

# Analysing English Learners' Experiences in the Transition from Senior Secondary Mainstream and Shadow Education to University Studies

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# Introduction

- **Transition** from senior secondary schooling to university studies
- **Secondary schooling** = mainstream schooling in the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum + shadow education (i.e., private supplementary tutoring)
- **University studies** = a Year-One English for Academic Purposes course, i.e., Core University English (CUE) at the University of Hong Kong

# Curriculum transformation in universities

- **Internationalisation** of higher education
- Demand for students' **communicative competence & academic literacy**
- Two Compulsory English courses: Core University English (CUE) (first year) & English in the Discipline (ED) (senior year)

# Background of “*Core University English*”

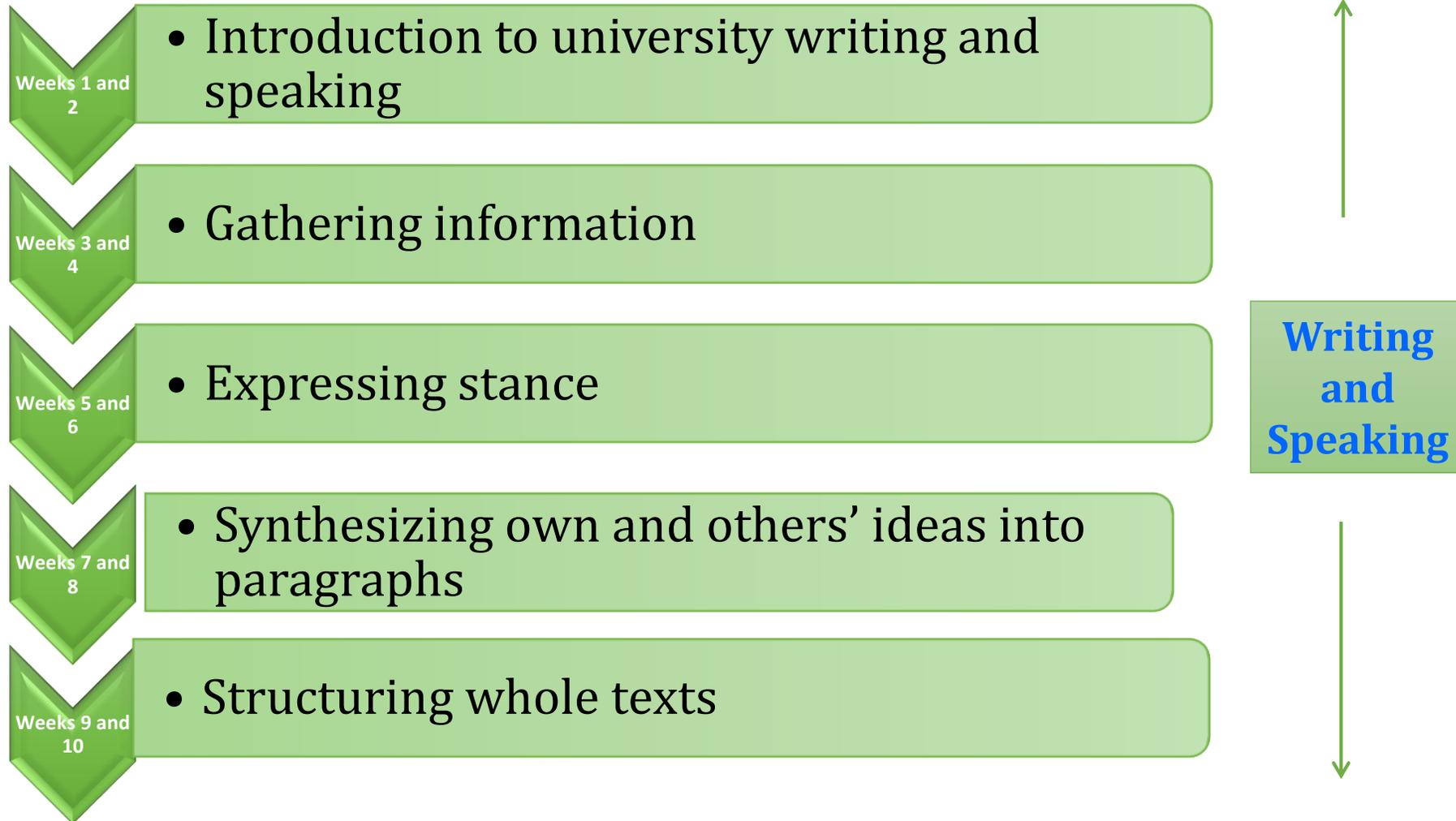
- A **6-credit, first-year** general **Academic English** course
- About **2,400** Year-1 undergraduate students take this course in each academic year
- runs over 12 teaching weeks in semester 1 and semester 2
- A **stepping stone** between secondary school English and English in the Discipline

