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Final Report

Project Title:

**Using Putonghua to Teach Chinese:
Perception of Chinese Language Teachers**

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Table of content

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. Literature Review | 5 |
| 3. Methodology | 11 |
| 4. Findings..... | 14 |
| 5. Discussion..... | 28 |
| 6. Conclusion | 31 |
| 7. References..... | 32 |
| 8. Appendix..... | 37 |

1. Introduction

There have been heated debates over the issue of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in the Hong Kong society. The major disagreement has been whether using the mother tongue, that is, Cantonese, is more effective. Since the end of last century, the Curriculum Development Council (1999) has identified the adoption of Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) as a “long term goal”, PMI (Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction) is never a compulsory policy in Hong Kong.

However, in the school context, many in-service teachers are strongly concerned “whether PMI has positive effects on teaching and learning of Chinese” (Kou & Cheung, 2014, p.6). Many teachers are skeptical and doubtful about the effectiveness of PMI. Kou and Cheung’s (2014) research also shows that teachers lack confidence to use PMI and are uncertain about the implementation of PMI. In a primary school in Chan’s (2006) case study, the major barriers of using PMI include qualification of teachers, choice of the right teaching materials and the curriculum planning. All these research findings indicate that Chinese Language teachers play a key role in the successful (or not) implementation of the PMI policy at the school.

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study investigates teachers' perspective on using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language and the impact of PMI on Chinese Language teaching. This research aims at collecting teachers' belief and exploring impacts of using PMI in terms of teaching and learning. This study attempts to provide some insights about with the current state of condition of PMI as perceived by teachers. The research findings may help to bring forth some suggestions for the further implementation of PMI.

The major research question of the study is:

1. How do Chinese Language teachers perceive the adoption of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language (PMI) in a primary school in Hong Kong?

The major question can be further developed into two sub-questions:

- i. How do teachers perceive the impact of PMI on the Chinese Language classroom teaching?
- ii. How do teachers evaluate the impact of PMI on students' learning?

Teachers play a critical role in education as they represent the implemented curriculum (Adamson & Davison, 2003). This study seeks opinions from teachers and provides some empirical evidences collected from classroom teachers to contribute to a more balanced dialog about the issue of the MOI in the Chinese classrooms in Hong Kong primary schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1 MOI Policy in Hong Kong

A. Curriculum reform

After the handover of Hong Kong, a first-ever policy of “bi-literacy and tri-lingualism” was put forward by the government (Lee & Leung, 2012). Before 1998, over 90% of secondary schools claimed to use English as the medium of instruction (EMI) (Tam, 2012). The medium of instruction then changed from mostly EMI to CMI (use Chinese as the medium of instruction) due to the implementation of mother-tongue education policy (Choi, 2003). The government convinced the public that mother-tongue education is the best for learning subject content by providing empirical evidence (Tsui, 2004). Yet, the Curriculum Development Council promulgated using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language as the long term goal in

2000. The Putonghua-medium initiative in Chinese subjects reduces the role of mother-tongue teaching (Gao, Leung & Trent, 2010) and is at variance with the rationale of mother-tongue education (Tam, 2012).

B. Rationale of adopting PMI

It is believed that students will master the Chinese language better when they have more exposure to Putonghua and its usage because Putonghua has a higher correspondence with written Chinese than Cantonese (Li, 2006). It deemed to be a more effective means of enhancing the acquisition of literacy in Chinese (SCOLAR, 2003). Some educators and language experts believe that under the “one country” principle, the promotion of Putonghua, instead of Cantonese, ought to be the trend, as Putonghua is the official language of China (Lee & Leung, 2012).

It is reported that using a second language as the MOI can improve the language proficiency of students. For example, the careful design and curriculum planning of programmes, coherent guidelines regarding teacher and student use of the first language are the key elements (Day & Shapson, 2001). Therefore, it is believed that using PMI can be an effective means to enhance the Chinese language ability of Hong Kong students.

2.2 Importance of understanding the belief and value of teachers

Teachers play a critical role in the implementation of MOI shift as they are the ones who receive the profound impact of the change while they need to implement the intended curriculum (Gao, Leung & Trent, 2010). According to Goodson & Numan (2010), teachers' perspective on educational changes and reform are "too often missing", which potentially undermine their roles in the changes. It is found that most Chinese Language teachers in Hong Kong are happier when they are using Cantonese to teach Chinese Language (Tse, 2009).

