

# Immersing children in

## a fun and rich

## English language environment



**Chinese Y.M.C.A. Kindergarten**

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# A fun and rich English language environment



# Research shows that...

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Children's language accomplishments are largely influenced by:

- **language environment**

(Pence, Justice and Wiggins, 2008);

- **language input**

(Snow, 1972; Dickinson, Cote and Smith, 1993); and

- **social interaction**

(Vygotsky, 1978).

# Research shows that...

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**Social interactions** of young children should be fostered in:

- a **'play' environment**

(Strickland and Morrow, 1989); and

- a classroom that organised into learning centres (activity centres)

(Cohen and Cowen, 2008).

# The Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum (2006)

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- A pre-primary language curriculum should aim at creating a **language-rich learning environment**, in which children can develop their language proficiency through try-outs, exploration and interpersonal interaction.
- Pre-primary institutions should incorporate **play activities** into different learning areas.
- Pre-primary institutions should prepare '**activity centres/corners**' which cater for children's interests.

# Case study



**Project teachers:** 3

**Project levels:**  
K2 and K3

**Project year:**  
2009-2011

## Chinese Y.M.C.A. Kindergarten

# Background

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## Chinese Y.M.C.A. Kindergarten

- Located in Tin Shui Wai.
- 2 classes per level and approximately 24 children per class (in 2009-2011).
- 65% of the children were new immigrants from Mainland China, Pakistan, Indonesia and Thailand.
- The children had limited exposure to English at home and in the community.
- Use Cantonese as the medium of instruction for all activities.

# Challenges / Opportunities

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- Children were **not interested** in learning English or reading English books.
- Children had **limited opportunities** to listen to or speak English.
- **Interaction** between teachers and children in English was **minimal** in English language activities.
- Children **seldom** take the initiative to **engage in English language activities** at English activity centres during free-choice activity time.

# Objectives of the case study

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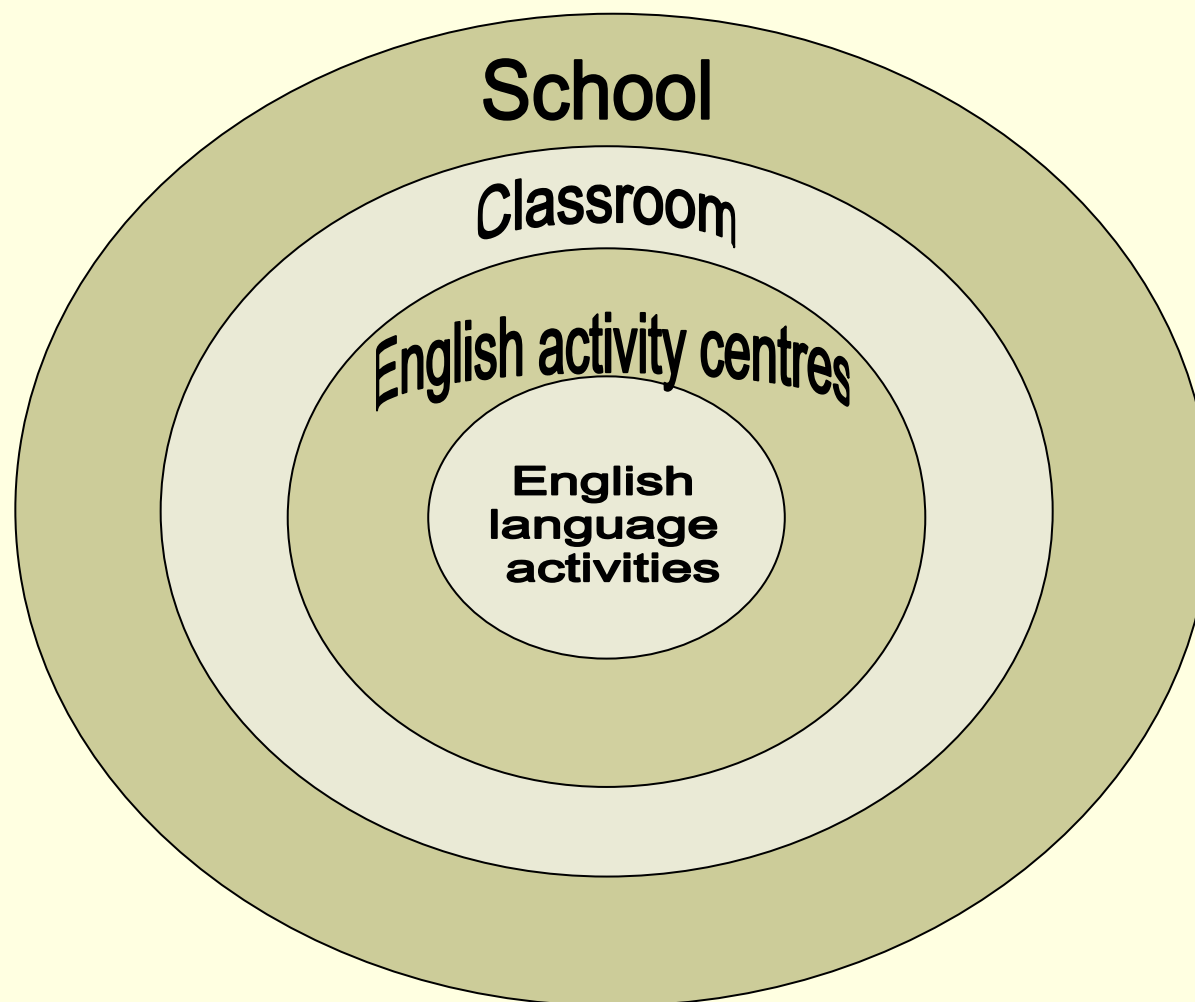
- To provide children with more opportunities to listen to, speak and read in English
- To promote teacher-student (T-S) and student-student (S-S) interactions.