# Key Features of “Core University English”

- to introduce students to aspects of **academic writing, speaking**, reading and listening
- Help Year 1 undergraduates develop the **academic English language skills** they will need to complete their university degree
- Increase students’ confidence to complete their **Common Core Curriculum**



# Structure of Core University English - In-class Learning



# Assessments

## Speaking Test

## Academic Essay or Report

## Written Examination (Essay or Report)

### ***Non-assessed Moodle Modules (Independent Learning):***

- *Citation & Referencing Skills & How to Avoid Plagiarism*
- *Academic Vocabulary*
- *Academic Grammar*
- *Academic Discussion Strategies*

# Academic writing assessment tasks in CUE

Week	Task	
1	Diagnostic writing (0%)	<i>For Formative assessment</i>
6	Revise the first two paragraphs / sections of diagnostic writing (with annotations) (0%)	
9	Full writing (with annotations) (25%)	<i>For Summative assessment</i>
After 12	Written exam (35%)	

# Background of Core University English

The screenshot displays the Uvision website interface. At the top left is the Uvision logo with the tagline "watch • learn • share". To the right are navigation links: HOME, BROWSE, SCHEDULE, ABOUT US, HELP, LINKS, and LOGIN. A language selector "[Eng 繁簡]" is in the top right corner. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: HOME > BROWSE > ACADEMIC LIFE > VIDEO. A search bar labeled "Search this site..." is also present. The main content area features a video player with a large play button. The video thumbnail shows a road leading to a horizon, overlaid with a logo that reads "CAES1000 Core University English THE ROAD TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS". To the left of the video player, there are statistics: "Video" with "VIEWS 777" and "LIKES 17". A decorative graphic of colorful dots is on the bottom left and right sides.

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Welcome to CAES1000 - Core University English! Offered by the Centre for Applied English Studies!

# Research questions:

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 (mixed-methods)

- Participants: **local first-year** undergraduates
- Research methods
  - A **survey** (N = 1,012: beginning of the course)
  - Two individual **interviews** (N = 60: beginning & at the end of the course)
  - Students' diagnostic, interim and end-of- course **writing** (N = 60)
- Data analysis: Excel, SPSS & NVivo

## 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)?

<u>Overall</u> English language level	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5* <input type="checkbox"/> 5**
Paper 1 Reading	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5* <input type="checkbox"/> 5**
Paper 2 Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5* <input type="checkbox"/> 5**
Paper 3 Listening & Intergrated Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5* <input type="checkbox"/> 5**
Paper 4 Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 5* <input type="checkbox"/> 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	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
8. helped me experience the cultures of other people.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9. provided chances for my personal development.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10. prepared me for using English in my university studies.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11. prepared me for using English in the digital world (e.g. internet).	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12. developed my skills of learning independently.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13. helped me use English in daily life.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14. increased my interest in English.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
15. increased my ability to use English for leisure/entertainment.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16. increased my critical thinking.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
17. promoted a culture of reading.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
18. made me learn other subjects better.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> 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**?

<p>a. No.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I had not participated any English private tutoring in the past 12 months.</p> <p>(Please answer Q.20)</p>	<p>b. Yes. (can tick more than one)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private one-to-one</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Small group (2-7 students)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lecture style by tutors (live)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lecture style (video)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify _____)</p> <p>(Please answer Q.21 onwards)</p>
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<p>20. Why <b>didn't</b> you take English private tutoring <b>in the past 12 months</b>? (can tick more than one)</p> <p><u>I did not take any, because:</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I did well enough in school.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> studying English was not my priority.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I didn't like the nature of learning in tutoring.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> none of the available private tutoring seemed to suit my needs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> not many of my friends were doing it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I didn't have time.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I didn't have the money.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> my teachers were knowledgeable enough.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> It didn't seem to worth the money.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> people around discouraged me from joining.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify _____)</p> <p>(Please answer Q.23)</p>	<p>21. Why <b>did</b> you take English private tutoring <b>in the past 12 months</b>? (can tick more than one)</p> <p><u>I took some, because:</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to learn English better.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to improve my exam scores.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I was attracted by advertisements.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> my parents chose it for me.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> many of friends were doing it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> my teachers recommended it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> my teachers taught badly.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I lagged behind at school.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to be the top in class.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I wanted more resources for studying.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I wanted a sense of security.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify _____)</p> <p>22. How long had you participated in English private tutoring <b>in the past 12 months</b>?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 month or less</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 month to 3 months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 months to 6 months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7 months or more</p>
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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)