According to Clark & Peterson (1986), teacher's beliefs about subject matter are noted as a primary factor influencing teacher's judgments about textbooks and classroom objectives which strongly influence the decisions and teaching practices of teachers. Teachers' beliefs and behaviors are interrelated and are reflected in various teaching approaches (Tam, 2005). With reference to Tam (2011), if the teachers' belief are resistant to change and it would impede teachers' own learning and changing their teaching practices. In other words, teachers' beliefs play a more critical role in facilitating or impeding education than the switch of MOI itself. It is necessary to take account of teachers' belief and the contexts in order to understand if effective implementation is to be achieved (Tam, 2012). Evaluating the existing beliefs of

teachers about MOI is critical as it could affect teacher's decision on how to handle Putonghua instruction and Chinese Language teaching as a whole (Tam, 2013). It is found that some teachers believe that using mother tongue could maximize the effectiveness of learning Chinese (Tam, 2012,). Therefore, it is worth studying if the teachers, the ones to implement the curriculum, have different beliefs over the policy.

2.3 The main impacts of PMI

Tam (2012) finds out that the inadequate professional development of teachers, the underdeveloped curriculum and textbooks are the problems arose from changing CMI to PMI. Kan (2010) also points out that there is insufficient support for the school and teachers to plan the curriculum and the willingness of teachers is often neglected in the process.

A. On teaching

When the medium of instruction changed from student's first language to a second language, the lessons tended to become more teacher-centred (Lo & Macaro, 2012). It is found that the opportunities for negotiation of meaning and scaffolding have been lowered, which directly affect the classroom interaction, which is regarded as an indicator of good or pedagogical practice (Muijis & Reynolds, 2001) and important

condition for learning to take place. However, deep learning and interactive communication were unlikely to occur with the use of PMI.

Leung (2009) identifies the investigation of lesson preparation and teaching content of non-native Putonghua teachers should be further discussed. The language of instruction in lessons has to be changed and reconsidered. Teachers need to use different ways to deliver the instruction to make things clear as students may not get the idea in Putonghua. It highlights the decrease in teaching efficacy of teachers can be one significant impact of using PMI.

Chinese Language teachers have to satisfy the Chinese Language and Putonghua teaching requirements for using PMI. The ability, fluency and the confidence of using Putonghua to give instruction and conduct lessons directly impact on their teaching and teaching efficacy (Tam, 2012).

B. On learning

It is believed that students can enhance the acquisition of literacy in Chinese by using Putonghua as the medium of instruction. However, according to Tam (2012), most interviewed teachers observed that Putonghua instruction itself created a

different kind of barrier to learning. The pace of learning was slower than using Cantonese as the medium of instruction as efforts were put into highlighting the pronunciation, syntax, and grammar in the use of Putonghua. Some words which have different usage or syntax between Cantonese and Putonghua have to be discussed and explained in details to avoid confusion.

Some experienced teachers who have gone through the transition from mother-tongue education to PMI were aware that there was a general decline in the language proficiency of students (Tam, 2012). Though the lessons are conducted in Putonghua, the use of Cantonese expression by students has not reduced. Experienced teachers highlighted the fact that students were disadvantaged when learning in Putonghua.

The undeveloped textbooks and materials can also be the impacts of PMI, which reveals to affect students' learning directly as suggested by Fung & Yip (2014).

3. Methodology

3.1 Choosing Qualitative Research

In order to obtain in-depth understanding of the in-service Chinese Language teachers' perception and the impacts of PMI on teaching, qualitative approach was adopted. According to Denzin & Luncoln (2000), "qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world". Therefore, using qualitative approach helps to study the issue in depth and to relate the phenomenon specifically into the context of Hong Kong Chinese Language teachers.

3.2 Participants

This empirical study was conducted at my field experience host school which has been using PMI to teach Chinese Language for years. Students are divided into "Full PMI", "Fewer PMI" and "Non-Chinese students" classes according to their ability and will.

The participants of this study are 8 in-service teachers using PMI to teach Chinese Language of different levels from primary 1 to primary 6. Teachers offered their opinions about their perceptions of PMI policy and the impacts of the policy according to their own teaching experiences.

