ENG 4903 Honors Project

Final Thesis Cover Sheet

(To be completed by the student and attached to the front of work submitted)

Name of student   Allan Jolly

SID

Name of tutor   Dr. Yu Baohua, Lucy

Similarity report

Words count excluding references and appendix   5917

<u>Declaration of originality and academic honesty</u>

I certify that this is my own work and I have acknowledged material taken from outside sources.

Signature:

Date: 10th April, 2017

**Understanding the attitudes and effectiveness of shadow education on
English language achievement: a study on Hong Kong tertiary students**

Abstract

The influence of shadow education continues to grow around the world and in Hong Kong. Students are flocking to tutorial centres and parents are hiring the best private tutors they can find. In light of this growing phenomenon, researchers have carried out quantitative studies to understand the effects of shadow education on various stakeholders. However, there is a paucity of data on the experiences of learners', especially post-implementation of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examinations, and if private tutoring had served them well. This study aims to address this gap by offering insight into learners' motives and attitudes towards shadow education, whether students feel private tutoring meets their English language learning needs, and how we can improve shadow education in Hong Kong. A qualitative study was carried out with data collected from background questionnaires and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with fifteen Undergraduate students as they were most able to tell whether their private tuition had an impact on their language achievement. The background questionnaire was adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and interview probes were based on the objectives and research questions of this study. Respondents had taken part in one-to-one, small-group, and large-group/lecture tutoring in their schooling in Hong Kong.

The data showed that shadow education has a significant impact on the effectiveness of language achievement, but only in terms of English results in the public examinations. It should be mentioned that shadow education can have a negative impact on students' integrative motivation. This raises questions for teachers, parents, and policy makers about the consequences of allowing shadow education to exert its influence on the Hong Kong education system.

Keywords: Shadow education, motivation, parents' role

1. Introduction

Hong Kong is a highly competitive meritocratic city. Pressure on parents to spend large amounts of money each year on improving their children's chances of getting into tertiary education increases continuously. One method that is becoming more popular is shadow education. Whilst definitions of shadow education remain inconsistent, Bray and Lykins (2012) define it as a system which provides support outside formal school education at a fee. Schools still hold the most dominant position in education, but shadow education and its importance has been growing rapidly around the world, including Hong Kong (Kwo & Bray, 2011). The reach of the private tutoring industry has become vast. The Education Bureau has listed 1,185 registered academic-oriented tutorial centres, exceeding the 1,031 secondary and primary schools in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2015)

1.1 Growth of shadow education

Private tutoring is ubiquitous in the territory. According to a survey conducted by The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (2013), the number of students enrolled in private tutoring classes has nearly doubled, from 34.1% in 1996 to 63.3% in 2012. Given the increasing popularity of private tutoring, its impact on mainstream schooling will grow as well. This surge cautions us about parents' trust in mainstream schooling and its shadow. Private tutoring's main purpose is to help students who cannot keep up with the pace of their teachers, and require more time and practice in understanding the subjects. On the other hand, the effects of private tutoring can be negative. Choi (2005) believes it reduces students' creativity and transforms them into passive learners. In addition, with the sole focus of many tutorial schools being to help students to perform in public examinations, the students' motivation for long-term learning may erode (Ho, 2009). Despite the drawbacks, the demand for shadow education continues to strengthen.

1.2 Role of shadow education in English language learning

Shadow education is offered for many subjects. As aforementioned, its main aim is to get students into university. One of the general university entrance requirements is to achieve a Level 3 in English and Chinese, and Level 2 in Liberal Studies and Mathematics in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. This raises the importance of English as it not only

affects a student's academic achievement and social mobility in Hong Kong, but also his/her own self-worth (Lin, 2010). The value of English goes beyond the classroom. Poon (2004) states that the language penetrates into the government administration, legislature and the judiciary domains due to the city's colonial past. Parents perceive that speaking English is vital for social mobility (Lai & Byram, 2003)

1.3 Relationship between students and shadow education

While most financial decisions are made by parents, students remain the primary consumers of private tutoring. The choices on what forms of private tutoring, which tutor is believed the most suitable, and how much to spend is usually decided by the students. Their choices play a major role not only in their university chances but their formal schooling. According to Zhan et al. (2014), little is still known, however, about 'students' perceptions on the quality and effectiveness of tutoring of various types" in Hong Kong and abroad, which is the focus of this study.

1.4 Objectives of the study

In view of the growing phenomenon of shadow education and its role with English language learning, this study hopes to focus on students' experience with private tutoring in order to gain understanding of their attitudes toward shadow education, whether they view it effective or not in meeting their English language needs, and how it can be improved.

2. Literature Review

First, this chapter will begin by describing the nature of shadow education in Hong Kong and relevant research on its effectiveness will be given. Finally, English language learning in Hong Kong is discussed.

2.1 Nature of shadow education

Since the turn of this century, the role of shadow education has ballooned. Kwo and Bray (2014) state that many families flock to the private tutoring sector as public schooling is considered inadequate in meeting "their needs and desires in the competitive environment". Given its importance, it is necessary to understand what shadow education means.

There are many forms and purposes of tutoring. Using a matrix presented by Bray and Kwo (2014), the aim of this study will be on academic subjects taught for a fee seen in the upper right quadrant.
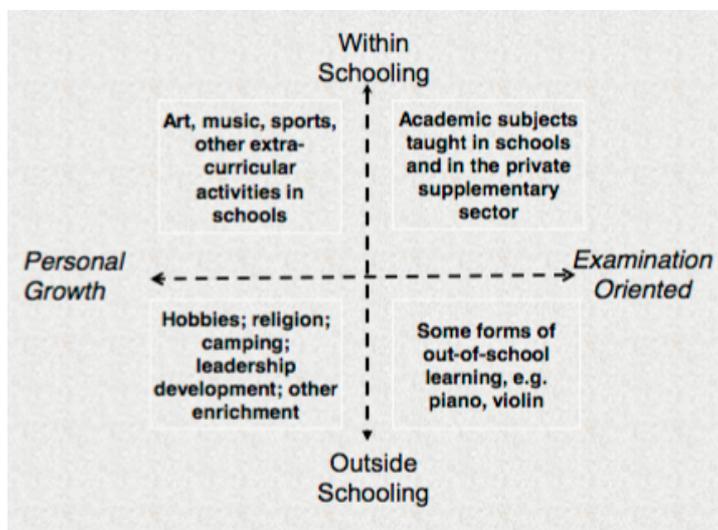
Source: Types of Learning Within and Outside Schooling (Bray and Kwo, 2014)

Shadow education is a type of private supplementary tutoring that mimics mainstream schooling. Bray (1999) explains in detail why the shadow metaphor is used in describing private supplementary tutoring:

> First, private supplementary tutoring only exists because the mainstream education exists; second, as the size and shape of the mainstream system change, so do the size and shape of supplementary tutoring; third, in almost all societies much more public attention focuses on the mainstream than on its shadow; and fourth, the features of the shadow system are much less distinct than those of the mainstream system.

Another reason for the shadow metaphor comes from its backwash effect on the mainstream schools (Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009), sometimes being positive or negative. Explanations on the effect will be given in subsequent chapters.

There are different ways for private tutoring to be conducted:

> *One-to-one*: it is common for a tutor to teach a student individually, usually at a centre or the tutee's home. It is conducted to cater better to the students' specific needs.

Small-group: The tutoring fee is shared among a small number of students. It is usually used for assisting with homework or for helping students who have similar abilities.

Large-group/Lecture: This method is common among local senior form secondary school students, and is used at large-chained tutoring centres. For students who pay a higher fee, a tutor will be present to teach students. For a lower fee, a video-recorded lecture will be shown to a large number of students. This form of private tutoring is extremely widespread due to tutoring centres paying enormous amounts on advertising, and the high demand due their emphasis on providing revision packages.

In his study of 1,624 students conducted in 16 secondary schools, Bray (2013) found, contrary to laypeople's belief, more higher-achievers tend to join private tutoring than lower-achievers. It was found that "74.2% of students in the sampled Band One schools received tutoring, compared with 48.6% of students in Band Three schools".