To create a **rich English language environment**

# Implementation plan

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**Think big but start small!**



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Sept. – Dec. 2009	Jan. – Mar. 2010	Apr. – July 2010	Sept. – Dec. 2010	Jan. – June 2011
<b>Phase 1:</b> Enriching the English language activities				
<b>Phase 2:</b> Enriching the existing English activity centres				
<b>Phase 3:</b> Enriching the classroom environment				
<b>Phase 4:</b> Enriching the school environment				
<b>Phase 5:</b> Setting up the library corners				

# Phase 1:

## Enriching the English language activities

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- ✓ Used English as the **medium of instruction**.
- ✓ Adopted **a variety of teaching strategies** (e.g. Shared Reading, Storytelling) to initiate T-S interactions.
- ✓ Designed **fun and meaningful English language activities** (e.g. singing songs, saying rhymes, phonics activities, show-and-tell, real-life experience activities and drama activities) that promoted T-S and S-S interactions.

# Phase 1:

## Enriching the English language activities



Storytelling activity



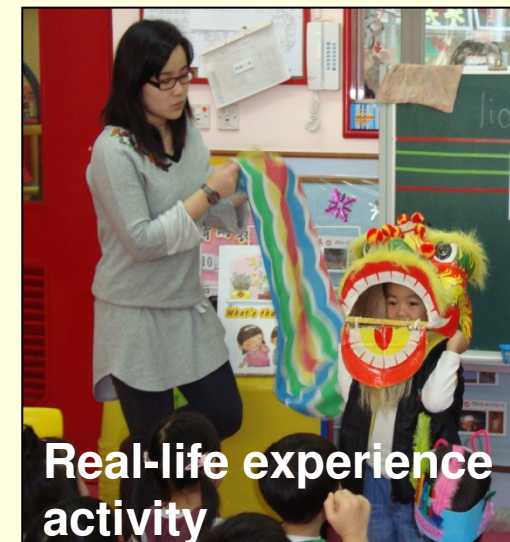
Shared reading activity



Drama activity



Singing a song



Real-life experience activity

## Phase 2:

### Enriching the existing English activity centres

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- ✓ **Replaced** the original **centre activities** with the activities introduced in English language activity time.
- ✓ **Expanded** the **variety of activities** at the English activity centres.
- ✓ **Encouraged interactions** between children and their teachers and between children and their peers in the English activity centres.

## Phase 2:

# Enriching the existing English activity centres

Bingo



Pelmanism



Slap game



What's missing?



## Phase 3:

# Enriching the classroom environment

- ✓ Conducted some **daily routines in English** (e.g. talking about the calendar, checking the weather).
- ✓ Set up **English activity centres** at every part of the classroom (e.g. the windowsills, the cupboards, the floor, the windows and the walls).



## Phase 3:

# Enriching the classroom environment



# Enriching the classroom environment

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# Enriching the school environment

- ✓ Set English activity centres in the **common area of the school**.
- ✓ Posted English **labels and signs** around the school.



## Phase 4:

# Enriching the school environment

- ✓ Held regular **English morning assemblies**.
- ✓ Organised **special English performances/activities** for the whole school.



## Phase 5:

# Setting up the library corners

- ✓ **Selected books** that suit children's interests and needs.
- ✓ Encouraged children to read by recording their progress in **reading logs**.
- ✓ **Facilitated T-S interaction** by inviting teachers to read with them at the corners.



## Phase 5:

# Setting up the library corners



# Children's learning

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- **More interactions** were found **between the children and their teachers** in English language activities, centre activities, English morning assemblies and everyday routines.
- **Some interactions** were found **between the children and their peers** at English activity centres.
- Children improved in **listening, speaking and reading skills**.
- Children developed a **greater interest** in English language activities.