In order to maximize the diversity of the sample, five experienced Chinese Language teachers who have experienced the shift from teaching with CMI to PMI were included. These teachers may have more in-depth understandings about the impact of the shift of MOI. Three Chinese Language teachers who have just entered the field or started teaching with the use of PMI were selected, including one whose mother tongue is Putonghua. This combination of participants allows larger varieties of Chinese Language teachers to be interviewed. The varied experiences and backgrounds of different teachers help to gather different perceptions of teachers.

Table 3-1 Background of 8 in-service Chinese Language teachers

| <i>Name (pseudonyms)</i> | Sex | Teaching experience | Taught in CMI | Years of teaching in CMI | Years of teaching in PMI | Class Teaching* | Mother Tongue # | Learnt Chinese in |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Ada</i> | F | >10 | / | / | 10 | JUN, SEN | CAN | PMI |
| <i>Betty</i> | F | >10 | YES | ~5 | 6 | SEN | CAN | CMI |
| <i>Cathy</i> | F | First year | / | / | 0.5 | JUN | CAN | PMI |
| <i>Dora</i> | F | First year | / | / | 0.5 | JUN, SEN | PTH | PMI |
| <i>Ella</i> | F | ~15 | YES | ~10 | 4 | JUN | CAN | CMI |
| <i>Frank</i> | M | >20 | YES | ~10 | 10 | SEN | CAN | CMI |
| <i>Gordon</i> | M | >15 | YES | ~4 | 12 | SEN | CAN | CMI |
| <i>Helen</i> | F | >15 | YES | ~10 | 7 | SEN | CAN | CMI |

* JUN= Junior (P.1-3) , SEN=Senior (P.4-6)

CAN= Cantonese , PTH= Putonghua

3.3 Data collection

Semi-structured individual interview is chosen as the prominent method to acquire useful and comprehensive information from teachers. Flexible open-ended questions were used so participants could expound on the topic and provide in-depth information with the support of their teaching experience.

Two different sets of questions were used for experienced teachers who have gone through the transition and teachers who started teaching in PMI (Appendix 1).

Each interview lasted for about 20 minutes to half an hour which they had offered valuable opinions under certain time pressure of their busy schedule and workload. Some background information was collected for better understanding of teachers' points of view as indicated in Table 3-1. Therefore, all the names of the teachers given in this study are pseudonyms so as to protect their privacy.

4. Findings

After interviewing eight Chinese Language teachers from the same school, it is found that there seems to be a consensus of opinion among Chinese Language teachers of the school to teach ancient Chinese and poems in Cantonese since students can make more sense of the poems and features in Cantonese. Apart from these topics, the degrees of using PMI to teach Chinese Language still vary across levels. Even though students are allocated to classes of different degrees of PMI classes, the actual practice still depends on students' ability and cognitive level. Teachers express that certain Cantonese would be used in lessons to assure understanding of students. More Cantonese would be used in junior primary classrooms as students may not adapt to using a second language as the medium of instruction and have lower competence in Putonghua. Comparatively, lessons are conducted in Putonghua most of the time in senior classrooms since students are used to this practice and more capable to understand instruction and subject knowledge. Therefore, there is still some divergence in practice in the same school.

4.1 Perceptions of teachers

The interview data reflects that even teachers teaching in the same school perceive the adoption of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in different

ways. Nonetheless, all teachers believe that using a second language to teach Chinese Language undoubtedly is a challenge for both teachers and students. The teachers mainly perceive the use of PMI in Chinese Language classroom as (A) a challenge for both teachers and students, (B) a change of medium of instruction, (C) a chance to get more exposure to Putonghua and (D) a call for flexibility.

A. A challenge for both teachers and students

Since the mother tongue of the majority of teachers and students is Cantonese, it is never easy to conduct the Chinese Language lessons in Putonghua. For experienced teachers, they had their professional training in Cantonese and had been teaching in Cantonese for a period of time. The switch of medium of instruction is a challenge for teachers to conduct the lesson using Putonghua even the teachers have good Putonghua proficiency. Betty mentioned that:

“Teaching Chinese Language from Cantonese to Putonghua is definitely a big challenge. My mother tongue is Cantonese and I had been teaching in Cantonese. The most important thing that help implementing the curriculum is mental preparation. My mind have to be ready for this challenge and make sure that I have more time on lesson preparation as there are some differences in some of the usage between Cantonese and Putonghua. But for students, it is rather difficult for them, especially for senior primary. The curriculum

involves much higher order thinking. They have to switch between Cantonese and Putonghua in their mind for understanding.”

