

# **English Teachers' Attitude and Perception on Teaching Shakespeare in HK's senior secondary ESL Classrooms**

BY

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## Abstract

Shakespeare's works play a significant role in English literature. In EFL classrooms, teachers share mixed views regarding whether Shakespeare should be taught; while in Hong Kong, researches and articles regarding teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards teaching Shakespeare in English classrooms are limited. This study collected voices and from different English teachers in Hong Kong through investigating in teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's works, teachers' personal experience and their attitudes and perceptions towards teaching Shakespeare to senior secondary school students.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from pre-service, in-service and post-service English teachers in Hong Kong. Questionnaires were completed by 94 teacher-respondents in this study. Semi-structured interviews with 9 respondents were also conducted to explore teachers' views and perceptions.

Although teachers recognized the benefits of teaching Shakespeare to students, they remain doubtful towards the feasibility of introducing Shakespeare in the compulsory NSS English Language curriculum. The research concludes and illustrates a number of reasons, such as time constraints or teacher unreadiness, create a huge barrier restricting teachers to teach Shakespeare in NSS English Classrooms. Suggestions and implications are justified and presented to alleviate the aforementioned restrictions and hence, enhance the feasibility of introducing Shakespeare's works in NSS English classrooms.

**Keywords:** NSS Language arts, Literature in secondary classrooms, Shakespeare teaching

# 1. Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) has been recognized as the most significant English writer in history. Dedicated in writing for his entire life, Shakespeare's plays and poems shared an emblematic status in English Literature. Shakespeare's language was often found to be linguistically and artistically impeccable, which established its superior status in English Literary work. Not only were they symbolic because of the miraculously precise and elegant language usage, they reflected controversial, yet invaluable moral and cultural values regarding numerous topics, ranging from romantic, family or even religious relationships, which such relationships were widely discussed and appreciated by many literature critics till now.

Influenced by British culture, Shakespeare's works are often explored by different literature critics in Hong Kong. Shakespeare's plays for instance, are occasionally performed by many groups, which were formed and organized by Shakespeare lovers; Shakespeare's workshop or campaign, such as "Shakespeare's Globe" are held from time to time in a bid to gather Shakespeare's lovers and promote Shakespeare's work (Tsui, 2016). Despite Shakespeare's relatively high popularity among some groups of general publics, in secondary schools, however, studying Shakespeare has not been a compulsory unit for students who chose English Literature as their electives, let alone other secondary school students. This research hence aims to investigate and explore teachers' attitude and perceptions towards teaching Shakespeare in New Senior Secondary (NSS) English Classrooms in Hong Kong. By analysing teachers' views, it reveals the, feasibility and effectiveness of teaching Shakespeare's work in senior secondary classrooms.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 The perception of Shakespeare's works in EFL countries**

The superior status of Shakespeare has been ingrained in many EFL countries' English curriculum in different times, which scholars possessed different explanations towards Shakespeare's significance. From the historical perspective, Shakespeare's work established English authority and had been adapted to symbolize the British Empire's superiority since late 17th century during the era of colonialism (Balinska-Ourdeva et al., 2013).

Nowadays Shakespeare's works accompany people to understand the meaning of lives and cope with challenges in it (Blocksidge, 2003; Irish, 2008). From the perspectives from educationalists such as Batho (1999), they believed that English curriculum in different times share three educational ideologies, namely "Classical humanism", "Progressivism" and "Reconstructionism", which have influentially contributed to Shakespeare's status in the curriculums: "Classical humanism" fosters students to seek truths and values from previous social powers and hence achieve a certain standard, whereas a large part of Shakespeare's work such as "Julius Cesare" or "Henry V" reflected problematic issues regarding dictatorship and the monarchy social system ; "Progressivism" contributes ideas about individuality, feelings and subjective meanings and hence initiate students to read aesthetically, i.e. to relate their personal experience and intuition to acquire knowledge, which Shakespeare's moving poems or sonnets were the idea text for students to experience aesthetic reading from many English teachers' perspective; "Reconstructionism" means teachers should only take the guidance role, whereas students should dominate in their learning, as Shakespeare's work are special in a way that students could produce new unique meanings that teachers might not be able to. From both the historical and educational perspectives, it explains the abiding superior status of Shakespeare's works.

### **2.2 Teacher's positive reviews on teaching Shakespeare in EFL secondary classrooms**

In addition, many teachers have affirmed the benefits of teaching Shakespeare in EFL secondary classrooms. To begin with, many researches depicted that a number of teachers subscribe to the view which

exploring Shakespeare's work improves students' English reading skills, writing skills and vocabulary bank to different extents, depending on students' learning ability and their psychological state (Blade, 2011; Boudreault, 2010). For instance, Blade (2011) and Boudreault (2010) suggested that teachers usually introduce Shakespeare's plays in lessons by designing relevant tasks for their students such as drama acting or rewriting characters' scripts in the modern context to improve students' language skills; by studying Shakespeare's poems and sonnets, students could encounter most literary devices they ought to learn; in terms of morphology, Shakespeare's words were written in post-modern English, whereas these lexical items were something new for most English learners to acquire.

Apart from language skills, exploring Shakespeare allows students to develop their generic skills. Generic skills refer to skills that are applicable to different domains, including in various subjects, occupations or in their lives (Wong, 2009). For instance, students are expected to develop analytical skills when interpreting complicated plays, whereas creativity and critical thinking skills would be developed when students were collaborating with classmates to produce a Shakespeare play on stage (Boudreault, 2010). In senior classrooms, teachers may even go beyond the textual knowledge with students and hence, explore and discuss the underlying humanistic and moral concepts in Shakespeare's work.

### **2.3 Criticism on teaching Shakespeare in EFL classrooms**

Although many researches as mentioned above supported the idea of teaching Shakespeare to students, there have been some speculations about the effectiveness of teaching Shakespeare in EFL classrooms, which some may see Shakespeare's language as outdated, irrelevant or redundant to the younger generations (Purewai, 2017). It was also indicated that some students do not recognize the purpose of learning Shakespeare (Lighthill, 2011; Pett, 2015). Hence, it is predicted that teachers and students from ESL classrooms demonstrate a more sceptical attitude towards Shakespeare, which the language itself could be a formidable barrier for ESL students and their teachers to communicate, let alone learning Shakespeare (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002).

## 2.4 Shakespeare in Asian ESL classrooms

However, on the contrary, many scholars, teachers and students from ESL countries support the idea of learning and teaching Shakespeare's work. Pickett (2011) indicated that Shakespeare's words were "emotional driving" which allowed students to pronounce the text aloud intuitively and hence, helped students to overcome fluency problems indirectly; Hammond (2006) in addition, pointed out learning Shakespeare exposes students to traditional western culture such as Greek mythologies or astrology, which familiarizes students with context that English speakers often aligned with when interacting. Scholars believed that if the complicated lexical constructions are resolved by teachers, the Western mythologies and the aligned Western cultural concepts in Shakespeare would even be more engaging for ESL students compared with EFL students (Ernst-Slavit, Moore and Maloney, 2002).

