to engage young readers in critical discussions about poverty (*Teacher's Pet* by Jason Li), disability (*Twinkle Toes* by Jane Houngh) and other pressing social issues, such as environment.

People and Environment has been another topic that Hong Kong authors often write about. Both *Black Rain Day* by Mathew Cooper, *The Mermaid and the Pink Dolphin* by Theadora Whittington, and *The Green Dragon* by Suzanne Younan offer for a discussion about the natural diversity of Hong Kong and protection of the environment. To focus the discussion on the topic of people and environment, we have selected to develop teaching materials for *One Tree* (Penguin Random House Australia, 2019) by Hong Kong heritage author Christopher Cheng and illustrated by Bruce Whatley. This picturebook tells a story about human relationship to the natural and built environment. It teaches young readers about social responsibility to protect the environment and at the same creating intergenerational and neighbourhood links and relationships. It connects to Hong Kong English Language Curriculum values of care for others, respect for others, responsibility. It also can be used to talk about modules of places and activities, me, my family and friends, the world around us;. In terms of General Studies Curriculum it touches upon topics such as people and environment, community and citizenship.

An additional documented benefit of using children's books as a resource is the fact that they can "address and increase awareness and acceptance of disability among students" (Bianquin and Sacchi, 2017, p. 8). Carefully selected stories, such as *Twinkle Toes* by Jane Houn, can help teachers acknowledge and openly discuss the issue of disability, thus making it a celebration of the human diversity. Having books where the characters are empathetic and accepting of children and adults with disabilities provides young language learners in the classroom with an "occasion to learn to appreciate both differences and unique specificities in all individuals" (Bianquin and Sacchi, 2017, 8). Teachers also note that having such picture books in the classroom is indeed a helpful aide in creating possibilities for their students to learn about and understand better about people with different abilities.

Emotions

Another reason for using literature in a language class is to engage young readers in critical discussions about loss, emotions and empathy. Picture books on these topics help children develop empathy and understanding while providing teachers with engaging content related to both language learning as well as personal development.

Socks Heaven (MCCM Creations, 2004) by Pauline Young and illustrated by Benny Lau talks about Sam who has a wonderful collection of socks. One day, he realises he has lost two of his socks and embarks on a delightful, imaginative journey to Socks Heaven to find his missing socks. The theme of loss is central to this story. The story connects to Hong Kong English Language Curriculum value of responsibility and module of changes. The terms of General Studies Curriculum the story links to the topic of people and environment.

Oliver the Quiet Firefighter (MCCM Creations, 2010) by Sophie Paine and Illustrator: Maxim Lo Oliver is a shy firefighter. He is always quiet and does all types of jobs. He smiles and nods and never says a word until he has to save a boy one day. The story connects to Hong Kong English Language Curriculum value of responsibility, and module of caring and sharing. In terms of General Studies Curriculum: Community and Citizenship

Teaching materials

For each of these books we have developed a Teacher's Resources pack (Attachment 4). The pack contains activities for 10 sessions of 30 minutes, as suggested in discussions with After discussions with six English language teachers from primary schools in Hong Kong, as well as

a working group at the NET section, for a total of 100 lessons plans with activities. This format was found the most suitable for the structure of the English Language Curriculum. All materials are freely available for download to teachers upon registration on the project website (<https://sites.google.com/view/clelt/home>).

Based on feedback from teachers for each lesson we have included:

- Lesson plan,
- PowerPoint presentation,
- Student Worksheet (differentiated where applicable),
- Teacher Worksheet with suggested answers,
- Video materials/game materials (where applicable).

Each books pack also includes:

➤ Unit Lesson Plan containing:

- General information about the book,
- Synopsis,
- About the author,
- Curriculum objectives, learning outcomes,
- Cross-curriculum links,
- Suggested readability levels,
- Outline of all 10 lessons.

The activities are based on the communicative approach to ESL teaching and cover all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as additional skills of grammar, vocabulary, phonics, literature, literary devices, culture, crafts, visual literacy and

games. Interaction is the foundation of the communicative approach of second language learning. Of special importance for the communicative approach is the notion that literature can provide the students with cultural information about the society they are living in. Students' responses to the cultural aspect that are reflected in literary texts are critical in the development of the teaching materials. The developed activities also take into consideration the model of scaffolding, and also make use of visual scaffolding. The concept of scaffolding (Bruner, 1975) is based on the work of Vygotsky, who proposed that with an adult's assistance, children could accomplish tasks that they ordinarily could not perform independently. More recently, Larkin points out that "scaffolding is one of the principles of effective instruction that enables teachers to accommodate individual student needs" (2002, p. 1).