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

#### IV Expectations on University English studies

24. 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

25. 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.\*\****

# Interview I (beginning of semester)

1. Questionnaire follow-up
2. Background and English learning experiences (e.g., during F.4 to F.6 in formal schooling and private tutoring, if any)
3. Values, attitudes and beliefs of teaching and learning English (e.g., evaluation of NSS, preparing for university studies)
4. Discussion of diagnostic writing

## Interview II (end of semester)

1. English learning experiences in university (e.g., what they have learnt, difficulties encountered)
2. Transition from secondary to higher education (e.g., comparing English learning experiences in secondary school with those in university)
3. Discussion of course writing assignments

# Results and discussion

# 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**?

- Students' enrolment in English private tutoring in Form 6
- Reasons for (not) participating in English private tutoring
- Comparison of HKDSE English language results between English private tutoring recipients and non-recipients

# Enrolment rate in English private tutoring in Form 6

		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	

# Reasons for participating in English private tutoring (n = 551)

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
2. I wanted to improve my exam scores.	512	92.9
1. I wanted to learn English better.	331	60.1
10. I wanted more resources for studying	269	48.8
11. sense of security	154	27.9
7. my teachers taught badly.	111	20.1
5. many friends were doing it.	109	19.8
9. I wanted to be the top in class.	108	19.6
8. I lagged behind.	44	8.0
4. my parents chose it for me.	24	4.4
3. I was attracted by advertisements.	20	3.6
6. my teachers recommended it.	14	2.5

# Reasons for NOT participating in English private tutoring (n= 460)

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
9. It didn't seem worth the money.	198	43.0
3. I didn't like the nature of learning in tutoring	178	38.7
1. I did well enough in school.	131	28.5
8. my teachers were knowledgeable enough.	128	27.8
2. studying English was not my priority.	114	24.8
6. I didn't have time.	106	23.0
7. I didn't have the money.	86	18.7
4. none of the available private tutoring seemed to suit my needs	66	14.3
5. not many of my friends were doing it.	31	6.7
10. people around discouraged me from joining.	7	1.5

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

Group Statistics					
GTutorialCode		N	Mean <sup>1</sup>	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
DSE Overall	Without Tutoring	443	4.88	1.052	.050
	With Tutoring	527	4.95	.986	.043
DSE Reading	<p><b>The result from independent samples t-test shows no significant difference in grades between the two groups (<math>p &lt; .05</math>)</b></p>				
DSE Writing					
DSE Listening					
	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

<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

# 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?

- Evaluation of the senior secondary English language curriculum
- Evaluation of teachers and tutors in secondary schooling

# 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Average: only slightly agree or neutral</b></li> <li><b>Instrumental values dominated</b></li> <li><b>lack of interaction with people of other cultures</b></li> </ul>	3.49
	3.48
	3.46
	3.39
	3.32
	3.16
17. promoted a culture of reading.	3.10
8. helped me experience the cultures of other people.	2.86

# Paired-sample t-test results of students' perceived helpfulness between tutors and teachers: students with private tutoring

		With English private tutoring (n = 551)				
		Mean	SD	t value	Sig	Cohen's d
<b>Improved my examination grades.</b>	<b>Tutors</b>	3.97	.762	13.910	.000	<b>0.588</b>
	Teachers	3.28	.928			
<b>Increased my English ability for daily life.</b>	Tutors	3.30	.926	-2.446	.015	0.101
	<b>Teachers</b>	3.42	.860			
Increased my English learning motivation.	<b>Tutors</b>	3.31	.932	3.266	.001	0.140
	Teachers	3.14	.948			
<b>Increased my confidence in examinations.</b>	<b>Tutors</b>	3.99	.729	15.573	.000	<b>0.660</b>
	Teachers	3.26	.903			
<b>Enhanced my independent learning skills.</b>	Tutors	3.20	.937	-2.926	.004	0.132
	<b>Teachers</b>	3.34	.864			
Were more knowledgeable in English teaching.	<b>Tutors</b>	3.67	.883	4.950	.000	0.208
	Teachers	3.43	.885			
<b>Had more interaction with me.</b>	Tutors	2.79	1.158	-13.707	.000	<b>0.587</b>
	<b>Teachers</b>	3.72	.913			
<del>Provided extra support outside tutorial/school lesson time.</del>	<del>Tutors</del>	<del>3.36</del>	<del>1.121</del>	<del>-1.570</del>	<del>.117</del>	<del>0.067</del>
	<del>Teachers</del>	<del>3.46</del>	<del>1.021</del>			
<del>Increased my confidence in using English in daily life.</del>	<del>Tutors</del>	<del>3.43</del>	<del>.886</del>	<del>1.078</del>	<del>.281</del>	<del>0.047</del>
	<del>Teachers</del>	<del>3.38</del>	<del>.891</del>			