In nearby Asian countries such as Taiwan, researches about teaching or introducing Shakespeare to secondary school students have been conducted, which results tend to be optimistic and encouraging for Shakespeare's supporters. For instance, Cheng and Winston (2011) suggested that Shakespeare's playfulness in his comedies actually, was found absent in the current ESL curricula, which indeed, interlocks the acquisition of language from the formal, semantic and pragmatic level. Cook (2000) explicitly depicted that Shakespeare's comedy constituted to the biggest part of experiencing a language, which hence, explains the importance of introducing Shakespeare in ESL curricula. In Hong Kong, research articles and books tend to focus on the teaching pedagogies of a Shakespeare classroom (Lau & Tso, 2016; Heim, 2017), which their papers focus on introducing and proposing relevant tasks for teachers and students, rather than eliciting views from teachers and students. This research, hence, was aimed fill in the research gap by collecting teachers' opinions and perceptions.

### 3. Significance of study

As mentioned, there was a lack of relevant researches about teachers' views on teaching Shakespeare's works in Hong Kong English classrooms. By eliciting teachers' voice on teaching Shakespeare, it reveals the status of Shakespeare in Hong Kong's English curriculum.

Although many questioned the significance of the Education Bureau's selection (McManus, 2008), the study of language arts remains as a compulsory component in the NSS curriculum till now. Adversely affected by the deep-rooted examination-oriented education atmosphere, both students and teachers remained doubtful about the effective of implementing of language arts in English curriculum. It could be predicted that teachers may share similar views on idea of teaching Shakespeare in classrooms.

In the aforementioned literatures, it corroborates Shakespeare's value and its status in English Literature. The above literature review also demonstrated the positive responses from teachers in nearby ESL countries. Thus, when we take Shakespeare's value and the success of teaching Shakespeare in ESL countries into consideration, it is intriguing to investigate in Hong Kong teachers' perception and attitude towards teaching Shakespeare in NSS English Classrooms, and hence, analyze and assess the feasibility of incorporating Shakespeare's works in the compulsory curriculum.

### 4. Research questions

In a bid to answer the raised questions in the above, the following research questions are set:

- (1) How much do Hong Kong English teachers know about Shakespeare and teaching Shakespeare?
- (2) What are the teachers' attitudes towards teaching Shakespeare in senior ESL classrooms in Hong Kong in general?
- (3) What adaptations could be made to increase the feasibility of teaching Shakespeare in senior ESL classrooms in Hong Kong?

## **5. Methodology**

### **5.1 Research approach and justification**

This research study has adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A quantitative research with larger and randomly selected groups of participants involved includes the process of data collection, which would be quantified and subjected to statistical analysis as a supporting or refuting argument towards a claim or hypothesis (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017). On the contrary, a qualitative research collects data by empowering individuals to share their personal opinions and views on a topic, which follows by a set of interpretive practices that points to a claim or stance. As smaller and targeted audiences are selected during the process of data collection, subjective narrative reports with descriptive enable studies to reveal unexpected findings for a research (Kumar, Sachan, and Mukherjee 2017).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative research generates comprehensive findings on Hong Kong English teachers' perceptions towards teaching Shakespeare in senior secondary classrooms: the quantitative data provides multifarious sets of generalized data from a greater sample size, while the qualitative data further enhances the comprehensiveness by eliciting detailed personal experience of teachers. This integration further strengthens the validity of the research as the quantitative and qualitative data could be juxtaposed and examined, which provide findings that are grounded in participants' voices if the two sets of data do not contradict.

### **5.2 Instruments of the study**

The quantitative data of this research was collected by online questionnaires, which were distributed to respondents through E-mails and text messages. Their responses were recorded automatically by the “Google Forms” system for latter analysis. The questionnaire was designed with three parts, with the first part asking about respondents' educational background and their exposure to Shakespeare's works; the second part of the questionnaire collected respondents' views regarding the benefits, feasibility and challenges when teaching Shakespeare to Senior secondary students; the third part collects teachers' views on modifications



made to facilitate the teaching of Shakespeare's works. The questions on the questionnaire were 5-point Likert scale questions and yes-no questions. A sample of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix 2

The qualitative data of this research was collected by semi-structured interviews with teacher respondents. Their responses were recorded and transcribed for my latter analysis. The questions were similar with the questionnaires', in which the interviewer would initiate respondents to refer to his or her personal experience or personal ideas more during the interviewing process. The interview questions are attached in Appendix 3.

### **5.3 Participants**

This research involves a total sample size of 103, respondents from a heterogeneous ESL teaching population in Hong Kong, which 94 and 9 respondents participated in the quantitative and qualitative research respectively. In both researches, participants are English teachers of different ages, ranging from 18 to 60 or above. Respondents' educational background and teaching experience varied, which they were preservice, in-service and retired English teachers in Hong Kong. Figures which report respondents' background information, such as age, teaching experience and current occupation are presented in form of tables and attached in Appendix 1A and 1B respectively.

### **5.4 Procedures and Data Analysis**

The data collection process began after the researcher was granted permission by The Education University of Hong Kong upon approving the way of recruiting research participants, the scope of the research and the handling of participants' personal data and opinions. For all participants in this research, consents were asked and recording before they started to complete the questionnaire or responding to the interviewer's questions. The quantitative and qualitative researches were conducted simultaneously in between 2019 October to 2020 April. As this research explores a research gap between reviewed literatures, the questions designed for the questionnaire and interviews were not significantly pinned on any previous researches.

The quantitative data collected from the completed questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Programme. Descriptive statistics, frequency tests and independent sample tests (t-tests) were conducted to present, compare and draw relationships between different sets of data. The qualitative data, which was verbally recorded during the interviews, were fully transcribed and attached in Appendix 4. Quotes were highlighted in the section 6 (Results) and 7 (Discussion) when necessary.

## **5.5 Ethical Considerations**

Consent forms were issued to all participants before the data collection process in the qualitative and quantitative researches. The consent form addresses the ethical implications and states the participants' rights of withdrawing from the project anytime. Each participant was informed by the information sheet attached, which outlines the overview of the research. Participants must agree and signed the consent before participating in the research. For questionnaire respondents, they have to choose "agree" as a consent to participating in this study before starting to complete their questionnaire; for interviewees, the researcher collected the signed consent forms as records. A sample of the consent form is attached in Appendix 5.

## 6. Results and Findings

In this section, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research would be juxtaposed in the following.

### 6.1 Results for Research Question (1): How much do English teachers know about Shakespeare and teaching Shakespeare?

6.1.1 Figures demonstrating teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's works and types of works that are commonly read:

Figure 1. Quantitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's work

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Received exposure in at least one type of Shakespeare's work	80	85.1%	85.1%
No exposure at all	14	14.9%	100%
Total	94	100%	-

Figure 2. Qualitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's work

Interviewee	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Received exposure or not	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

As pointed out in figure 1, about 85% of the English teachers have been exposed to Shakespeare's work before; while in figure 2, 6 out of 9 respondents (around 65%) of teacher respondents are exposed to Shakespeare's works as well.