While there are studies on finding the reasons for parents to send their children for private tutoring, the answer to whether students find it effective remains to be inconclusive.

2.2 Views on the effectiveness of shadow education

Views on the effectiveness of private tutoring remain mixed, which may come from the lack of research literature on the links between tutoring and academic achievement (Zhan et al., 2013).

In a study mentioned previously, Bray (2013) interviewed students on how they perceived the benefits of private tutoring. Most students agreed or strongly agreed that it helped in improving examination grades, confidence in examinations, revision skills, confidence in school performance, and learning strategies. 47.2% of the sampled students, however, disagreed or strongly disagreed that private tutoring helped improve their relationship with school teachers. In the interviews of the same study, students also complained of receiving more pressure from tutors than teachers, and that it may even do them more harm than good due to higher workload.

Research by Kwo and Bray (2014) found that while tutors are able to teach students how to prepare for examinations with "tricks of how to remember the difficult stuff", they lack the

ability to deal with fundamental learning challenges and could only help with meeting superficial learning needs.

Zhan et al. (2013) did a study with 1,624 Grade 9 Grade 12 students. 58.1% of the respondents felt private one-to-one tutoring had a large effect on their achievement while only 2.7% agreed for Lecture style (video recording), showing that not all forms of private tutoring are effective.

In a study by Coniam (2014), 206 full-time students in a Hong Kong tutorial school retook the HKCEE English language examination. It was reported that "students do make significant, although small, gains". The study, however, notes that 67.2 % of the students achieved no gain at all. Whilst this study gives interesting insights into whether students feel satisfied after attending private tutoring, it is still limited. The study admitted that factors such as "maturation, motivation, exposure to English" may have caused the gain for some students rather than the tutorial school. In addition, this study only followed a single teacher in a tutorial school, and was taken before the implementation of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE).

While the literature on private tutoring has grown recently, especially in East Asia, studies on its implications are still in its infancy. (Bray 1999, 2009; Lee et al. 2009). Most of the studies have focused on understanding private tutoring and how it affects different stakeholders e.g. students, parents and teachers. There is still a gap in literature as Hof (2014) mentions that while private tutoring has become popular all over the world, the evidence on how students view private English tutoring and whether it is effective remains uncertain. In Hong Kong, most research has focused on the effectiveness of private tutoring in all academic subjects. Very little has been done on finding the specific needs of students learning English, whether private tutoring helps for learning the language, and if there are any limitations. Relatively little research has been done on finding the effectiveness of private tutoring after post-implementation of the HKDSE.

2.3 English language learning and private tutoring

To understand the needs of Hong Kong students, it is necessary to look at the demographics of Hong Kong. Approximately 93.6% of the Hong Kong population are ethnically Chinese and Cantonese-dominant (Census & Statistics Department, 2012). Ethnicity can have

significance on students' private tutoring. (Kwok, 2004; Salili, 1996). Since the 1997 Handover, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) developed a new language policy, promoting biliteracy and trilingualism in local schools (Kan & Adamson, 2010; Li, 2009; So, 2000).

In his study, Bray (2013) found that 71.7% of 1,624 students in the 16 sampled secondary schools received private tutoring in English. This is much higher than the second most popular subject which is mathematics at 58%. In another study of the 1,624 Grade 9 and 12 students conducted by Zhan et al. (2013), English is also the most common subject at 65.2%. This could be attributed to Hong Kong's colonial past. Bray and Kwok (2003) observe that the high demand could also be because obtaining a Level 3 English in the HKDSE is one the main requirements for university entrance, and that many schools use English as a medium of instruction in other subjects. Gardner and Lambert (1972) divide L2 motivation into integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. They added that learners were more successful when using integrative motivation. In Hong Kong, students usually study English because of instrumental motivation.

Coniam (2014) points out that "English as a subject in the shadow education system has received comparatively little attention in the research literature". As aforementioned, most research has focused on private tutoring on all subjects, limiting information on the needs and effectiveness of English private tutoring. More studies should be done on understanding the views and needs of students who take private tutoring for the subject (Fan, 1999).

3. Research questions

Based on the review of the literature on English language and shadow education in Hong Kong, it is evident there are gaps. Three questions have been formulated to address this:

- *What are the motivations and attitudes to private tutoring?*

This question aims to understand students' motives and experience of participation in English private tutoring.

- *Do students feel private tutoring meets their English language learning needs?*

This questions hopes to gain insights from students in order to evaluate the effectiveness of private tutoring in English language learning.

- *How can private tutoring be improved?*

As numerous studies have reported negative effects of private tutoring, this question hopes to find feasible suggestions in improving private tutoring, especially for English language.

4. Research Methodology

According to Bray (2014), while quantitative studies may give useful information, they require large random sample sizes to be reliable which this study will not be able to achieve. To counter this limitation, he suggests using qualitative studies as they can compensate by providing insights that quantitative studies cannot achieve. As it is "highly beneficial and timely" in understanding L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), this study will employ a qualitative approach to better understand the needs and motivation of students taking English private tutoring. The questionnaire was adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and the interview probes were based on objectives and research questions of this study.

While private tutoring occurs across primary and secondary levels, this study will focus on tertiary students as very little research has focused their attitude toward shadow education, especially when it may have changed after taking the HKDSE.

Private tutoring of different forms exists. This study will include students who have received 'one-to-one tutoring', 'tutoring in small-sized groups in small tutorial centres', and 'tutoring at large tutorial centres'.

To improve the reliability of this qualitative study, an initial questionnaire was used to choose a suitable sample size of students who have taken private tutoring and gain a better understanding of their thoughts regarding private tutoring. 30 questionnaires were distributed at a program assembly for undergraduates at the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). The Snowball sampling was used by asking respondents to suggest other students who fit the requirements of this study and were willing to help. 22 questionnaires were received and 21 questionnaires were valid. After the questionnaires and consent were obtained, fifteen students were selected to take part in a one-to-one interview. Semi-

structured interviews were employed so that broad questions can be used to elicit deep and informative responses (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

5. Findings

Fifteen students from the EdUHK, who have gone through the local education system since Primary 1 and taken private tutoring for the HKDSE, were selected and interviewed. The table below shows their HKDSE result for English, type, frequency, and duration of tutoring chosen.

5.1 General Information

Name*	HKDSE Result (English)	Type of private-tutoring	Commencement of private-tutoring	Frequency of private-tutoring	Duration of private-tutoring
1. BKb	*4*	*One-to-one*	Form 2	1-2/week	4 years
2. HLg	*5*	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 2	1/week	4 years
3. WCb	*5*	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 6	4/month	3 months
4. SCb	*5*	*One-to-one*	Form 5	1-2/week	1 year
5. RCg	*5*	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 6	1/week	3 months
6. JWb	*4*	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 5	3/month	1 year
7. ALg	*5**	*One-to-one*	Form 5	2-3/week	8 months
8. MMg	*5*	*One-to-one*	Form 6	Every day	4 months
9. BCb	*5*	*Small-group*	Form 2	1-3/week	3 years
10. KKb	*4*	*One-to-one*	Primary 4	1/week	8 years
11. KWb	*5**	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 4	1/week	2 years
12. MHg	*5*	*Small-group*	Form 3	3/week	2 years
13. ELb	*4*	*One-to-one*	Primary 3	Every	9 years

				weekend	
14. AWg	*5*	*Large-group/Lecture*	Form 5	1/week	5 months
15. CWg	*4*	*One-to-one*	Form 4	3/week	2 years

*The names of the interviewees have been coded based on the initials of their name and gender to maintain their privacy.

5.2 Motivations and Attitudes

All the respondents were highly motivated to do well and learn English. However, it must be noted that they were pushed by instrumental motivation. ELb mentioned:

> 'I think it's quite difficult for me to use English in Hong Kong because I don't have many non-Chinese friends…...I think it's just mainly for getting a good university offer. Even many jobs don't need good English skills.'