Her comment highlights that the challenge face by students and supported by Ella:

“The switch of MOI is a challenge for kids. Putonghua is not their mother tongue, they can hardly understand what teachers say in class. But Chinese Language is rich in content, for weaker students, Putonghua can be the barrier of their learning”.

It reveals that using a second language as the medium of instruction poses difficulty in teachers’ teaching and students’ learning.

B. A change of medium of instruction

While all teachers consider the use of Putonghua is a challenge for teachers and students, some also consider it as a change of medium of instruction. The use of Putonghua in Hong Kong classroom does not affect the learning of the language itself.

Regarding to this, Ada made the following comment:

“The thing we are trying to teach is Chinese Language. Using Cantonese or Putonghua does not affect how students learn. You can learn Chinese Language in any dialect, Putonghua is just one of them. Putonghua and

Cantonese, they are just the means to communicate, a medium, but what we are teaching is the language.”

Similarly, Frank shared similar thoughts:

“PMI or CMI is just the change of means of communication. There isn’t change in the subject itself. The content of the curriculum remains unchanged.

The only change is conducting lesson in Putonghua or Cantonese.”

Their comments reflect that the main focus of the subject is Chinese Language itself instead of what dialect that is being used in lessons. The nature of the language is the same.

C. A chance to get more exposure to Putonghua

Changing the medium of exchange from Cantonese to Putonghua, some teachers perceive it as a chance for students to get more exposure to Putonghua. Students have limited exposure to Putonghua with the limited time of Putonghua lesson. By conducting Chinese Language lesson in Putonghua, students have more time to be immersed in this national language. Gordon thought that:

“I think the rationale of promoting teaching Chinese Language in Putonghua is a response to the social environment. The EDB has been promoting bi-literacy and tri-lingualism since the handover. It is not bad for students to

have more opportunities to learn Putonghua as a language.”

Another teacher, Helen, also agreed that:

“It is a trend to learn better Putonghua after the handover. The society needs this change. It is good that students to get more exposure to Putonghua.

Learning one more language is always advantageous to students.”

Teachers perceive the use of PMI in Chinese Language classroom as more exposure to Putonghua as well as a means that may contribute to the mastery of this language by everyday practice.

D. A call for flexibility

However, after using PMI for some time, teachers perceive that there should be more flexibility in adoption. Although the school has certain policy to stream students according to their ability, concerns are needed in classroom. Cathy thought that:

“Although there is pre-test for streaming before the new academic year, it is still difficult to conduct lesson in Putonghua for junior students. It greatly depends on students’ ability of the class. For P.1 students, they are still trying to adapt to primary school life. It is really difficult for the 6 years olds to get used to the change of school life and language in classroom.”

Ella agreed that the Chinese Language learning foundation acquisition of young learners will be affected if there is no flexibility in implementation. It is suggested that both the schools and government to allow more flexibility in adopting PMI. With more flexibility, for example, non-restrictive use of PMI in primary classroom, may help the students to learn with a solid foundation.

4.2 Impacts on teaching

Despite the fact that teachers have different personal perceptions of the use of PMI, all the teachers share the views that the implementation of PMI does not affect their lesson preparation and teaching pedagogies much. However, they share similar impacts on teaching: low teaching pace and use of Cantonese in lessons. It reveals that there are some practical impacts on teaching while using PMI in Hong Kong Chinese Language classrooms.

A. Lesson preparation and teaching pedagogies

Although teachers are required to conduct their lessons in Putonghua instead of their mother tongue, Cantonese, not much differences are found in terms of lesson preparation and teaching pedagogies. Most teachers agreed that the content of the subject itself does not change due to the switch of the medium of instruction.

Therefore, they are still teaching the same content but in a different means of exchange – Putonghua only. In terms of lesson preparation, teachers tend to double-check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words and usage before having lesson.