Figure 3. Quantitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's poems

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Yes	61	64.9%	64.9%
No	33	35.1%	100%
Total	94	100%	-

Figure 4. Quantitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's plays

	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Yes	66	70.2%	70.2%
No	28	29.8%	100%
Total	94	100%	-

In addition, Figure 3 and figure 4 further indicated that around 70% of teachers have read Shakespeare's plays, while around 65% of them have also read Shakespeare's poems. Hence, it can be concluded Shakespeare's works are prevalent among many English teachers in Hong Kong.

#### 6.1.2 Figures depicting the relationship between teachers' age and their exposure to Shakespeare's works:

Figure 5. Quantitative results showing teachers' age and their exposure to Shakespeare's works

Age groups	Total Number of Respondents	Respondents who have received exposure in any Shakespeare's works	Percentage (%)	Respondents who have received no exposure at all	Percentage (%)
18 - 23	27	23	85.1%	4	14.9%
24 - 30	26	26	100.0%	0	-
31 - 40	15	8	53.3%	6	46.7%
41 - 50	12	9	75.0%	3	25%
51 - 59	8	8	100%	0	100.0%
60+	6	6	100%	0	
Total	94	80			

Figure 6. Qualitative results showing teachers' age and their exposure to Shakespeare's works

Interviewee	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Age group	18 - 23	18 - 23	18 - 23	24 - 30	31 - 40	31 - 40	41 - 50	31 - 40	51 - 60
Received exposure or not	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

From Figure 5, around 45% of the respondents from the age group 31-40 indicated that they have not received any exposure to Shakespeare at all, which is the highest among the other age groups. The results in figure 6 echoes with the results from figure 6, as the two respondents from the 31-40 age group also indicated that they had no exposure to Shakespeare's works during the interviews:

*“...I skipped every Shakespeare course in my B.A programme as I am not interested in Shakespeare’s works at all ...” (Interviewee T5)*

*“I studied law for my degree and took PGDE before teaching. So I haven’t read Shakespeare before” (Interviewee T6)*

The findings from figure 5 and 6 reflected Hong Kong English teachers’ lack of exposure to literary works, which to extend, raised a question about whether teacher training in Hong Kong is sufficient. They would be further pondered over in the latter discussion.

6.1.3 In a bid to highlight the relationship between teachers’ views on Shakespeare’s relevance to their daily lives and their exposure to Shakespeare’s works, the results are presented in the following:

Figure 7. Group statistics

	Number of respondents	Mean score on how relevant they found Shakespeare’s works to their daily lives	Std. Deviation
No Exposure	14	19.71	4.631
Exposed to at least a type of Shakespeare’s works	80	20.96	5.179

Figure 8. Independent Sample Test

Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances					t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Sig.	t	dF	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Variances assumed	.551	.460	-.844	92	.401	-1.502	1.479
Variances not assumed			-.913	19.161	.372	-1.248	1.367

Figure 7 illustrates that teachers who had no prior exposure to Shakespeare reported very similar ratings in perceived relevance than those who have been exposed to at least a type of Shakespeare’s works. Further group testing in Figure 8 showed that the discrepancy between the group with exposure and the group without exposure is insignificant [ $t(92) = -1.502, p = .401$ ;  $t(19.161) = -1.248, p = .372$ ].

Figure 9. Qualitative results showing teachers' views on Shakespeare's relevance with daily lives

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Received exposure or not	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Find relevance with daily life	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

However, Figure 9 illustrates contrary findings compared with the quantitative results obtained in Figure 7 and 8. The qualitative results indicated that teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's works directly correlates with whether they see Shakespeare relevant. During the interview, 4 teachers (T2, T7, T3 and T6) who have read Shakespeare's works agreed that they are relevant with our daily lives. For instance:

*"I think some of the themes are very much co-related (with our daily lives). Well for example, the theme of love will never be outdated ..."* (Interviewee T2)

*"Prevalent Shakespeare's concepts are also prevalent in our daily lives too"* (Interviewee T7)

On the other hand, all interviewees who were not exposed to Shakespeare's works (T3 and T6) expressed the idea that Shakespeare's works were outdated:

*"... Shakespeare is something that is outdated, ... it is written in something like the 17<sup>th</sup> century..."* (Interviewee T3)

*"... Shakespeare is not quite relevant because the social setting is totally different ..."* (Interviewee T6)

There is a discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative results when comparing teachers' exposure to their views on whether Shakespeare is relevant to daily lives. It is suggested that such discrepancy was caused by the lack of purposive sampling, which would be further discussed in section 9 of this report.

6.1.4 To investigate whether teachers have been equipped with skills to teach language arts or Shakespeare, both quantitative and qualitative results were analysed and presented in the following:

Figure 10. Quantitative results showing Training that teachers' have received in their career

	Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Trained to teach language arts	94	92	97.7%
Trained to teach Shakespeare	94	9	9.6%

Figure 11. Qualitative results showing training that teachers' have received

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Trained to teach language arts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trained to teach Shakespeare	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Despite teachers' high exposure in Shakespeare's works as discussed in 6.1.1, Figure 10 and Figure 11 revealed that most teachers were not prepared to teach Shakespeare. Only 9.6% of respondents in the quantitative research (Figure 11) and one interviewee (T7) were trained equipped with pedagogical skills of teaching Shakespeare's works in the classroom. However, nearly all teachers (97.7 % of respondents in Figure 10 and all the interviewees in Figure 11) in the research indicated that they have received training in teaching language arts, which creates an intriguing room for discussion considering the definition of language arts in Hong Kong, a city which regards English as a second language.

#### 6.1.5 Conclusion

Section 6.1 concluded that most English teachers in Hong Kong are exposed to Shakespeare's works. Among all age groups, however, the age group 31-40 was highlighted as they were shown to have less exposure to Shakespeare's works. It is suggested that the educational background of respondents from this age group is a contributing factor to finding, which the aroused problems would be further explored in the latter discussion section. In terms of teaching, the results depicted that most teachers are not trained to teach Shakespeare, although the teaching language arts have been hugely emphasized in Hong Kong's New Senior Secondary English Curriculum in recent years.

## 6.2 Results for research question (2): What are the teachers' attitudes towards teaching Shakespeare in senior ESL classrooms in Hong Kong in general?

6.2.1 The following figures illustrate the relationship between teachers' exposure to Shakespeare and their views on teaching Shakespeare in terms of whether seeing perceived benefits in implementing it.