Only two mentioned that they attended because they like the language or for enjoyment. MMg said:

> ' I enjoy reading English books and watching Hollywood movies so I really want to improve my English skills…..I think it's not good to just think about it for the exams because we may need it for our daily life or our future job.'

Nearly all the respondents agreed that pressure from family was the biggest reason to attend private-tutoring. Their families hoped that they would enter university and felt their English results will have a great influence on their chances. Some parents wanted their children to start earlier while others commenced later because of the HKDSE. AWg described her parents' role as '*financial support for tutoring*' and to '*check her English marks at school and see if she needed more help*'.

Another common reason for students to join private-tutoring was their peers. Although the

pressure to perform came from parents, the respondents chose to ask their classmates where they went for tutoring. For example, RCg reported that since her friends had already attended lectures in the tutorial centres, they were in a better position to tell whether they were effective or not, in comparison to parents or teachers who could only evaluate from hearsay. The respondent mentioned that:

'…friends' feedback is very important because I can know if my money will be spent properly…..And also I can go with them when I'm attending the lessons. I think it's quite a lot of pressure to go there alone.'

There was a mixed response on whether the respondents' motivation in learning English changed after joining private-tutorials. MMg stated:

'I don't think I became more motivated from the tutoring. I just tried to learn whatever I can from my tutor. Sometimes I got high marks but I don't think I was motivated……..Because I don't really enjoy doing the past papers that my tutor gave me. I just did them because I have to'

A majority responded that their aims were to use their tutors *to raise their HKDSE English Language result'*. Secondary reasons were to be able to '*find a job'* or '*communicate effectively at the workplace'*.

When asked if they felt they had achieved those aims, more than half, such as KWb, felt they benefited from private tuition because of the exam skills taught:

'I think I was able to do better because those big tutors gave me a lot of useful tips for the English exams like I know what key terms to underline and how I should answer. I think when I used their tips, my exam results at school and my DSE result got better.'

The biggest disadvantage of private tutoring was the lack of understanding of how English can be used in authentic contexts. BKb was a typical interviewee:

'I would say the biggest disadvantage is that they don't teach how to use

12

> English with native speakers….at school I can practise my English with my non-Chinese classmates or the NET teachers….because the reality is I need to get a good result in the DSE and I think tutorial school can help me for that.'

Nearly half of the interviewees responded that either their teachers did not know they were attending private tutorials or chose to ignore. However, for the respondents who had teachers that knew, only a few were supportive. While the teachers knew they could not focus solely on exam skills, they doubted the language proficiency of the 'star tutors'. JWb responded:

> 'My teacher didn't really like it. He said those tutors are not reliable because they make the revision materials for students very quickly and don't bother to check if there are any mistakes…..I think it's ok. The celebrity tutors can still teaching something useful…..For example, I can read the passage faster, the skills for reading are quite useful for me because I rarely read English stuff.'

He added that it may have affected the relationship between students and the teacher:

> 'I used to have a classmate who came to the English lessons and didn't do anything the teacher told him to do. He would just stare back. Later he said he doesn't need to do because he'll do all the grammar stuff at home with his tutor but I think it's also because he was tired. Every day he would have tutoring so maybe he didn't have any more energy to listen to our teacher.'

5.3 Teaching Strategies and Effectiveness in meeting English language learning needs

5.3.1 Teachers

There are a variety of teaching methods adopted by the respondents' teachers. BCb's teacher tried to integrate language arts into the lessons:

> 'Most of them like to use poems or dramas to teach so they were quite fun.'

HLg mentioned that her teachers produced HKDSE packets:

> 'We had a packet for reading, speaking and writing and arranged according to the type or topic and they would give us the format and vocabulary we could use so we would just practice using them.'

WCb said the teachers also taught using past-papers:

> 'Nearly every lesson we had a past-paper and then we will underline the key words and do it. And the we would check the answers in class or the teacher will mark and give it back to us.'

Further questions about whether there was difference in teaching strategies in Form 4 or 5. Most of the interviewees, such as JWb responded there was a difference but still exam-oriented"

> 'I think we had a lot of newspaper journals because they wanted us to train for English and LS and practice writing so we did a lot for it. And then also presentations to practise speaking. But I think in Form 5 we started having more mock exams and past-papers.'

When asked whether they were effective or not, most of the respondents evaluated their teachers' effectiveness based on his/her ability to improve their exam scores. Some interviewees, such as MHg, felt that there was still something incomplete in the English lessons:

> 'I wasn't sure if what I was being taught was going to be in the DSE. I don't think the teachers have enough time to finish all the stuff so we have to do a lot by ourselves too and I remember sometimes we can't receive our homework back or we receive it after several weeks.'

Lack of feedback was also a problem for many interviewees. BKb elaborated:

> 'I remember the teachers will write very short comments about what I should do so it's not easy to see what you can do to improve. There were a lot of underlining and circling and but not much elaboration on what we should do.'

5.3.2 Private Tutors

Developing a relationship with students was very important for tutors, especially at large tutorial chains. RCg remembered:

'The tutors will try be very funny and tell some jokes….to make a relaxed atmosphere for us and then they'll try to make the lesson very fast so that students won't get bored.'

Her tutors tried using financial incentives:

'I remember (name of celebrity tutor deleted) said he would give $100 back if you got 5* and $200 if you got 5** or something like that. And then he'll ask you if he can use your exam paper to teach'

She said the strategy was quite effective:

'I think it's quite cool because that time was the first time I can earn money from my high marks. For a student, it's quite special.'

WCb mentioned that tutors would try to make it easier for students to understand by translating from Chinese to English or vice versa:

'I remember (name of celebrity tutor deleted) would show a passage on the screen and then he would identify what are the key terms and explain the Chinese meaning….He would also show us how to answer the questions and tell us the difference between level 3 or level 5**….like we have to use more complicated vocabulary or some idioms.

When asked if the strategies used by their tutors were effective, most of the interviewees agreed but that it was only effective in improving exam results. JWb said:

'They are quite good because they are very professional at finding or predicting the exam questions. Some of them are better at teaching those

stuff than our English teacher but sometimes I'm not sure what I've learnt from them will be useful in the future like for work.'

5.4 Improvements for private tutoring

Nearly all respondents said they would recommend a private tutor to others. HLg agreed but added students have to look deeper before joining:

> 'Definitely. Because our teachers can't teach everything and they don't have enough time. But I think students need to be careful when choosing. They have to see whether the tutors suit their style of learning. They should follow just because their classmates are going.'

Despite its effectiveness, more than half felt shadow education is not good for Hong Kong. SCb elaborated:

> 'I don't think it's good. It's hard to enjoy learning English because the only way for us to get high marks is to practise the exam format. I don't think we should encourage this.

BCb worried that it might create a gap between rich and poor students:

> '….I know some of my classmates couldn't afford to go for private tutoring because the rich students can get more help from their tutors. I know some of my classmates hire those very professional tutors to come to their home to tutor them every day.'

When asked what improvements could be made for private tutoring and schools, many struggled to find suggestions but agreed that change has to be made. BKb explained:

> 'I don't think there's much private tutors can do to change. They just do whatever the students want them to do. If the students want to know how perform well in the exams then they'll try to give them tips. They are not forcing us to practise the exam skills, it's the DSE force them. I don't think

private tutors need to change, it's the education system.'

An area that was not considered before this study commenced was suggestions for parents. RCg initiated that parents need to think more about the consequences of sending their children for private tutoring:

> 'Actually a lot of the problems is caused by the parents because they spend a lot of money for their children for tutoring. The children have to spend a lot of time to and effort or else they are scared they might fail.....I think parents should observe their child more carefully.....they think sending their children to tutoring every day for many hours will improve their results but actually the opposite might happen. The children are under a lot of pressure because of how much the parents have spent on them.