# Paired-sample t-test results of students' perceived helpfulness between tutors and teachers: students without private tutoring

		Without English private tutoring (n = 460)				
		Mean	SD	t value	Sig	Cohen's d
Improved my examination grades.	Tutors	3.23	1.443	-5.273	.000	0.248
	Teachers	3.62	.828			
Increased my English ability for daily life.	Tutors	2.59	1.320	-15.646	.000	<b>0.727</b>
	Teachers	3.63	.828			
Increased my English learning motivation.	Tutors	2.46	1.275	-12.446	.000	<b>0.575</b>
	Teachers	3.29	.947			
Increased my confidence in examinations.	Tutors	3.38	1.520	-2.375	.018	0.108
	Teachers	3.55	.816			
Enhanced my independent learning skills.	Tutors	2.43	1.286	-15.122	.000	<b>0.710</b>
	Teachers	3.47	.859			
Were more knowledgeable in English teaching.	Tutors	3.23	1.443	-5.273	.000	0.248
	Teachers	3.62	.828			
Had more interaction with me.	Tutors	2.59	1.320	-15.646	.000	<b>0.727</b>
	Teachers	3.63	.828			
Provided extra support outside tutorial/school lesson time.	Tutors	2.46	1.275	-12.446	.000	<b>0.575</b>
	Teachers	3.29	.947			
Increased my confidence in using English in daily life.	Tutors	3.38	1.520	-2.375	.018	0.108
	Teachers	3.55	.816			

# Research question 3

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

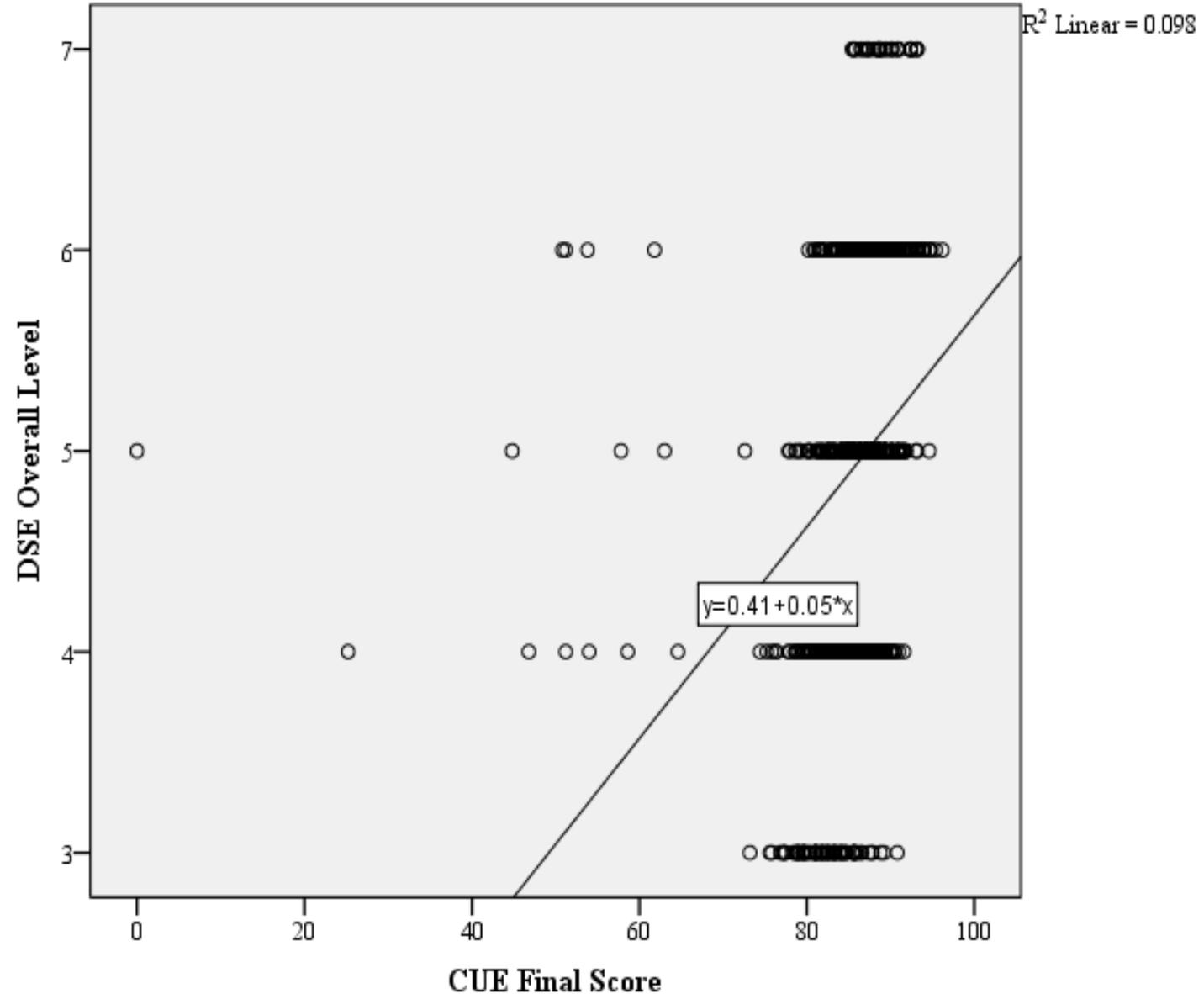
- HKDSE results vs CUE results
- Skills that need improving at university
- Challenges in the transition from secondary school to university