Figure 12. Quantitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare and how beneficial do they think teaching Shakespeare is

	Number of respondents	Mean score on the perceived benefits of teaching Shakespeare to students	Std. Deviation
No Exposure	14	15.71 / 35	4.423
Exposed to at least a type of Shakespeare's works	80	26.85 / 35	3.639

Figure 13. Qualitative results showing teachers' exposure to Shakespeare and how beneficial do they think teaching Shakespeare is

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Received exposure or not	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whether teaching Shakespeare is beneficial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figure 12 shows that teachers who had no exposure to Shakespeare's works reported significant different ratings in perceived benefits than those who have been exposed to Shakespeare's works ( $M=14$ ,  $SD=4.423$ ;  $M=26.86$ ,  $SD=3.639$ ). Figure 13 further affirms the results obtained from Figure 12, in which all interviewees who have read Shakespeare's works agreed that students would be benefited from learning Shakespeare.



6.2.2 This section illustrates the perceived benefits that the respondents and interviewees see from teaching Shakespeare to students.

Figure 14. Quantitative results showing perceived benefits that teachers see from teaching Shakespeare to students

Area of improvement	Number of respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading skills	94	3.39	.819
Writing skills	94	3.22	1.109
Listening skills	94	2.80	.923
Speaking skills	94	3.22	.093
Analytical skills on literature	94	3.30	.971
Exposure to Western culture	94	3.93	.086
Learning Vocabulary items	94	3.74	1.005

Figure 14 illustrates the three most perceived benefits that teachers see from teaching Shakespeare to students. It shows that receiving exposure to Western culture is the most perceived among teachers, while learning vocabulary items and improving reading skills are the second and third most perceived advantage for students to learn Shakespeare.

Figure 15. Qualitative results showing perceived benefits that teachers see from teaching Shakespeare to students

Interviewee	Summary of what benefits they see
T1	Reading skills, Analytical skills
T2	Reading Skills, Writing skills, Analytical Skills
T3	Vocabulary acquisition, Writing skills
T4	Reading skills, writing skills, Speaking Skills, Analytical skills
T5	Vocabulary acquisition
T6	Writing skills, Analytical skills
T7	Reading skills, writing skills, Listening Skills, Speaking skills, Analytical Skills, Critical Thinking skills
T8	Reading skills, writing skills, Speaking Skills, Analytical skills
T9	Speaking skills, Analytical Skills, Critical Thinking skills, Meaning of life

Figure 15 further illustrates the perceived benefits of teaching Shakespeare. Apart from cultivating the four language and analytical skills, interviewees also further highlighted some possible benefits, such as:

*“Students have to come up with a logical evidence to support their understanding, and there’s no model answers for many texts” (Interviewee T7)*

*“Shakespeare can be meaningful when students could reflect the meaning of life...” (Interviewee T9)*

The justification of these benefits would be further explored in the discussion section.

6.2.3 Despite seeing the benefits of teaching Shakespeare to students, the following figures indicated the low feasibility of teaching Shakespeare from the teachers’ perspective.

Figure 16. Quantitative results showing teachers’ views in terms of feasibility

Score* on the feasibility of teaching Shakespeare	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Overall mean	S.D.
1	21	22.3%	2.81 / 5	0.842
2	40	42.6%		
3	28	29.8%		
4	5	5%		
5	0	0		

\*1 = not feasible at all, 5 = very feasible

In figure 16, the relatively low mean score (2.81) and the high number of respondents choosing a score for the feasibility indicated that suggested that teachers do not see teaching Shakespeare as a feasible motion. This echoes with the results obtained from the qualitative research, with many respondents stressing the feasible and some, stating that it would only be feasible unless serval conditions are fulfilled:

*“EMI students should try, but CMI students don’t have to” (Interviewee T4)*

*“It’s only feasible when the teachers are ready ...” (Interviewee T8)*

*“It would be difficult ... the school system is not very good at encouraging students to read...”*

*(Interviewee T9)*

6.2.4 This section presents the results which account for the low feasibility of implementing Shakespeare teaching from the teachers’ perspective.

Figure 17. Quantitative results showing reasons that restrict teachers from teaching Shakespeare

Statements	Number of respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>I don't have time to teach Shakespeare under the packed NSS curriculum.</i>	94	3.88	.878
<i>I don't feel confident in teaching Shakespeare at all.</i>	94	2.89	1.140
<i>I don't have time to prepare for lesson materials for teaching Shakespeare.</i>	94	3.41	1.051
<i>I don't think I would have sufficient resources when I teach Shakespeare</i>	94	3.34	1.022
<i>I think Shakespeare's language is too hard for my students.</i>	94	3.33	.988
<i>I think it is impractical for my students to study Shakespeare.</i>	94	3.47	1.013

Figure 17 shows the three most perceived reasons of why teaching Shakespeare in senior secondary English classrooms is unfeasible. The quantitative results show that the packed NSS curriculum is regarded as the primal reason for restricting the teaching of Shakespeare (M=3.88, S.D.=0.878), while the impracticability for students to study Shakespeare (M=3.47, S.D.=1.013) and not having sufficient time to prepare lesson materials (M=3.41, S.D.=1.051) are the second and third commonly perceived reasons among all of them.

Figure 18. Quantitative results showing reasons that restrict teachers from teaching Shakespeare

Interviewee	Reasons interviewees highlighted during the interview
T1	Packed curriculum, poorly designed learning materials, teachers' heavy workload
T2	Packed curriculum, teachers' unreadiness in teaching Shakespeare, students' lack of interest
T3	Packed curriculum, Students' lack of interest, unwillingness of school management
T4	Students' average English proficiency
T5	Packed curriculum, examination-oriented education system
T6	Packed curriculum, Students' average English proficiency
T7	Packed curriculum, teachers' unreadiness in teaching Shakespeare
T8	Teachers' unreadiness in teaching English literature
T9	The language barrier of ESL learners when reading literature

Figure 18 summarizes the interviewees' views in terms of the possible reasons that might restrict teachers from teaching Shakespeare, in which some of them are affirmed by respondents in Figure 18. For instance, the packed English curriculum was highlighted repetitively by interviewees T1 - T3 and T5 - T7. In addition, some interviewees have further highlighted some reasons, which were not covered or mentioned in the previous quantitative research:

*“the only way that I could draw students' attention ... would be telling them hey, this is the part would appear in the final examination” (Interviewee T5)*

T5's words revealed the problematic curriculum in Hong Kong, in which assessments have been put undue emphasis on. With such emphasis, it explains why Shakespeare's works are overlooked despite its emblematic status in English literature. Furthermore, the reason regarding teachers' qualification and training, which was mentioned in 6.1.2 and 6.1.4, was once again stressed by Teacher 8 during the interview:

*“How could you expect students to learn English when their teachers do not read English?”*  
*Interviewee T8)*

The language barrier, which was a major issue for ESL learners when reading English Literature, was aroused by Teacher 9 during the interview as well:

*“...deal with Shakespeare’s language ... it’s a barrier.” (Interviewee T9)*

6.2.5 To further investigate in the effectiveness of teaching Shakespeare to students, the quantitative research compares the predicted students’ responsive rate and the actual students’ responsive rate between teachers who have taught and who have not taught Shakespeare in classroom respectively:

Figure 19. Quantitative results showing teachers’ experience in teaching Shakespeare

Whether teachers have taught Shakespeare before	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	70	74.5%
Yes	24	25.5%

Figure 20. Quantitative results comparing scores between students’ actual and predicted response

	*Score of Students’ <b>Actual</b> Response		*Score of Students’ <b>Predicted</b> Responsive	
	Mean score	S.D.	Mean Score	S.D.
Teachers <b>with</b> experience in teaching Shakespeare to a class	3.75 / 5	.737	Invalid	
Teachers <b>without</b> experience in teaching Shakespeare to a class	Invalid		2.31	.772

\*1= least responsive, 5 = the most responsive

Figure 19 identifies that 70 respondents have not taught Shakespeare before, in which they were asked about their prediction in terms of their students’ responsiveness; on the contrary, the 24 respondents who had taught Shakespeare before were asked about their experience in terms of how their students actually reacted in that particular Shakespeare class. As presented in Figure 20, teachers who had experience in teaching Shakespeare had a higher mean score in terms of students’ responsiveness (N = 24, M = 3.75, S.D. = .737).

This might be a significant figure providing an optimistic direction to the implementation of Shakespeare

teaching, as it showed that students responded much actively than many teachers' prediction. This would be further discussed in the Implication section.

### 6.2.6 Conclusion

Section 6.2 revealed that most English teachers have affirmed the benefits of teaching Shakespeare to students; for instance, students could cultivate their reading skills and be exposed to Western culture through reading Shakespeare's work. However, multifarious reasons may lower the feasibility of teaching Shakespeare in the classroom, such as the packed curriculum or teachers' unreadiness might contribute to the low feasibility. Yet, the research also shown that students unexpectedly responsive in lessons about Shakespeare, which suggests that modifications should be made to facilitate the teaching of it.

## 6.3 Results for Research Question (3): What modifications could be done to facilitate the teaching of Shakespeare?

This section presents the suggested adoptions that were proposed by the respondents in the quantitative and qualitative research.

Figure 21. Quantitative results showing teachers' views on the suggested modifications

	Number of respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
Create a simplified version of Shakespeare's text	94	3.71	.969
Attach a Chinese translated version of Shakespeare's works	94	3.78	1.156
Organize a Shakespeare's Week in class	94	2.88	1.125
Play video clips of Shakespeare's plays in class	94	3.47	1.094
Organizing a role-play activity in class	94	3.29	.887
Read aloud Shakespeare's text in class	94	3.04	1.200

Figure 22. Qualitative results showing interviewees' suggested modifications

Interviewee	Suggested Modifications
T1	Start with easy texts, set low amount of texts to be taught
T2	Use Chinese translation of texts, Design worksheets to keep Ss on task
T3	Use Chinese translation of texts
T4	Focus on one task and one literary skill only for one text, Work with school's Net teacher
T5	Incorporate Shakespeare's works in reading exercises
T6	Use Chinese translation of texts, play cartoon version of Shakespeare's plays
T7	Use e-platforms, incorporate productive tasks, start with easy texts
T8	Equip teachers with the skills of teaching literature works
T9	Work with university professionals to conduct "knowledge transfer sections"

From Figure 21, it shows that the two most perceived adaptations would be attaching a Chinese version of the play ( $M=3.78$ ,  $S.D.=1.156$ ) and creating a simplified version of Shakespeare's works ( $M=3.71$ ,  $S.D.=.969$ ). They were mentioned by many interviewees in the qualitative results (Figure 22), in which some of them in addition, propose intriguing suggestions:

***Working with the in-school net teacher***

*"I would approach the net teacher in our school because they usually have better resources"*  
(Interviewee T4)

***Collaborate with the university and set up knowledge transfer project***

*"It would probably be a good idea to look for support from people like me ... that would be what we called a knowledge transfer project ... (Interviewee T9)*

## 7 Discussion

### 7.1 The role of Shakespeare's works in the compulsory NSS English curriculum

Part 6.1.4 reflected that teachers were well trained to teach language arts but not Shakespeare. Such finding seemed contradictory, as Shakespeare's works are considered as an emblematic icon in literature works, whereas literature works are recognized as a critical element in language arts. This section first extends the discussion in terms of how the definition of language arts in Hong Kong differs from other EFL countries; and hence, further justifies the value of teaching Shakespeare to students.

#### 7.1.1 The definition of language arts in Hong Kong

In EFL countries such as the United States, language arts are categorized as the multifarious range of texts and literature, including fictions or non-fictions, printed or non-printed texts, visually representing texts and even values (California Department of Education, 2000; Tompkins, 2002; Cramer, 2004). With reference to such definition, Shakespeare's works are considered to be an indispensable element in language arts.

The difference in the definition of language arts in Hong Kong explains teachers' lack of training in Shakespeare pedagogy and the low popularity of Shakespeare's works in Hong Kong's English classrooms. Language arts in Hong Kong are referred to the activities involving both literary texts and popular culture texts, such as poems, novels and songs, designed to arouse students' language awareness and develop students' creativity (Mok, Chow and Wong, 2006). Interviewee Teacher 9 also indicated similar definition during the interview:

*"... the definition of language arts in Hong Kong is to use the appeal of the story to get material and use it to teach language..." (Interviewee T9)*

In addition, Benson and Patkin (2013) illustrated that language arts texts "were not drawn from the traditional canon of English literature and that they would be both modern and popular". The Senior

Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2009) further distinguish "English Language arts" and "Literature in English",



which the previous as the part of English curriculum and the latter an elective subject. As Shakespeare's works are categorized as English literature, they were not identified as a part of language arts in Hong Kong. This explains why teachers do not receive training in teaching Shakespeare in particular, although being trained to teach language arts.

### **7.1.2 The value of teaching Shakespeare to Hong Kong students**

Despite the low popularity of Shakespeare in English classrooms, the benefits for Hong Kong ESL students to learn Shakespeare are mutually affirmed by the participants of the research and scholars. The most perceived benefits are justified and illustrated in the following paragraphs.

#### **7.1.2.1 Exposing students to western cultures and values**

As stated in the literature review, English morals and values were ingrained in Shakespeare's works as a civilizing tool since the era of colonialism. Western cultures, compared with Chinese culture, are often labelled as explicit and expressive, which could be observed by the overwhelming emotions such as love, hate, anger or courage, to name a few as expressed in Shakespeare's works (Gibson, 2008). Apart from appreciating Western cultures and values through reading, the immersion in virtual or authentic Shakespeare Festivals allows students to further appreciate and explore the extravagant and fancy world of Shakespeare (Segurado, 2013). Addison (2013) further elaborated that although the study of Shakespeare might not be easily assessed formatively, it provides students with wider perspective needed to help them "place their goals and aspirations within a richer context".