Ella explained that:

“There is no big difference in terms of lesson preparation. The content is the same. But I do spend more time on preparing on pronunciation of some unfamiliar words to make sure I pronounce these correctly in lesson. I won’t say it’s a difference because even if I teach in Cantonese, I would still check the pronunciation of some unfamiliar words to ensure that I won’t mislead my students.”

Whereas teachers pointed out that teaching pedagogies are adjusted according to the level of students instead of considering the medium of instruction. The pedagogies are used to assist teachers’ teaching and understanding of students. Helen said that:

“For junior primary, just like other lessons, I prefer using more pictures, drawing and body gestures to help students understand what I am saying. For example, when I explain the word “Sun” to P.I, I write the Chinese characters on blackboard and draw a sun next to the word. I will do the same regardless to Cantonese or Putonghua.”

The variations of pedagogies are used as tools according to the needs of students.

Gordon recounted his views on senior primary:

“As a teacher, motivating students to learn is the most important thing. Arousing their interest of learning through different means is critical. For senior primary, I make use of e-Learning. I ask student to record their own reading aloud practice to the e-learning platform and select some pieces for discussion in class. They enjoy participating. I also use some games to play with them.”

It can be seen that the main criterion of teachers to consider their teaching pedagogies is not bounded to the medium of exchange, but for the benefits of students. The best strategies are those which are applied according to the levels and needs of students while motivating students is the key to learning.

B. Low teaching pace

However, when it comes to teaching, most teachers found that the teaching pace becomes lower and less efficient. Due to the use of Putonghua, students need longer time to process teachers' instruction and explanation. Regular time has to be spent to motivate students and arouse their interest of the topic. Teaching pace and content have to be adjusted according to students' reaction. In order to let students have a clearer idea of the flow, explanation becomes lengthier and repetitive. More time is

spent on checking for understanding and communicating the ideas. Dora recounted:

“After getting used to listen and speak Putonghua, students are willing to speak. But sometimes they struggle very long to formulate what they want to say. At that time, you can’t stop them as it discourages them from trying. After saying few words, you have to give help or correct them. More turn-takings are required for one simple question. It actually affects the progress of the class and interrupt the flow.”

As a native speaker of Putonghua, she also agreed that such phenomenon will not happen if the lesson is conducted in students’ mother tongue. In real teaching, much time is spent on the negotiation of meaning between teachers and students which lowers the pace of teaching.

C. Use of Cantonese

It seems that using Cantonese to clarify subject knowledge and explanation is inevitable in Hong Kong PMI classrooms. Cantonese is used as the last resort for checking students’ understanding and stopping the negotiation of meaning. However, for junior primary, owing to their lower competency in both Putonghua and Chinese Language, the ratio of using Cantonese is much higher than that of senior levels.

Cathy shared that:

“For P.1 students, it is almost impossible to have lesson in Putonghua only. They do not have solid language foundation and they know limited words. They do not listen or understand what I am saying if I only speak Putonghua. I have to repeat everything in Cantonese again. When I speak Cantonese, they find it is more intimate and willing to listen. I use Cantonese most of the time for P.1.”

It is found that the use of Cantonese does not only contribute to students’ understanding, but also related to intimacy of Cantonese. Ella added that:

“It’s difficult for junior students to adapt to PMI and it becomes hard to cater for students’ learning. Sometimes, I give lengthy explanation of a task or homework in Putonghua, and I look into their faces, I know that I have to explain everything in Cantonese once more. Basically, I use half Cantonese and half Putonghua for my class.”

The roles of Cantonese and Putonghua in lesson become unclear to students when both are being used and switched continuously. It reveals that there is a mix use of both Cantonese and Putonghua in lessons to facilitate students’ learning.

4.3 Impacts on learning

There are some common impacts on students’ learning discovered by the teachers. The impacts include (A) enhancement in Chinese listening and writing, (B)

Putonghua becomes a barrier of learning and (C) change in students' confidence.

A. Enhancement in Chinese listening and writing

The implementation of PMI positively enhance students' Chinese listening and writing as reported by the teachers. Since students are exposed to Putonghua much more often than having just one Putonghua lesson a week, they become more familiar with Putonghua pronunciation. Some misuse of Cantonese features are avoided in writing owing to the usual exposure to Putonghua vocabulary. However, due to the passive role of students in class, there is limited improvement can be found in students' speaking and reading. Dora commented:

"I believe there is improvement in listening and writing. They listen more Putonghua and with the use of text, they can associate the words and pronunciation better. For writing, it is clear that they avoid some Cantonese spoken words in their writing. For example, there is no "after that" (之後) in Putonghua and written Chinese. I found that they avoid using "after that" (之後) but "afterwards" (然後) in their writing. But I don't think much there is much improvement in speaking and reading. Limited time is given to them to speak in Putonghua in class and they prefer speaking in Cantonese."