# Correlation between HKDSE and CUE results

		DSE Overall	DSE Reading	DSE Writing	DSE Listening	DSE Speaking
CAES Speaking Final Score	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.148**	.173**	.211**	.293**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1857.113	1444.008	1529.968	2018.984	2737.009
	Covariance	2.012	1.518	1.612	2.127	2.878
	N	924	952	950	950	952
CAES Exam Final Score	Pearson Correlation	.283**	.201**	<b>.219**</b>	.261**	.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2016.784	2017.108	1991.753	2559.612	2097.908
	Covariance	2.185	2.121	2.099	2.697	2.206
	N	924	952	950	950	952
CAES Task 3 Final Score	Pearson Correlation	.225**	.169**	<b>.169**</b>	.210**	.167**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1852.364	1918.821	1730.971	2326.535	1806.380
	Covariance	2.007	2.018	1.824	2.452	1.899
	N	924	952	950	950	952
CAES Course Final Score	Pearson Correlation	<b>.355**</b>	.204**	.231**	.282**	.289**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	1819.474	1634.571	1682.566	2214.173	2211.273
	Covariance	1.971	1.719	1.773	2.333	2.325
	N	924	952	950	950	952

## Correlation between HKDSE and CUE results

- Correlation is significant ( $p < 0.01$ )
- **Poor** linear relationship (Pearson's  $r < 0.3$ )
- **Weak positive** relationship between overall HKDSE results and Overall CUE results (Pearson's  $r = .355$ )



# Skills that need improvement

Skill	Count	Percentage
<b>Writing</b>	<b>645</b>	<b>63.7</b>
Speaking	513	50.7
Oral presentation	467	46.1
Vocabulary	441	43.6
Citation	433	42.8
Discussion	355	35.1
Grammar	317	31.3
Listening	247	24.4
Intercultural communication	243	24.0
Reading	237	23.4
Note-taking	185	18.3

# Challenges in University Learning

*English is very important in university. Except Chinese courses, all courses are taught in English. In fact, I do not understand what the university teachers talk about in class ..... I cannot catch up with my undergraduate learning. My English is very weak in different aspects such as grammar and vocabulary.*

(95106, Interview 1, DSE English Level 3)

# Challenges in University Learning

*My reading pace is very slow. I need to spare much time to write an essay.... Chinese was the medium of instruction in my secondary school; whereas English is a dominant language communication in university. I need to spend a lot of time understanding difficult English words now.*

(95241, Interview 1, DSE English Level 3)

# Challenges in University Learning

- *In university, I think grammar is not the main issue. Instead, it is challenging to **make sense of academic texts and then produce your own writing.***

*(91138, Interview 1, DSE English Level 5\*)*

- *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.***

*(91244, Interview 1, DSE English Level 5\*\*)*

In light of the economic growth and changes in family structure, more students in Hong Kong are now getting higher education. **Some of the general public point out** that the extent of higher education should be expanded in Hong Kong. **It is apparently a double-edged sword,** the reasons for and the drawbacks of the expansion of higher education will be explained as follows.