6. Discussion

6.1 Motivation

Research by Bray (2013) states that, contrary to popular belief, students who join private tutoring are usually high-achievers. Our study also found that higher-motivated students were more likely to attend. Since all the interviewees were already high-achievers, this shows that, other than the proficiency of the students, motivation is an accurate indicator of whether a child would join private tutoring. This could be because private tutoring requires not only financial investment but also a substantial amount of time and effort from the student to produce desirable results.

6.1.1 Parent pressure

Zhen et al. (2013) also mention that students begin private tutoring early in secondary school and mainly continue due to their own desire. However, contrary to their results, our study found that parents are playing a bigger role than expected in attending private tutoring as students get older. This could mean that pressure is increasing for parents to make their children more competitive. As one of the interviewees mentioned, her parents felt afraid when they saw more and more students joining and pushed their child to attend private

tutoring as well as they feared she would be behind her peers. This shows that both parents' desire and students' motivation are the driving forces for joining private tutoring.

6.1.2 The worrying growth of instrumental motivation

This study confirms that instrumental motivation, as pointed out by Bray (2013) and Kwo and Bray (2014), continues to push students to seek private tutoring. Most of the respondents expected their tutor to raise their English language examination results and did not see it as a mean to improve their communication with English speakers. This could be the result of a lack of opportunities for students to communicate with other speakers whose L1 or L2 is English. In addition, many tutors promise customers will achieve 5** results in the HKDSE, supporting the argument that students are mainly concerned about attending tutorial classes to improve their exam performances.

6.2 Teacher and tutor strategies

The role of teachers has been identified as a source of content knowledge and provide holistic attention and tutors teach exam and memory skills (Kwo & Bray, 2014). While this remains true, especially in junior forms in secondary schools, the findings show that similarity between the teachers and tutors increases as students progress to Form 6. Due this belief, which was shared by the respondents, it can be argued that teachers feel their effectiveness is strongly shaped by their students' views and expectations of them. As the presence of shadow education grows, we can predict that more teachers will try to implement some of the strategies used by 'star tutors' at large tutorial schools in order to increase their competitiveness. However, this may not be desirable for students in Hong Kong, a view shared by the respondents, as content knowledge is still vital. It might be claimed that the biggest strength that teachers have over tutors is in motivating students to learn English for enjoyment or for authentic situations. This could be because schools are encouraged to organize career activities and to create opportunities for communication with native speakers in the English language curriculum whereas tutors tend to ignore the practical uses of the language.

Zhan et al. (2013) mention the effectiveness of strategies used by private tutors, however, may not always be high. They stated that some respondents received more pressure and higher workload from tutors than teachers, hence, doing more harm than good. Over half of

our respondents disagreed that tutorials, especially one-on-one tutors, increased the burden because they felt they could share their needs openly. This could be because teachers and classmates are present at school and having questions is sometimes seen as a sign of weakness.

Zhan et al. (2013) also found one-on-one and small-group tutoring to be more effective and large group tutoring to be less so. They added that video recording tutoring does have its use as it can be quite effective in improving students' confidence in examinations, revision skills, and learning strategies. This does not necessarily, however, lead to an improvement in examination grades. Our study confirmed this result. When asked why video recording tutorials aren't effective enough, the respondents felt it was due to the small group size allowing the tutor to pay more attention to their needs whereas the tutors in video recorded lectures are more experienced in identifying patterns and skills. This could be and indicator that identifying patterns and skills in examinations are not as important as addressing one's needs or weaknesses in using a language. Despite the limitations of private tutoring, nearly all the respondents felt satisfied with private tutoring, suggesting that the effectiveness of shadow education relies on the purpose of the student.

6.3 Improvements

From the data collected, it should be pointed out that the effectiveness of shadow education varies across the different types of private tutoring and the expectations of the tutees. While the aim to achieve good examination results is common, each student requires a different style of tutoring to meet their needs. One of the limitations mentioned in this study is that shadow education is usually too exam-orientated and focuses on superficial learning needs. This was mirrored in studies by Kwo and Bray (2013) and Zhan et al. (2013). In addition, a new criticism mentioned was the proficiency of some of the 'star tutors'. As mentioned in the findings, some respondents found grammatical errors in the materials provided from the courses at large tutorial chains. While it is not possible to find out if the mistakes were made by the 'star tutors' or their team, it is worrying that the standards may not be as high as some may expect. For students with lower English language proficiency, it may be difficult for them to evaluate the quality of the courses they have paid for. Hence, since the products sold by tutorial schools are not checked by the government, students may have scrutinize and not go solely on hearsay from peers.

6.4 Pedagogical implications

As this study has found, more schools are starting to mimic its shadow due to its effectiveness in meeting the pragmatic needs of students and because more students will criticize their teachers if they don't teach exam strategies. As schools are usually judged by parents based on their ability to produce excellent performances in the public examination, teachers are looking at methods used by private tutors at the expense of giving opportunities to students to use English in meaningful ways. Private tutors are allowed to spoon-feed so that customers can tackle papers in HKDSE quickly. This will encourage teacher-centred classrooms which may be disadvantageous to students who require more interaction and co-construction to learn a language.

6.5 Limitations

Since only a qualitative study could be used, the sample size may not be large enough for generalization. In addition, it may not be possible for respondents to remember all their experiences during private tutoring.

7. Conclusion

15 undergraduate students at the EdUHK participated in this study to find out their motivation and attitude toward shadow education, to discuss teaching strategies and its effectiveness, and how it can be improved. This study has found out that students' motivation to perform in the HKDSE is not the most common motives for joining private tutoring, as claimed in previous research, but parents' fear for their children's future. Peers' opinions are considered more important than parent's choices when choosing the tutor. This study supports the claim that the aim for students to join private tutoring is usually to improve the result in the HKDSE. We've found private tutors to be largely successful at achieving due to their intense focus on analyzing exam questions and techniques. This, however, creates problems because students are not learning how to use English in authentic situations and creates pressure to succeed. A new finding is that parents have to more careful when asking their child to attend private tutoring as it may have a negative impact. It can be claimed that private tutoring is effective in improving public exam results but fails in inspiring students to enjoy learning.

8.   A final word

The growth for shadow education is a reflection of the demands of the public examination system and the superficial learning needs of the students. This trend will continue as long as the Hong Kong education system continues to place a huge emphasis on the role of the HKDSE results on students' academic and career prospects over their interest or commitment to learn the English language for authentic communication. Since the HKDSE is a newly implemented exam system, it will be difficult for the policy makers to make large-scale changes. They should, however, take into consideration the widening gap between rich and poor students due to the growing necessity of private tutoring, and its implications on social mobility. Private tutors may have positive intentions to improve their students' chances of having a better future but it should not come at the expense of developing a lifelong interest in learning the English language.

References

Bray, M. (1999). *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners* (Fundamentals of Educational Planning 61). Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

Bray, M. (2009). *Confronting the shadow education system: What government policies for what private tutoring?*. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

Bray, M. (2013). Benefits and Tensions of Shadow Education: Comparative Perspectives on the Roles and Impact of Private Supplementary Tutoring in the Lives of Hong Kong Students. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, *2*(1), 18-30.

Bray, M. (2014). The impact of shadow education on student academic achievement: Why the research is inconclusive and what can be done about it. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 15*(3), 381-389.

Bray, M., & Kwo, O. (2014). *Regulating Private Tutoring for Public Good: Policy Options for Supplementary Education in Asia*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 93.

Bray, M., & Kwok, P. (2003). Demand for private supplementary tutoring: Conceptual considerations, and socio-economic patterns in Hong Kong. *Economics of Education Review, 22*, 611–620.

Bray, M. & Lykins, C. (2012). *Shadow Education: Private Tutoring and its Implications for Policy Makers in Asia*. Manila: Asian Development Bank, and Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 98.

Choi, S. (2005). Book review: Mark Bray, Adverse effects of private supplementary tutoring: Dimensions, implications, and government responses; Mark Bray, The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners. *International Journal of Education Development, 25*(1), 93-95.