Furthermore, the images help contextualize the topic of the text and help students to predict and interpret the meaning of the words (Carney and Levin, 2002). This is even stronger when the readers can identify and relate to the images in the stories and picturebooks used in the teaching of English in primary schools. Creating familiar mental images while reading in a foreign language can improve the students' engagement with the text, increasing the reading motivation, confidence and reading competence. Having in mind that all selected books are picturebooks we have used the opportunity to incorporate Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) (Yenawine, 2013) to encourage students to read with more curiosity and increased level of interest. The increasingly international picturebook market has been encouraging illustrators to erase "all 'local' visual references in their art works" (Salisbury, 2004, p. 8). However, the Anglophone picturebooks in Hong Kong, quite to the opposite, aim at introducing the localities and history and culture of Hong Kong to its readers.

Contacts were also made with the authors of all ten selected books to secure their agreement to participate in the project. Agreement was secured by all authors who participated in the project by:

- Helping us in securing permission to use some of the illustrations and the text of their book to be reproduced in the design of the materials;
- Provide written, audio or video materials in relation to their work;
- Take part in an interview and/or a short reading video which is posted on the project website.

The interviews with each author are available on the password-protected website. Each interview is divided in 7-10 short videos responses to individual questions. This allows teachers to choose appropriate questions they want to focus on, depending on the time they have available.

Trial sessions and observations in three Hong Kong primary schools were planned. We have made preliminary arrangements with five teachers from schools have agreed to participate in trial sessions (Table 1). However, due to COVID-19 all Hong Kong schools were suspended during a crucial period for the project when we had the materials ready to run trial sessions and observations, and we were not able to hold any trial in a Hong Kong primary school during the life of the project.

Table 1. Agreed trial sessions

Teachers	Schools and tutorial centres participating in the SCOLAR project
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Mr. Mark Hopkinson	Taoist Ching Chung Primary School https://tccps.edu.hk/
Ms. Brandi Ruby	C.C.C. Heep Woh Primary School http://www.heepwohcsw.edu.hk/it-school/php/webcms/public/mainpage/main.php3
Mr. Gavin Massingham	SKH Yan Laap Memorial Primary School http://www.yanlaap.edu.hk/new/index.html
Ms. Heledd Williams	Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School http://shmcps.edu.hk/it-school/php/webcms/public/mainpage/main.php3
Ms. Carina Un	TEACH English Centre, Globe Education Ltd. http://www.hkteach.org

Thus, we had made provisions to trial three of the books at a local English tutorial center, Globe Education Ltd. The books used in the trials were: *Socks Heaven* by Pauline Young (P1), *Oliver the Quiet Firefighter* by Sophie Paine (P2), and *Three Years and Eight Months* by Icy Smith (P6). The trial runs were a great success and we received positive feedback from both teachers and students (Attachment 5). The book *Three Years and Eight Months* by Icy Smith was so successful that the students have requested to complete all 10 lessons.

Based on the feedback from the teachers we were able to make adjustments in the materials in terms of acceptability of topics for some lessons, as well as length of the lessons. The students showed high level of engagement with the lessons, and could make connections between the text of the book and their personal lives. For example, one of the students was able to describe his relationship with an uncle who is a firefighter while learning from the book *Oliver the Quiet Firefighter* by Sophie Paine.

To allow for easy access to the created materials while protecting the copyrights of the authors, we have created a password protected website. The link to the website is made available from the Research Center for Professional Communication in English at the Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The website contains two distinct sections. One section of the website is publicly available to the general public. It provides information about the project, its goals, staff and funders. It also provides short description on methodology and selection criteria. This part of the website provides full access to the list of more than 50 books which were identified as meeting specific criteria (see Attachment 1), grouping the books in three categories: KS1, KS2 and advanced readers. It also provides a link to each book to the Hong Kong Public Library (where available) for easier access. Further this section provides a reference list and a list of useful websites related to the project.

The other section of the website is password-protected and intended for the use of English language teachers from Hong Kong primary schools. This section contains separate pages for each of the ten selected books. Each page contains brief introduction of the book and the author, video interview with the author, searchable info on level, readability, skills allocation, and GE topics. It also contains downloadable files with all the materials produced about each book.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Hong Kong offers a unique possibility for the use of authentic children's literature to be used in the English language classroom. One of the most prolific and most profitable children's books in English that represent Hong Kong are picturebooks. Both text and illustrations in these picturebooks allow young readers to recognize not only themselves, but also Hong

Kong's diversity. Although, "English language books published and written in Hong Kong have missed this opportunity to represent its full diversity" (Todorova, 2018, p. 84) the situation is changing with authors understanding the need to represent Hong Kong in full with all their geographic and demographic diversity.

In order to make reading part of the language classroom "[t]he availability of literature is a crucial issue" (Bland, 2013, p. 3). Primary schools in Hong Kong lack awareness about the English language books about Hong Kong. Further, school libraries are not equipped with all these books. We would like to recommend that our suggestions are considered in future curriculum development and schools are provided with the necessary support to obtain all the necessary books to be able to apply the materials developed by this project in their English language classrooms.

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