(96004, **Writing 1**, DSE English Level 5\*)

Since 1990s, comprehensive reviews and reforms on higher education have been carried out to improve the quality of education and its relevance to socio-economic needs (Lee, 2014). Besides, there is the growth of higher participation rate in basic education and progression rates in primary and secondary (UNESCO, 2014). These contribute to the flourishing of higher education. However, it brings about question of the quality of education, distribution of resources and recognition of degree (Jung & Postiglione, 2015). **This essay contends that to a large extent higher education should be expanded. It will first include suggestions to mitigate the problems and then look into the benefits brought in threefold** – getting private and public benefits by democratization of higher education, enhancing competitiveness to other countries and achieving social justice.

(96004, **Writing 2**, DSE English Level 5\*)

# Student's Reflection

*[In the diagnostic writing], I wasn't academic enough. And then... I know now that we can add some in-text citations... and avoid inappropriate tone. [...] In secondary school, I recited some vocabulary and sentence structures. They are not very useful now. Like, I recited some idioms, but they are not common in academic writing... For example, "every coin has two sides", "a leap in the dark", something like that.*

*(96004, Interview 2, DSE English Level 5\*)*

# Secondary School English vs Academic English

- *In university, we need to **use citation**. It is inevitable. In secondary school, we didn't have this awareness. We didn't need to think about citation in writing.*

(92125, Interview 2, DSE English Level 5\*)

- *In secondary school, we just needed to show off **vocabulary and format**. But **at university, we need to write precisely, academically**, and you need to be **rational**, and sometimes you need to **use more sources**.*

(91583, Interview 2, DSE English Level 5)

# Secondary School English vs Academic English

*[In academic writing], we are asked not to write many questions, but it was different in secondary school. The requirement was different. Secondary school writing requires rhetoric, but it is more practical in university writing.*

(95384, Interview 1, DSE English Level 5\*)

# Secondary School English vs Academic English

*The topics used in secondary school English and university English are more or less the same (about social issues); but the **use of tone** is very different . In secondary school English writings, I only needed to address the topic. **In university, I am required to use hedges such as “may”, “must” to show the level of certainty in my arguments.***

(95106, Interview 2, DSE English Level 3)

# Secondary School English vs Academic English

*In secondary school English, I was just required to present an idea **without any use of supporting evidence.***

*In university English, I have to **make use of ideas in academic sources to support my claims.***

*(95509, Interview 2, Level 3)*

# Impact of the EAP course

- *When you read many sources, you need to know how to come up with the main idea. This skill helps me with my Common Core courses. As I need to read many sources, I can now understand more quickly what each source is generally talking about. (91228, Interview 2, Level 5\*\*)*
- *I can apply the skills in my disciplinary learning. At least I know how to structure an essay, and how to summarise sources, and then add my own interpretation, sometimes with criticism. (91138, interview 2, Level 5\*)*

# Impact of the EAP course

*CUE has filled the gap between secondary school and university learning. CUE can help students smoothly transition their written and spoken communication from non-academic to academic.*

*For example, I have learnt from CUE that I need to express my perspectives and actively participate in the tutorial discussions.*

*(95369, interview 2, Level 3)*

## Secondary school English

Rather mechanical  
connectors

Expressing views based on  
personal experience

Recited formulaic expressions  
and idioms

Assertive style

## EAP at University

Linking ideas **more naturally**

Expressing views based on  
**academic sources**

**Less rhetorical**

Using **hedges** to show  
tentativeness

# Implications & Ways Forward

- Exemption vs **Make an EAP course compulsory to all undergraduate students, regardless of their level of English proficiency**
- **Strengthen general English proficiency** of secondary students and weak first-year undergraduates
- **Understand first-year undergraduates' learning needs and background** (both in mainstream and shadow education) **to help them have a better transition of English learning**
- **Raise the awareness of the importance of academic literacy** among stakeholders in higher education, i.e. students, teachers, and senior management

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