Coniam, D. (2014). How much do students benefit from attending private tutorial schools? A case study of the Hong Kong shadow education system. In D. Coniam (Ed.), *English language education and assessment: Recent developments in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland*, 103-119. Singapore: Springer.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Longman.

Education Bureau (2014). *Student Enrolment Statistics 2014/15*. Hong Kong: Education Statistics Section, Education Bureau.

Fan, M. (1999). An investigation into the beliefs and strategies of Hong Kong students in the learning of English. *Educational Journal, 27*(2), 65-81.

Hamid, O., Sussex, R., & Khan, A. (2009). Private tutoring in English for secondary school students in Bangladesh. *TESOL Quarterly*, *43*, 281–308.

Ho, E. S. C. (2009). *Understanding shadow education of East Asian societies from an international perspective.* Hong Kong: Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Hof, S. (2014). Does private tutoring work? The effectiveness of private tutoring: A nonparametric bounds analysis'. *Educations Economics*, *22*(4), 347-366.

Hong Kong Census & Statistics Department. (2012). *2011 Census thematic report: Ethnic minorities.* Hong Kong.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers.

Kan, V., & Adamson, B. (2010). Language policies for Hong Kong schools since 1997. *London Review of Education*, *8*, 167–176.

Kwo, O. & Bray, M. (2011). Facing the Shadow Education System in Hong Kong. *University of Leiden*, *Newsletter of the International Institute for Asian Studies, 56*, 20.

Kwo, O. & Bray, M. (2014). Understanding the nexus between mainstream schooling and private supplementary tutoring: patterns and voices of Hong Kong secondary students, *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* Education, *34*(4), 403-416.

Kwok, P. (2004). Examination-oriented knowledge and value transformation in East Asian cram schools. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 5*, 64–75.

Lai, P. S., & Byram, M. (2003). The politics of bilingualism: A reproduction analysis of the policy of mother tongue education in Hong Kong after 1997. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education, 33*(3), 315-334.

Lee, C. J., Park, H. J., & Lee, H. (2009). Shadow education system. In G. Sykes, B. Schneider, & D. N. Plank (Eds.), *Handbook of education policy research* (pp. 901–919). New York: Routledge for the American Educational Research Association.

Li, D. C. S. (2009). Towards 'biliteracy and trilingualism' in Hong Kong (SAR): Problems, dilemmas and stakeholders' views. *AILA Review*, *22*, 72–84.

Lin, A. (2010). English and Me: My Language Learning Journey. In D. Nunan & J. Choi (Eds.), *Language and culture: Reflective narratives and the emergence of identity*, (pp. 118-124). New York: Routledge.

Poon, A. Y. K. (2004). Language policy of Hong Kong: Its impact on language education and language use in the post-handover Hong Kong. *Journal of Taiwan Normal University: Humanities & Social Sciences. 49*(1). 53-74.

23

Salili, F. (1996). Accepting personal responsibility for learning. In D. A. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*, (pp. 85–105). Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong.

So, D. W. C. (2000). Achieving biliteracy and trilingualism without MOI-based bifurcation of the schools: A plea for third-alternatives. In D. C. S. Li, A. Lin, & W. K. Tsang (Eds.), *Language and education in postcolonial Hong Kong* (pp. 9–33). Hong Kong: Linguistic Society of Hong Kong.

Youth Research Centre., HKFYG. (2013, March). *Private Tutoring of Students in Hong Kong*. Retrieved from March 21, 2016, http://yrc.hkfyg.org.hk/page.aspx?corpname=yrc&i=6245

Zhan, S., Bray, M., Wang, D., Lykins, C., & Kwo, O. (2013). The Effectiveness of Private Tutoring: Students' Perceptions in Comparison with Mainstream Schooling in Hong Kong. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *14*(4), 495-509.

Appendix 1 - Ethics Participants Consent

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of English Language Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Understanding the attitudes and effectiveness of shadow education on English language achievement: a study on Hong Kong secondary school students

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research conducted by ALLAN JOLLY as part of the Honors Project in the B.Ed. in English Language Education.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without penalty of any kind.

Name of participant

_____

Signature of participant

_____

Date

_____

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of English Language Education

INFORMATION SHEET

Understanding the attitudes and effectiveness of shadow education on
English language achievement: a study on Hong Kong tertiary students

You are invited to participate in a project conducted by Allan Jolly, as part of the Honors Project in the B.Ed. in English Language Education.

You have every right to withdraw from the study before or during the measurement without penalty of any kind. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

If you have any complaints about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Cherry Ng, Secretary of the Human Research Ethics Committee of The Education University of Hong Kong in person or in writing (c/o Research and Development Office in room   of the Institute).

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Allan Jolly at telephone number

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Allan Jolly
Principal Investigator

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire

Questionnaire

1. Have you ever participated in any type of English tutoring?

   Yes (*please go to Question 2*) No (*end of questionnaire*)

2. Your average result in English Language before English tutoring:

   85 and above / 70-84 / 55-69 / 40-54 / 25-39 / 38 or below

3. Your average result in English Language after English tutoring:

   85 and above / 70-84 / 55-69 / 40-54 / 25-39 / 38 or below

4. Your result in HKDSE English Language after English tutoring:

   5**/ 5* / 5 / 4 / 3 / 2 / 1 / U

5. Which component of the HKDSE English Language examination did you

   feel private tutoring helped you? *(You may choose more than one)*

   Reading / Writing / Listening & Integrated Skills / Speaking / None

6. Which of the following type(s) of English tutoring have you participated

   in? (*you may choose more than one answer*):

   - One-to-one private tutoring

   - Small-group private tutoring (specify class size: _____)

   - Large-group private tutoring/ lecture (specify class size: _____)

   - Online tutoring (specify class size: _____)

   - Others (please specify: _____)

7. During which time period did you participate in English tutoring?
   (you may choose more than one answer):
   Primary 1 to 3 / Primary 4 to 6 / Secondary 1 to 3 / Secondary 4 to 6

8. How often did you have English tutoring?

   - Once a week

   - Twice a week

   - Once a month

   - Twice a month

   - Others (please specify: _____)

9. Learning English is useful.
   Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
   Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

10. I am highly motivated to learn English in class.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

11. I am highly motivated to learn English in private-tutorials.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

12. English lessons help improve my English language skills.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

13. Private-tutoring helps improve my English language skills.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

14. English Private-tutoring helps for my future.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

15. English private-tutoring is more interesting than English lessons.
    Strongly   Moderately   Slightly   Slightly   Moderately   Strongly
    Disagree   Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree   Agree

16. I really work hard to learn English.

| Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |
| Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |

17. My parents motivate me to improve my English.

| Strongly | Moderately | Slightly | Slightly | Moderately | Strongly |
| Disagree | Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Agree |

18. I learn English because….

of the HKDSE / I need to find a job / I like the language / others (please specify: _____)

- Adapted from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

- END OF QUESTIONNAIRE -

Appendix 3 - Interview questions/probes

Interview questions/probes

Part 1 – General information

1. When did you start joining private-tutorials?
2. How often did you have your tutorials and how long were they?

Part 2 – Reasons and attitudes

3. Why did you join private English tutoring?

4. Why did you join that type of private-tutoring? Peers, parents, teachers, advertisements. others? Could you explain their roles?

5. How high was your motivation in learning English before joining private-tutorials?

6. How high is your motivation in learning English after joining private-tutorials?

7. What did you aim to achieve through private-tutorials?

8. What do you think about your English private- tutoring? Could you explain the advantages and disadvantages?

9. What were your parents' attitude about attending private English tutoring?

10. Did your English teacher know that you were attending private English tutoring? If yes, what was his/her attitude about it?

Part 3 - Teaching strategies and effectiveness

11. What teaching strategies did your English teacher use? Were they effective?

12. What teaching strategies did your private English tutor use? Were they effective?

13. What are the main differences between your private English tutor and your English teacher? Are the differences good or bad?

14. Did your private-tutor influence your English grades in school, your motivation/confidence in using English, your interest in English or finding a job? Why or why not?