#### **7.1.2.2 Allowing students to acquire vocabulary items**

According to Elliott and Valenza (2011), Shakespeare's works were constructed with a greater variety of expression compared with other prominent English writers, such as John Milton; in which Shakespeare wrote his plays with 15,000 words and Milton with 8,000 words. It justifies the views of questionnaire respondents, which a number of them believed that their students could learn more vocabulary items if they read Shakespeare. Dakin (2009), further depicted that students could acquire different types of

vocabulary items from Shakespeare's works in depth; they include: vocabulary of Shakespeare's stage

directions, archaic words, vocabulary used to describe Shakespeare's complex and ambiguous characters, synonyms illustrating human emotions and pronouns such as "thee, thy and thou". Not only do students simply "read" or "recite" these vocabulary items, the complexity of Shakespeare's works fosters students to "understand" a word (Dakin, 2009). Vocabulary learning could be introduced in Shakespeare's lessons about plays, in which acting, script writing or performing activities are integrated in it, promoting students acquire vocabulary items more effectively.

### 7.1.2.3 Developing students' reading and critical thinking skills

As Shakespeare's works consisted of ambiguities and complexities, they generate room for multifarious interpretations (Purewal, 2017). In Hong Kong's English curriculum, efferent reading is practiced in classes, requiring students to locate information and read for a purpose; on the contrary, the aesthetic reading approach is usually adopted when students read Shakespeare, hence creating rooms for students to explore and debate themes in ways that few other literary texts can do. During the interview, Interviewee Teacher 7 has expressed his views regarding students' interpretation:

*"Well, it's very hard for teachers to say that students' interpretations are wrong, as there are no rights and wrongs in Shakespeare's worlds..." (Interviewee T7)*

Apart from the ambiguities, the detailed depiction of Shakespeare's plays can serve as reading materials for students to undergo analysis (Dakin, 2009). In specific, for instance, students can be instructed to read stage directions, cast lists and even key lines in prereading stage and hence, allowing them to predict the story plot by their analytical skills; in while-reading stages, students could be guided to conduct annotations in long Shakespeare's text, which could contribute for students' skimming and scanning skills in the future; in post-reading stage, teachers may switch students' attention not only to apparent meanings, but also to underlying meaning to Shakespeare's main element of construction, the entire scene. This further inspires students to think beyond texts, hence developing students' critical thinking skills.

## 7.2 The current problematic NSS English curriculum

Though responses to the teaching of Shakespeare were mostly positive, participants of the research however, stated the low feasibility of teaching Shakespeare. The reasons accounted for such low feasibility reflected the problems of the current NSS curriculum.

### 7.2.1 Time constraints

During the research, many teacher participants indicated time constraint as a critical reason which lowers the feasibility of introducing Shakespeare in classrooms (Section 6.2.4). This reflected that the English curriculum was overwhelmed, as both the non-language arts and language arts chapters have to be covered by teachers before students sit for the HKDSE examination. Within each module taught, summative assessments regarding the four language skills have to be conducted, adding the burden to teachers and students. Carless and Harfitt's (2013) indicated that such packed curriculum restricted teachers from regularly implementing learning tasks in the language arts modules, which corroborates with teachers' participants views from this research, as quoted in the following:

*"... he or she (teachers) would be affected by many factors .... for example, to catch up with the schedule ..."* (Interviewee T1)

*"...it's not feasible at all ... the schedule is extremely packed. Teachers are rushing to complete numerous exercises every day..."* (Interviewee T3)

These two quotes summarized the viewpoint that time constraint is a restriction when it comes to the implementing of new elements, such as Shakespeare's works in the classrooms.

### 7.2.2 Collaboration and consents among stakeholders

Apart from time constraints, the reluctance of some stakeholders in the position of curriculum planning restricts the implementation of teaching Shakespeare in classrooms. Consider Interviewee T8's quote in the

*“It’s not that easy to move what had been established for years; even if it’s not working, not every panel heads or even principal are willing to make a change ... as this may indirectly prove that they are at a wrong direction, perhaps for the last 10 years ...” (Interviewee T8)*

Interviewee T8’s words indicated a problematic phenomenon in the school administrative level. Although changes might benefit students’ learning, there are always other non-academic related factors to be considered by the school management section when decisions are made.

In addition, the introduction of new elements, such as chapters or lessons about Shakespeare, requires the integration of information collected through needs assessment, meetings with programme leaders, reviews on policy documents and large-scale discussion among relevant stakeholders. Rounds of discussions regarding logistical constraints, parents and the society’s expectations on the curriculum, explicit and implicit policies, are all to be considered if the curriculum is reformed with Shakespeare introduced in classrooms (Snow & Kamhi-Stein, 2006). This requires negotiations and collaborations between different parties from the administrative sections to in-school levels, which is difficult to be coordinated.

### **7.2.3 The undue emphasis on formative assessments**

The deep-rooted examination-oriented education system in Hong Kong has deteriorated the reformation of the curriculums and stifles the chances for students to appreciate English language. Instead, researches showed that many students perceived that the conventional mode of teaching, in which teachers focus on exam-oriented and grammar drilling practices, is more beneficial for their studies from the perspective of academic expectation (Wong, 2014; Ko, 2019). Wong’s research also further stated in the research that the role of assessments contributes to many students’ motivations for learning English. In Hong Kong’s English curriculum, literature such as Shakespeare’s works, is only considered as an aid for the pedagogy and acquisition of knowledge in the curriculum “English language”, which could be expected that the chapter would be ignored by students. Even if Shakespeare is introduced in the elective part of the

compulsory curriculum, hardly would it be taken into serious consideration as there is no formal assessment

for the Elective part for the compulsory English curriculum (Carless & Harfitt, 2013). Despite the fact that Shakespeare's works are introduced in the examination subject "Literature in English", students still see them as a chapter to be tested, instead of something to be appreciated. The influence of students' examination-oriented mindsets in classrooms could be reflected and concluded in the following quote from the interview with Interviewee Teacher 5:

*"the only way that I could draw students' attention ... would be telling them hey, this is the part would appear in the final examination" (Interviewee T5)*

#### **7.2.4 The "Dark Side" of Shakespeare's works**

Not only does the problem align in terms of feasibility, some scholars also indicated that the superior status of Shakespeare may alienate students from ethnic minority backgrounds and students from privileged backgrounds as well (Cole, 2013; Dusbiber, 2015). Dusbiber's research (2015) indicated that non-white students found Shakespeare's works irrelevant, while some of them found Shakespeare's works offending as it promotes the notion that British civilization is superior to other cultures. In Hong Kong's classrooms, students come from different family backgrounds, in which the numbers of students from ethnic minorities have been increasing in recent years (Gao, 2018). Their needs and culture should also be taken into consideration when educational policies or reforms are discussed to prevent misunderstandings aroused when teachers explain or teach controversial themes in Shakespeare's works.