Apart from the enhancement in listening and writing, all teachers agreed that the

Putonghua competency of students have been improved in general. It discloses the positive impact of PMI on students' learning.

B. Putonghua as a barrier of learning

Nonetheless, teachers felt that Putonghua becomes a barrier of learning for some students. Comparing with mother tongue education, which teachers and students speak in their mother tongue in class, Putonghua seems to become the prerequisite of learning Chinese Language in PMI classroom. Students have to process teachers' instruction and words in Putonghua. For weaker students, longer time is needed for understanding. This problem does not exist if lesson is conducted in mother tongue as ideas are transacted effectively. Betty pointed out:

“Students have to be ready for learning in Putonghua. However, they don't really like it because they do not understand. Especially for senior students, when they are required to do some higher order thinking, they have to think one step further from mother tongue. It is challenging and becomes the obstacle of learning. You will see some poker faces as they do not know what's going on.”

Students refuse or are restricted to learning because of the use of Putonghua in Chinese Language classroom.

Additionally, Ella mentioned that:

“I found that Putonghua itself is a barrier of students’ learning. They speak Cantonese as mother tongue and use Putonghua in lesson. But indeed we are asking students to master 2 pronunciation systems. Having two different systems, but there is only one kind of written system. Kids may wonder and be confused that why should I write that, what shouldn’t I write. If there is no support from family, kids will struggle a lot in their learning.”

The systematic differences of Putonghua and Cantonese impose difficulties on students’ learning which teachers have to work hard to eliminate the confusions of students.

C. Change in students’ confidence

Students are always encouraged to participate in class activities. However, the use of PMI seems to affect students’ confidence. Students are less active and willing to answer questions or express their views as they are expected to speak in Putonghua. Helen suggested that flexibility and rewarding scheme have to be allowed for encouraging students to speak and boost their confidence for speaking aloud. Students are encouraged to answer in Putonghua with certain use of Cantonese which assists their expression. Frank added that:

“It is sad to see that students are not confident enough to raise their hands for answering questions. Their participation is affected by their Putonghua ability and confidence in speaking Putonghua. They found difficulty in expressing what they want to say in Putonghua so they rather give up the chance. It is simply because they do not feel they can speak as proficiently as using mother tongue.”

The participation of students is affected due to the use of PMI. Teachers expressed that the answer of students tend to be concise and less in-depth. Much effort is needed for building the confidence of students with the use of PMI.

5. Discussion

This study has presented a case study of the perceptions of some Chinese Language teachers of a local primary school. Based on the findings, there are three issues concerning the use of PMI that needed to be discussed. They include the beliefs of teachers, school curriculum and support and the impacts on teaching and learning.

The results present that even teachers all noticed that the use of PMI as a challenge for both teachers and students, they perceive the adoption of PMI differently. It is delighting to find that the attitude of different teachers towards the adoption of PMI is generally positive. Regarding that most of the interviewees are experienced teachers who have gone through the switch of MOI, they do not appear to have contrastive beliefs towards the switch but they are open-minded to accept the challenge. Teachers do not have resistant beliefs which impede their own teaching and students learning as suggested by Tam (2011). Whereas, the perception of teachers may be influenced by their own personal and teaching experiences. For teachers with 15 years teaching experience or above, they notice and understand the differences of teaching in CMI and PMI and help themselves in teaching. While teachers who learnt Chinese in PMI classrooms understand the difficulty and struggle of students and teach with effective strategies.

Nevertheless, teachers highlighted the importance of the school curriculum and

support. During the interview, Betty stressed that “the successful implementation of PMI teaching greatly depends on the school curriculum, colleagues and the environment, but not teachers only”. Frank also pointed out the how school policy and curriculum implement and adapt to PMI teaching are critical. Having clear curriculum between Putonghua and Chinese Language and consensus with colleagues eliminate the barriers of using PMI (Chan, 2006).