Part 4 – Improvements

15. Would you recommend a private English tutor to your friends or family? Why or why not?
16. Do you think private tutoring is good for Hong Kong students and Hong Kong?
17. What suggestions do you have for English teachers?
18. What suggestions do you have for improving private tutoring?

Appendix 4 – One-to-one interview transcript

Allan (interviewer): A
SCb (interviewee): B

A: Once again thank you so much for coming to this interview. Your help is much appreciated. I'm going to ask you questions about your experience when you were doing private tutoring. Will that be ok?

B: Yes. No problem.

A: Ok can you tell me when you started and for how long did you do private tutoring?

B: I started in Form Five and I think I did it for around one year.

A: I see. So you joined in Form Five. So how often per week did you have tutoring?

B: Should be one or two times per week after school.

A: This is for English right?

B: Yes.

A: Ok, do you mind if I ask what you got for English in the DSE?

B: I got a 5.

A: That's good! Ok wait. I want to ask you some questions about your motivation and your attitudes about private tutoring.

B: Ok

A: So can you tell me why you chose to join private English tutoring?

B: I think it's mainly because of the DSE. I was going to have the exams soon. I was scared that I was going to fail so I found a tutor to help me

A: So who helped you find the tutor?

B: One of my best friends told me about a her tutor. The tutor was studying at CU and my friend told me she's quite good so I asked if she could help me.

A: Why did you choose one-to-one tutoring? Why not those big tutorial centres?

31

B: Umm...I think it's because my close friends had their own private tutor and my parents were ok with it so I just decided to have one-on-one.

A: Do you think you made the right decision?

B: I think so, she helped me a lot.

A: I mean is there something she could do that other tutors couldn't? For example, those celebrity tutors we see on the buses or billboards.

B: I think the celebrity tutors are not that effective because I've many questions. I'm not good at speaking or writing. I needed someone who can practise with me so maybe that's why I chose private tutoring.

A: Oh I see. So how was your motivation in learning English before you joined private-tutorials?

B: Pretty high I guess.

A: Why do you think it was high?

B: I think it's because my classmates were quite motivated or competitive and I don't want to be behind and then me and parents wanted me to get into a university so that pushed me to join.

A: So do you think your motivation changed after joining private-tutorials?

B: Ummm….not really….maybe a little. I think maybe more confident….yeah.

A: What was your aim? Like what did you hope to achieve from your private tutoring?

B: Mainly just to improve my school and DSE results. See how I can perform better in the exams.

A: So you didn't join because you enjoy learning English?

B: Not really, I mean I like English but I just did it for the DSE to be honest.

A: So do you think you achieved your aim? Do you feel you performed better in the DSE?

B: Ummm…. I think so. Yeah...definitely.

A: Why do you think so? Why do you think you performed better?

B: I felt I could do the questions faster. My tutor gave me some strategies for the reading paper and I felt I could guess what the examiner is asking for.

A: What about for speaking and writing? You said you needed help for them right?

B: Ah yeah, I think for them my tutor gave me some phrases to use which I can use when I'm discussing.

A: Were there any disadvantages? Did you feel there were and disadvantages from your private tutoring?

B: Not really, maybe it was a bit boring I think because every lesson I was kept doing the practise papers with my tutor again and again.

A: Then do you think this affected your interest in English?

B: Not really, I think it's more or less the same.

A: What about your English teacher? Did he or she know that you were attending private English tutoring?

B: She knew I was having a tutor for English.

A: So what did she think about it? Was she ok with it?

B: I think she was ok. I think since my marks were ok so she was also ok.

A: She didn't have any hard feelings or felt that it was bad for you?

B: No I don't think so. I think many of my classmates have tutors as well so she was ok. She didn't have any hard feelings.

A: Ok now can you tell me what teaching strategies your English teacher used?

B: I remember she would give us a lot of the grammar exercises to do and then after we did them we would check it in class.

A: Anything else? What about for speaking and writing? Did she help you with those?

B: For speaking we did some presentations

A: How long?

B: I think it was around 3 to 5 minutes. We would choose a book and present on it.

A: And writing?

B: Writing she gave the template like the format for letter to the editor and so on and we would copy it.

A: So do you think they were effective?

B: Not really I think. I felt I couldn't use what we used in the lessons in the exams?

A: Why do you think so?

B: Like the questions she asked were different to the ones asked in the exams so I felt it was a waste of time.

A: Ok then what about the teaching strategies your private English tutor used? Were they effective?

B: I think more effective. She would do the past papers more closely with me and we could see how to do them. She would organize the question types based on their difficulty and explain what are the traps or what to keywords we should write from the paragraph.

A: So you felt she was better because you can get higher marks from her than from your English Teacher?

B: Yes.

A: So what do you think are the main differences between your private English tutor and your English teacher? Are the differences good or bad?

B: I think not much big difference. Both of them want us to perform good in the DSE. I think my English teacher mainly taught based on the curriculum but my private tutor taught based on what I needed help with because my teacher was quite rush so she had to finish everything very quickly but my tutor could spend more time teaching what I didn't know.

A: Ok finally I want to ask you about improvements. Would you recommend a private English tutor to your friends or family?

B: Maybe.

A: Why? Why do you say maybe?

B: Because I know some of my classmates are not suitable for private tutoring. Maybe they think it's too boring.

A: What about if you have a friend and his or her English marks are really low and he asks you if he needs to go for private tutoring. Would you tell him to join or find a private tutor?

B: I guess so. I think some tutors can really help and teach him or her slowly if they think the English lessons are too fast.

A:So do you think all of this, this private tutoring is good for Hong Kong students and Hong Kong?

B: I don't think it's good. It's hard to enjoy learning English because the only way for us to get high marks is to practise the exam format. I don't think we should encourage this.

A: So do you have any suggestions on how they can improve? I mean the teachers and private tutors?

B: Maybe they can try to make the lessons more fun. Especially for the school teachers so that students are more encouraged to learn English?

A: Do you think if they do so you'll be more motivated and get higher marks?

B: I think so because sometimes it's really hard to concentrate every day if you're keep doing just exam practice. At least you won't fall asleep or day dream. Using some games or some fun activities can draw our attention and make us want to learn English more.

A: Great, is there anything you want to add?

B: No.

A: No problem. Thank you so much again.

Appendix 5 – One-to-one interview transcript

Allan (interviewer): A
RCg (interviewee): B

A: So thank you for coming to this interview, it's really helpful. I'll ask you some questions about your experience when you were having your private tutoring. Will that be ok?

B: Ok.

A: So when did you start your private tutoring and for how long was it?

B: I started when I was Form Six.

A: So how long were you doing it? The private tutoring?

B: Around ….3 months something like that.

A: So how often per week did you have those tutoring?

B: It changed a lot, so can't really tell.

A: What about when it was close to the DSE? Around how many times did you have tutoring?

B: Maybe around once a week.

A: Wait so what type of tutoring did you do?

B: I went to (Tutor's name deleted).

A: So you chose a star tutor?

B: Yes

A: Ok. Is it alright if I ask what you got for English in the DSE?

B: I got a 5.

A: Ok wait a second. You did quite well. So now I will ask you some questions about your motivation and attitudes about private tutoring. First why did you choose to go to star tutoring in Form Six?

B: It was my parent's decision. They saw my English results were not very good and I remember my English teacher predicted I would only get a level 3 or 4 and I was quite worried about that so I tried to find a way to improve it.

A: Do you think you mainly did it for your parents or for yourself?

B: I would say it's both. Quite hard to tell actually.

A: So did your parents help you choose (Tutor's name deleted)?

B: No they don't really know much about this stuff.

A: So who told you about (Tutor's name deleted)?

B: Many of my classmates go to his courses. He's really good for writing like he can give many tips on how to get a level 5 or something like that.

A: So you followed your classmates' decision?

B: Yes.

A: Then why did you trust them or think their decision would be good or better?

B: I think my friends' feedback is very important because I can know if my money will be spent properly.

A: So you think because they're doing those courses already and their opinions about (Tutor's name deleted) are quite positive so you decided to go to that tutor?