While Shakespeare's controversial themes may violate ethnic students' background, scholars and teacher participants in this research indicated their worries that the superior status of Shakespeare's works might bring an undesirable effect towards students' self-esteem or confidence. Cole (2015) also stated that:

*"If policymakers continue to adhere to a view of culture which presents it more as a body of elite knowledge rather than as social practice, then students who do not come from backgrounds where Shakespeare forms part of their cultural capital, are unlikely to find it the liberating experience it is claimed to be..." (Cole, 2015)*

Cole's article further illustrates that there is a possibility for students to distinguish themselves from the elite group, as the compulsory study of Shakespeare further distinguishes societal boundaries which depict that individuals should belong to a particular class to be identified as cultured. Interviewee Teacher 8 indicated and concluded similar point of views, as quoted in the following:

*"If Shakespeare has to be implemented, weaker learners learning needs should be catered so that they won't feel deterred by the complexity, which might crush their confidence in the worst case ..."*  
(Interviewee T8)

### 7.2.5 Teacher training in Hong Kong

Results in the above (6.1.2) also pointed to a major issue that teacher training in Hong Kong is inadequate. The quotes from the interviews with Interviewee Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 as stated in the results section 6.1.2 suggested that loopholes might exist in the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Post-graduate Diploma Studies (PGDE) Programmes, which undesirably qualifies teachers with inadequate subject knowledge to be an in-school teacher. To be specific, teachers' exposure to literature might be limited as they are labelled as elective courses, in which teachers' participation are not compulsory. Many teachers, such as Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 from the interviews, might graduate with limited exposure to a particular area in English language, such as English Literature. As researches indicated that competence in subject knowledge should be emphasized in senior secondary level, some teachers' lack of exposure to Shakespeare programme reflected their deficient subject knowledge (Coniam, Falvey & Xiao, 2017).

Despite completing the PGDE programmes, some scholars indicated that the short period of studying as a part-time restrict teachers' exposure to ample opportunities for integrated learning experiences, i.e. teacher preparation from the integration of academic studies and professional studies (Lai, Chan & Li, 2002). As a qualified teacher should be trained in fields of other educational studies, ranging from psychology to teaching theories and skills, it remains questionable as whether non-English major subject degree holders (such as

Teacher 6) are qualified to be an in-school teacher in spite of completing their PGDE studies.

### 7.3 Suggestions for improvements

Despite the low perceived feasibility, teacher respondents and scholars share similar suggestions which aim at enhancing the possibility and effectiveness of teaching Shakespeare in senior secondary classrooms. The most perceived and significant suggestions would be discussed and justified in the following paragraphs.

#### 7.3.1 Adapting a translated version of Shakespeare's plays

To begin with, teacher respondents and scholars suggest that Chinese versions of Shakespeare's works could be attached for students' reference. As Shakespeare's language barrier is a major concern for students (Interviewee Teacher 9), respondents and scholars indicated that providing revised versions written in their first language may lower their affective filter towards Shakespeare's works. This suggestion is justified by the affirmed values of L1 in the learning of L2, in which scholars believe that the incorporation of L1 builds up connection between L1 and L2 knowledge in students' minds and facilitates students to conduct learning tasks through collaborative conversations with their fellows (Cook, 2001; Mart, 2013). From the scholars' views, not only do L1 helps students alleviate the language barrier, L1 also further facilitates students' collaboration when activities are conducted. In the teaching context of Shakespeare, in-class activities such as drama production, script writing or even story re-writing are often incorporated; if L1 is introduced among these activities, it would facilitate students' communication and collaboration.

#### 7.3.2 Working with in-school net teachers

As suggested by interviewee Teacher 4 in section 6.3, in-school net teacher plays a critical role if Shakespeare is taught in classes, which the role and value of NET teachers are further affirmed by scholars. The research conducted by Griffin and Woods (2009) indicated that NET teachers are well perceived in local secondary schools as they arouse students' interest in English, help students enhance their English proficiency and confidence to use English. In many secondary schools, NET teachers also help coordinate after-school English learning activities. Under the context of this research, it is obvious that NET teachers should be capable of helping in-service English teachers to coordinate aforementioned relevant activities, or, even take over several classes when Shakespeare is taught. This may relieve English teachers' workload and allow students to learn Shakespeare out of the classrooms which are often dominated by assessments.

### 7.3.3 Setting up knowledge transferring networks with universities

As suggested by Interviewee T9, knowledge transfer activities should be set up to equip teachers with better skills and knowledge towards the teaching of Shakespeare. This alleviates the concerns regarding teachers' qualification and inadequate subject knowledge as indicated in 7.2.5. Ferreira and Carayannis (2019) indicated also pointed out that knowledge transfer activities foster the collaboration between different education levels. In the context of this research, secondary school teachers are benefited they would receive training or workshops held by tertiary education; meanwhile, tertiary education would gain recognition and credits upon such collaboration, as quoted from the interview with Interviewee T9:

*“That would be what we called a knowledge transfer project ... someone gives us credit for delivering knowledge...” (Interviewee T9)*

By fostering the collaboration between universities and secondary schools, it enhances the feasibility of implementing Shakespeare works in secondary classrooms.



## 8 Implication

Students' and teachers' perceptions towards the effectiveness of the innovated curriculum bring a profound impact on the successiveness of the reformation (Fullan, 2007). Initially, implementation of teaching Shakespeare NSS classrooms seemed unfeasible due to several aforementioned constrains. However, the results shown in section 6.2.5 indicated that students performed unexpectedly responsive towards in lessons about Shakespeare. This alleviates concerns regarding students' learning, which on the other hand, signifies that the constraints of teaching Shakespeare are created by other factors, including the curriculum, the administrative structure and teachers themselves.

In student-centered classrooms, students' learning needs and preferences should be regarded as the primal concern when teachers adapt any pedagogical approaches or tasks (Wright, 2011). If lessons about Shakespeare were unexpectedly well perceived by students as shown in 6.2.5, it further affirms the value of Shakespeare's works in classrooms, and hence, advocates and encourages English teachers to make innovative changes in their classrooms. This research also implicates and suggests other English Literatures could also be considered and adapted by English teachers in their classrooms in the future. If appropriate teaching approaches and guidance is provided by the teacher, the feasibility of incorporating Shakespeare and other English Literatures can be enhanced, which enriches students' exposure to the mysterious and colourful English language culture.

## 9 Limitations

This research consists two major limitations in its attempt demonstrate teachers' views and perceptions towards the idea of incorporating Shakespeare in NSS English classrooms.

The first limitation is reflected from the discrepant results between the quantitative and qualitative research in section 6.1.3, in which the quantitative results showed that there is no significant relationship between teachers' exposure to Shakespeare's works and the relevance of Shakespeare's works in their daily lives, while the qualitative results indicated opposing results. It is suggested that such discrepancy exists due to the lack of purposive sampling, which should be conducted to further separate respondents from those whose major were in arts or literature and those whose major were in education; as the study focus of these two groups of respondents varies, it could be expected and presumed that there would be segregate views on such issue. Purposive sampling in this research provides a clearer view on how teachers' educational backgrounds affect their views and perception on teaching Shakespeare.