# Teachers' reflection

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- Children need plenty of opportunities to use the language in **fun and meaningful contexts** in order to acquire the language.
- At pre-primary level, it is important to provide children with **a rich English language environment** in which they can be exposed to English by
  - listening to the teachers and their peers;
  - using the language for communication; and
  - reading for pleasure.
- More T-S and S-S interactions would be facilitated if the **teacher joins children's play** at English activity centres.

# Challenges

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- Using English as the sole medium of instruction when conducting English language activities.
- Equipping children with the skills to engage in English language activities at the English activity centres.

# Way forward

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➤ Further enrich the English language environment of the school by:

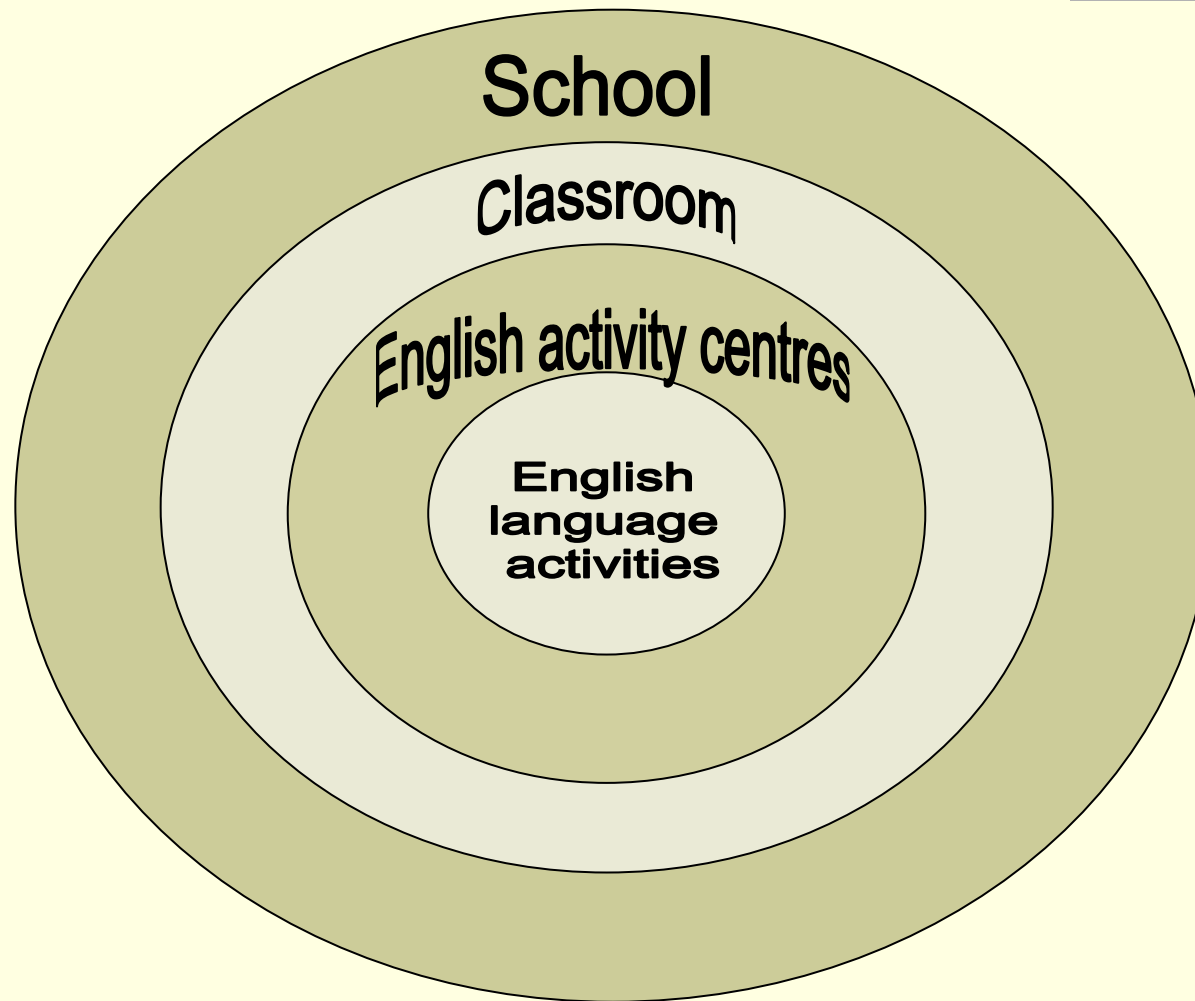
- Posting the **steps** and **rules** of the English language activities at the English activity centres
- **Joining children's play** at the English activity centres regularly to facilitate T-S and S-S interactions
- Conducting **a variety of activities** in **morning assemblies**
- Organizing **regular English game days** for all levels of the school.

➤ Adopt a **whole school approach** by preparing and inviting every teacher to conduct a wide range of English language activities in their classrooms.



# Way forward

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# Thank you!