B: Yeah and also I can go with them when I'm attending the lessons. I think it's quite a lot of pressure to go there alone

A: So you prefer going with friends for tutoring? You don't like going alone?

B: Yeah I feel more comfy more secure if my friends are there because sometimes the tutor might ask you some questions. It's a bit pressure.

A: Did you choose the live lesson or the video-recorded lesson.

B: The live one.

A: Why didn't you choose the video-recorded lesson?

B: I don't know, just my friends chose live so I went to the live lesson.

A: But do you think there's any difference? Which one do you think is better?

B: I think maybe live is better because the tutors will try to be very funny and tell some jokes I don't know how say it in English but they'll try to make a relaxed atmosphere for us and then they'll try to make the lesson very fast so that students won't get bored.

A: So you prefer the fun and relaxed atmosphere that the tutors create?

B: Yeah.

A: Do you feel it was better than when you were at school?

B: It's more boring at school but I think I'm used to their teaching style.

A: Was there anything else that attracted you other than the fun and relaxing atmosphere?

B: I remember (name of celebrity tutor deleted) said he would give $100 back if you got 5* and $200 if you got 5** or something like that. And then he'll ask you if he can use your exam paper to teach to his other classes.

A: So you liked his financial incentive? Do you think it was helpful in improving your DSE result?

B: Yeah I think it's quite cool because that time was the first time I can earn money from my high marks. For a student, it's quite special.

A: But what about his teaching strategies? Were they effective? You said your teacher predicted level 3 or level 4 but finally you got a level 5. Was it because of (name of celebrity tutor deleted)?

B: I think I was quite lucky. I didn't expect I could get a level 5.

A: But what if you didn't go to his lessons? What if you just relied on your English teacher?

B: Then maybe yeah I don't think I can get a level 5.

A: Why do you say that?

B: I think the way (name of celebrity tutor deleted) teaches makes it easier to memorize how to write and I think I could improve my writing because of that like before my writing was very simple.

A: So you think after attending his course it was easier for you to remember the tips for the writing paper better?

B: Yeah I can see how to make my writing more higher level or more attractive.

A: I see. So now I want to ask how was your motivation in learning English before you joined private tutorials? How as your motivation after joining his courses?

B: I think quite high.

A: Why do you think it was high?

B: Because I want to have a good university offer and I don't want to let down my parents. I really tried to work hard and take down the notes in the lesson.

A: So do you think your motivation changed after joining (name of celebrity tutor deleted) courses? Do you think he made you more motivated to learn English?

B: Not much change I think.

A: So your aim was to improve your DSE result?

B: Yeah because I didn't want to get a level 3 or level 4.

A: And you felt you achieved your aim right?

B: Yes I'm quite satisfied with my result. Maybe not for other subjects but for English it's ok.

A: Since you were satisfied with your result, do you think your interest in English improved or increased?

B: Maybe I'm more confident when using English. I'm less shy and I can try to use more English if I need to.

A: So you're willing to use English more and you want to learn English more?

B: Yes.

A: What about disadvantages? Were there were any?

B: I don't think so but it was quite expensive. I know some of my classmates or friends felt it was too expensive to join.

A: What about your English teacher? Did he or she know that you were attending private English tutoring

B: Yeah she knew we're going to those tutoring schools.

A: What did she feel about it?

B: She's ok with it. Many students in our secondary school do it so it's normal.

A: She didn't think it was bad for the students?

B: There's nothing much she can do. As long as the students' marks are ok, are good enough then she won't say anything.

A: What about her teaching strategies? How did she teach you?

B: Mainly just do some exam papers or grammar drilling something like that.

A: So do you think they were effective?

B: Quite boring but nothing else she can do.

A: Do you think they were less helpful?

B: I think the tutorial school was a bit better.

A: Why?

B: Because we can get more strategies and it's easier to memorize what they taught us.

A: Ok now I'll ask you about improvements. First, would you recommend your friends to go to those star tutors for improving their English?

B: Yeah I will.

A: Why?

B: Because I think it's worth trying. Sometimes the teachers teach something really different from the DSE. Maybe for those who don't have much idea about how to tackle the exam questions can try.

A: So you think private tutoring is good for Hong Kong students right?

B: I wouldn't say it's good.

A: Really? But you said you would recommend it and it's helped you for the DSE.

B: Yes but I really don't know how to say like it creates a lot of competition among students. And some people really can't afford to spend so much on these lessons so it's quite unfair to them.

A: So you think it'll create a very competitive society like too much competition

and it's unfair to poorer students?

B: Yes, and I also want to add is that actually a lot of the problems is caused by the parents because they spend a lot of money for their children for tutoring. The children have to spend a lot of time to and effort or else they are scared they might fail.

A: So what do you think parents should do?

B: I think parents should observe their child more carefully. Because from my classmates I see sometimes they think sending their children to tutoring every day for many hours will improve their results but actually the opposite might happen. The children are under a lot of pressure because of how much the parents have spent on them.

A: I see. I think that's it. Thank you so much for your contribution. Before we end, is there something you'd like to add?

B: I think that's it.

A: Great, thanks for your time.

Appendix 6 – One-to-one interview transcript

Allan (interviewer): A
BCb (interviewee): B

A: Hi thanks for accepting to come to this interview. First I want to ask you some questions about when you had your private tutoring. Is that ok?

B: Yeah sure.

A: Great! So first I want to ask when did you start your private tutoring? How long did you do it?

B: I went when I was in Form 2. Yes. And I did it until Form 5. Beginning of Form 5

A: So why didn't you continue until Form 6? Why did you stop?

B: I think….it was too much for me. I told my parents I can't I don't want to go for tutoring anymore so I stopped.

A: Was it too much pressure?

B: Yeah and also I don't think it suited me.

A: Why didn't it suit you?

B: I prefer to self-study actually. I don't really feel it's good for me when I've just finished all my lessons and then I've still some more lessons to go. It's quite tiring and I think focus better if I study alone.

A: I see….then what about if you have questions? Like you don't how to answer a question and you want someone to help you.

B: I'll just ask my friends for help or maybe sometimes the teacher.

A: Did you feel it was enough?

B: Yeah it's enough. I don't think I've many questions actually

A: Ok. So what about how often did you have tutoring per week? Before Form Five?

B: Depends maybe once a week or even up to thrice a week.

A: What about in Form Five? I mean before Form Five? How many times did you have tutoring?

B: Around thrice a week.

A: So you felt that was too much?

B: Yeah kind of.

A: So what type of tutoring was it? One-to-one tutoring?

B: No it was a group. Usually around two to three of us.

A: Ok so it was small-group tutoring. Ok. Do you mind if I ask what you got for English in the DSE?

W: I got a 5.

A: Oh that's good. Ok. So how did you choose your private tutor?

B: Mainly my parents chose for me. One of their friends recommended the tutorial centre and it's quite close to my home so parents chose to send me there.

A: And what was your aim? What did you hope to achieve?

B: Mainly to get help for English homework or for exam.

A: Ah and what did your parents feel when you stopped going to that tutorial group? Were they ok with it? Any problems?

B: They were quite worried actually. They didn't have a good feeling but I tried to tell them it's ok.

A: And they trusted you?

B: Yeah they're ok finally.

A: What about the big tutorial centres like (name of celebrity tutor deleted) or (name of celebrity tutor deleted)?

B: Wa I really don't like those type.

A: Why what's wrong with them?

B: I really don't think they're useful. Just memorizing some key words or

something. I don't think it's worth it.

A: So you prefer having a small group?

B: Yeah kind of. I think it's better because I can ask my teacher for help.

A: Did you feel your tutor was better than your English teacher?

B: Hmmmm…I think my tutor was more grammar-focused and my teacher was…..also grammar-focused but also like giving organizing more activities more focused on projects I would say.

A: So who would you say was better?

B: Maybe my teacher for learning English and my tutor for exam things.

A: But you felt you benefitted from both?

B: Yes my English teachers and my tutor helped me a lot.