The findings also show both positive and negative impacts on teaching and learning. In response to Leung (2009), it is surprising to see teachers perceive no difference in terms of lesson preparation and teaching content in their teaching. It indicates that the teaching materials, like e-books, supplementary exercises, games, are sufficient and supportive. It is not consistent with previous study about the shortage of appropriate teaching resources (Tam, 2012). It appears to be a rise in concern among textbook developers in Hong Kong to be aware of the quality of materials with regard to PMI teaching. However, low teaching pace and mix use of Cantonese are unavoidable while using a second language in Chinese Language classrooms.

The results partly support the findings of Li (2006) which shows that Putonghua has a higher correspondence with written Chinese than Cantonese since students are able to avoid some common colloquial Cantonese in their writing. However, the

findings only show limited enhancement of Chinese Language ability after immersing in PMI environment which cannot confirm Putonghua as a more effective means for the improving acquisition of language literacy (SCOLAR, 2003).

As for the negative impacts of learning, the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction itself created a barrier to learning which slow down the pace of learning of students (Tam, 2012). It is also consistent with the findings that using unfamiliar MOI not only hampers students' academic and cognitive growth, but also self-esteem and ability to participate meaningfully in the educational process (Tsui & Tollefson, 2004, Kou & Cheung, 2014).

Therefore, it is not easy to distinguish whether the adoption of PMI facilitates students learning or not. There are advantages and also drawbacks for applying every single policy. Teachers should try their best to assist students learning and minimize the negative impacts of it according to the school context and students ability.

6. Conclusion

This article has reported eight in-service Chinese Language teachers' perceptions of the adoption of using Putonghua to teach Chinese Language in Hong Kong primary classrooms including the impacts on teaching and learning. Although it only reports limited views of Hong Kong Chinese Language teachers, the findings show some insights about with the current state of condition of PMI as perceived by teachers which enrich our understanding the impacts on teachers and students. The findings show that teachers perceive the adoption of PMI positively in general despite the fact that they agreed that it is a challenge for both teachers and students. Although the use of PMI does not affect much on lesson preparation, it gives rise to low teaching pace and mix use of Cantonese in teaching. Meanwhile, Putonghua itself becomes a barrier of some students and changes their confidence even though certain enhancement in Chinese listening and writing is observed.

In conclusion, it is hoped that some improvements and adjustment can be done after getting the voices of some Hong Kong in-service teachers. Teachers themselves need to facilitate students' learning and minimize the negative impacts according to the needs and levels of students.

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8. Appendix

Interview questions

Question set for experienced teachers

Perception of PMI

1. How do you help yourself to implement the curriculum?
2. How do you perceive using Putonghua to teach Chinese?
3. In your opinion, do you think using Putonghua to Chinese is a good strategy for enhancing students' language proficiency? Why / Why not?
4. How do you perceive the switch from CMI to PMI as you have taught in both languages?

Impact on Chinese teaching

5. Have you adopted different strategies when you taught in Cantonese and in Putonghua? Why or why not?
6. What are the impacts on your Chinese Language teaching?
7. Do you find any differences or difficulties on preparing your teaching?
8. How do you evaluate students' Putonghua?
9. How do you evaluate the role of PMI in facilitating students' learning? In what way?
10. How do you see their learning motivation?
11. How do you see the social distance between you and your students with PMI?
12. How do you see the classroom interaction with PMI?

Question set for relatively new teachers

Perception of PMI

1. How do you help yourself to implement the curriculum?
2. How do you perceive using Putonghua to teach Chinese?
3. In your opinion, do you think using Putonghua to Chinese is a good strategy for enhancing students' language proficiency? Why / Why not?

[If you are a native speaker of Putonghua, how do you perceive this policy in Hong Kong context?]

Impacts on Chinese teaching

4. What strategies do you use for teaching Chinese Language in Putonghua as it is not the mother tongue of students?
5. What are the impacts on your Chinese Language teaching?
6. Are there any impacts on lesson preparation on you?
7. How do you evaluate students' Putonghua?
8. How do you evaluate the role of PMI in facilitating students' learning? In what way?
9. How do you see their learning motivation?
10. How do you see the classroom interaction with PMI?
11. How do you see the social distance between you and your students with PMI?