A: Ok. What about your motivation level in learning English before you joined private tutoring and after?

B: I was quite motivated I think because I wanted to study in the university. And maybe because of my classmates they were quite motivated too.

A: Do you think your parents influenced your motivation level as well?

B: Yes. I remember they spent a lot time and money for me to go to tutorials and I don't want to waste and I didn't waste those chance.

A: Did you feel more motivated after attending the private tutoring.

B: I think it's the same. I still want to get good DSE results and have the university offer.

A: So finally did you feel your private tutoring helped you achieve your goal?

B: Ummmm….maybe helped me I think.

A: What about your interest in English? Did it increase or decrease after private tutoring?

B: Also same.

A: And you're confident in using English?

B: Yes haha.

A: Ok then what about the disadvantages?

B: Too much time and quite boring. But luckily I can sometimes choose what I want to practise. I think that is an advantage. Disadvantage…yeah quite boring. Sometimes makes it hard for me to stay concentrated.

A: I see. Now I want to ask about your English teacher. Did he or she know that you were having these small group tutorings.

B: I don't think they knew. They didn't really ask or care.

A: What about their teaching strategies? Were they similar to your tutor?

B: A bit different. Like I said they tutor is a bit more exam focused than the teacher. But I think it's because sometimes I wanted my tutor to focus more on the exam practice.

A: Do you think your teacher had any influence on your exam results or motivation to learn English?

B: I would say motivation to learn English. Most of them like to use poems or dramas to teach so they were quite fun.

A: But you still preferred your tutor?

B: Because I need to get a pass or get a good result in the public exam. It's more….it's more realistic to have a or rely more on the English tutor rather than just the English teacher.

A: So do you think private tutoring is good for Hong Kong students right?

B: I think it's ok. If people want extra help than why not find a tutor to help them?

A: But I also heard some people felt it's unfair to some poorer students who can't afford to go to or hire private tutors. Do you think this will worsen the gap between the rich and the poor or private tutoring doesn't really affect your chances of getting a university offer?

B: Yeah I understand what you mean….yeah….I know some of my classmates couldn't afford to go for private tutoring because the rich students can get more help from their tutors. I know some of my classmates hire those very professional tutors to come to their home to tutor them every day.

A: Do you think students should have the freedom to choose who they want to hire or it's not good? It's unfair to some.

B: Maybe it's unfair but there's nothing they can do. Maybe the government should think about why the learning is so exam-focused instead. I feel if the students don't have to worry so much about the DSE then they the parents don't have to spend so much money for the private tutors.

A: What suggestions do you have for private tutors and English teachers in Hong Kong then? What can they do to improve?

B: Maybe teachers should focus more on doing fun things that will attract students to learn English more and tutors can focus more on exam skills so that there is a balance for students. They can enjoy learning English and at the same time prepare for the DSE.

A: Ok! That should be it. Thanks so much again for your help. Really means a lot

B: No problem.

Appendix 7 – One-to-one interview transcript

Allan (interviewer): A
ALg (interviewee): B

A: So thank you for coming here. Your help is much appreciated. I'm going to ask you questions about your experience during private tutoring. So can you first tell me when you started going for private tutoring and for how long did you do it?

B: I was in Form Five and I did it for I think it was 8 months.

A: Not six? You wrote six.

B: Wait let me count…..yeah should yeah 8 months more than 8 months.

A: Ok no problem let me change it first….ok….and how many times per week?

B: Should be at least two or three times every week.

A: And you got a 5* right?

B: Yes,

A: That's really good! So now I want to ask you about your motivation and attitudes towards private tutoring.

B: Sure.

A: So what was the reason why you chose private tutoring?

B: I would say it was for preparing myself for the DSEs. I wanted to raise my English language results so I found a private tutor to give me one-on-one lessons every week.

A: So how did you choose that tutor? Why did you choose him or her?

B: I asked some of my schoolmates in the senior form because I'm close to her and I asked her if she knew anyone who could help with preparing for the DSEs and then she suggested this HKU student so yeah.

A: Ok why did you feel she was good enough to be your private tutor?

B: Because she's smart, I think she got an A….or maybe a B….for English in the A-levels so she's quite experienced with public exams.

A: So you felt she was proficient enough and she knew how to do the public exams. Then why didn't you choose those big tutorial school chains? Like the ones we see on buses and billboards.

B: But they're in Chinese right? I mean Cantonese. I can speak Cantonese but I prefer a tutor I'm more comfortable if the lesson is in English. I'm scared I might not understand some words so….

A: But you were satisfied with it? You didn't feel it was a disadvantage that you couldn't go to those tutorial schools?

B: No not really no. I think I was fine. I just wanted someone to practise English with me and check my essays cus sometimes I make mistakes grammar mistakes.

A: So your aim was to go get a good result in DSEs right? Did you feel you achieved that aim? Do you think your private tutor helped you achieve it?

B: Yeah I think she really helped me a lot. She really knew how to use those exam techniques like what the examiner is looking for and how to write your answers. Her English was really good.

A: Do you feel she was better than your teachers?

B: Well…that's a bit harsh I think. I mean I saw how hard my English teachers worked to help us and they gave us a lot of advice as well. But sometimes your tutor can help you more cus they have more time. You can tell them your problems and they'll immediately see what it is and help you. Teachers don't have that advantage or that privilege I think.

A: So you felt that individual attention that your tutor gave was something very useful and that your teacher couldn't give unfortunately.

B: Yes.

A: Then what about your motivation in learning English before and after you joined private-tutoring?

B: Oh it was very high cus I knew I was weak in other subjects but English was something I could use to improve my total score so I had to ace it.

A: Did you feel your tutor and English teachers helped in your motivation?

B: Yeah definitely. They were super supportive and they would try to get us to think positive and then I remember my tutor would write memos for me before the exam. And then she also called me after the exams to see how I did so…..

A: Do you feel one was more supportive than the other?

B: No no both were equally supportive, they were really nice.

A: And what about after joining private-tutorials? Did you enjoy English more after ending her tutoring?

B: Yeah I think so. I've always liked English so cus I use it with my friends and I like to watch American tv shows and movies.

A: But did she have a part in that?

B: Maybe not. I was already interested in English I guess.

A: Did you feel there were any disadvantages from your private tutoring?

B: Not that I can think of. Maybe it was a bit boring sometimes cus I had to do those sample papers but I was ok.

A: So did your English teacher or teachers know that you had a private tutor for English?

B: She didn't know I think. She didn't ask cus maybe my scores were ok so she didn't have to worry if I needed a tutor or not.

A: Ok so can you tell me more about the teaching strategies your English teacher used to prepare you all for the DSE?

B: I remember she gave us a lot of reading passages from the textbook and then we would do it and check it in class. And then grammar exercises. A lot of drilling basically.

A: Do you think they were effective?

B: I think so but if I had some questions or I wanted more feedback then it was quite hard cus they didn't have much time. They were really busy.

A: Ok then finally how do you think we can improve? Wait first would you recommend a private English tutor to your friends or family?

B: Yeah definitely. I think they're useful especially if you need help for the exams. Of course not all of them are good, you have to choose carefully like as your friends or classmates for recommendations.

A: So do you think private tutoring is good for Hong Kong students and Hong Kong?

B: Yeah I think so. As long as they can improve your English then why not? You can always choose based on what you want from them. If you want help for the DSEs you can find or if you just want to practise English then I'm sure there are many who are willing to help.

A: What about suggestions on how they can improve? Teachers and private tutors?

B: Maybe less exam-centred and more student-centred? Like I see a lot of Hong Kong kids don't really like English cus they think it's too difficult or they don't really use so I think we should make it more fun. Show them the other side of English. Not the boring textbook and grammar stuff.

A: Even for private tutors?

B: Yeah sure. I think it might students perform better even though it's not very similar to the DSEs cus they're having fun and they want to learn more.

A: Ok. Is there anything else you want to add? Any last comments

B: No I think I've said everything I wanted to say.

A: Sure. Thank you so much for your help.