The second limitation is that this research only takes teachers' perspectives from a limited range of secondary schools and institutions, in which such limited sample size may not be generalized and applied to the large population in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this research would be a reference for further investigations and researches to be conducted in the future.

## 10 Conclusion

To conclude, this research reveals teachers' mixed attitudes towards the teaching of Shakespeare in NSS English classrooms: while they affirmed in the benefits of students' learning Shakespeare, they indicated a number of constrains which inhibit the implementation of such innovative idea. In the latter part, suggestions are proposed to enhance the feasibility of incorporating Shakespeare's works. Despite the challenges, English teachers should maximize their efforts ensure that students are comprehensively exposed to different works, including Shakespeare's in English classes.

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## Appendix 1A: Background Information of questionnaire respondents

Table 1A (I): The age distribution of Questionnaire participants

Age Groups	Number of Respondents	Percentage (cor. to 2 d p.)
18 – 23	27	28.72 %
24 – 30	26	27.66 %
31 – 40	15	15.96 %
41 – 50	12	12.77 %
51 – 59	8	8.51 %
60 +	6	6.38 %
<b>Total:</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 1A (II): The Occupation of Questionnaire participants

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage (Cor. to 2 d. p.)
Pre-service Teachers	25	26.60 %
In-service Primary School Teacher	22	23.40 %
In-service Secondary School Teacher	26	27.66 %
In-service Tertiary Education Tutor / Lecturer / (Associate) Professor	14	14.89 %
Retired from English Teaching Posts	7	7.45 %
<b>Total: 28</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 1A (III): Teaching Experience in Senior Form's English Classrooms

Teaching Experience in NSS Classrooms	Number of Respondents	Percentage (Cor. to 2 d. p.)
Yes	77	81.91 %
No	17	18.09 %
<b>Total Number of participants:</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## Appendix 1B: Background Information of Interviewees

Interviewee	Age Group	Occupation	Nationality	Experience in Teaching NSS English Classes
T1	18 - 23	Pre-service Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T2	18 - 23	Pre-service Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T3	18 - 23	Pre-service Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T4	24- 30	In-service Secondary School Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T5	31 - 40	In-service Secondary School Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T6	31 – 40	In-service Secondary School Teacher	Chinese	Yes
T7	41 – 50	In-service Secondary NET Teacher	Pilipino	Yes
T8	31 – 40	Lecturer in a local university	Chinese	Yes
T9	51 – 60	Associate Professor in a local university	Canadian	Yes



## Appendix 2: Sample of the Questionnaire

### Section 1 – Personal Information

1. What is your current occupation?
  - A pre-service English Teacher
  - An in-service English teacher in a local primary school
  - An in-service English teacher in a local secondary school
  - An in-service tutor teaching English related subjects in a university
  - Retired from English teaching posts
2. Which of the following age groups does you belong to?
  - 18 – 23
  - 24 – 30
  - 31 – 59
  - 60 or above

### Section 2 - Educational Background and Teaching Experiences

3. Have you ever participated in any courses / lectures / workshops, or, received information about the NSS English curriculum?  
Yes / No
4. Have you ever participated in any courses, lectures or workshops about teaching language arts in secondary schools?  
Yes / No
5. Have you ever participated in any courses, lectures or workshops about teaching language arts in secondary schools?  
Yes / No
6. Have you ever taught in senior forms (i.e. NSS English curriculum classroom)?  
Yes / No
7. From your knowledge or experiences, do you think it is effective to teach language arts in senior secondary forms?



8. Have you ever read the following Shakespeare's works before?
- Poems – Yes / No
- Sonnets – Yes / No
- Plays – Yes / No
9. From your knowledge or experiences, how effective do you think it would be to teach Shakespeare in senior secondary forms?
- Rate on the scale from 1 (least effective) – 5 (most effective)
10. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?
- Yes / No

### Section 3 – More about Shakespeare

11. The following options are themes which are commonly found in Shakespeare's works. According to your knowledge of Shakespeare's works, please state how relevant you find the following themes are to your personal life on the scale from 1 – 5. (1 being the least relevant, 5 being the most relevant)
- a) Romantic relationship
  - b) Family Relationship
  - c) Women in the society
  - d) Friendship
  - e) Humanity
  - f) Revenge
  - g) Misunderstandings
12. The following statements are some statements about the possible benefits of teaching Shakespeare's works to students. Please state how much you agree with the following statements. (1 least agree, 5 the most agree)
- a) My students' English reading skills could be boosted by learning Shakespeare.
  - b) My students' English writing skills could be boosted by learning Shakespeare.
  - c) My students' English listening skills could be boosted by learning Shakespeare.
  - d) My students' English speaking skills could be boosted by learning Shakespeare.
  - e) My students' analytical skills on literature works could be boosted by learning Shakespeare.
  - f) My students would be exposed to traditional western culture by learning Shakespeare.
  - g) My students' vocabulary bank would be enriched by learning Shakespeare.

13. In terms of students' learning, the following options statements are some possible reasons which restrict you from teaching Shakespeare to a group of senior secondary school students. Please state how much you agree with the following statements. (1 least agree, 5 the most agree)
- a) I don't have time to teach Shakespeare under the packed curriculum
  - b) I don't feel confident in teaching Shakespeare at all.
  - c) I don't have time to prepare for lesson materials for teaching Shakespeare.
  - d) I don't think I would have sufficient resources when I teach Shakespeare.
  - e) I think Shakespeare's language is too hard for secondary school students.
  - f) I think it is impractical for my students to study Shakespeare.
14. Have you attempted to teach Shakespeare in a senior secondary English classroom?  
Yes / No (If yes, move on to 16; If no move on to 17)
15. From your experiences, how responsive did your students react towards the lesson?  
( 1 = the least responsive / 5 = the most responsive)
16. From your prediction, how responsive would your students react towards the lesson?  
( 1 = the least responsive / 5 = the most responsive)
17. The following are some suggested modifications to be implemented in senior secondary classrooms to teach Shakespeare. Please state how useful they are in terms of facilitating the teaching of Shakespeare to senior secondary students. ( 1 = the least useful / 5 = the most useful)
- a) Creating a simplified version of Shakespeare's text
  - b) Attaching a Chinese translated version of Shakespeare's works
  - c) Organizing a Shakespeare Week in class
  - d) Playing video clips of Shakespeare's plays in class
  - e) Organizing a role-play activity in class
  - f) Reading aloud the texts within the class

## Appendix 3: Semi-structured teacher interview questions

[Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?]

1. How many years have you studied English / taught English?
2. What is your current occupation?
3. What are your thoughts on the New Senior Secondary English Curriculum?
4. What is your impression of teaching language arts in NSS English curriculum? Do you find it meaningful? What are the benefits and limitations of introducing language arts in the curriculum?
5. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever come across Shakespeare in your learning career?
7. Do you believe that students should learn Shakespeare? (Including students with low and high English proficiency / from EMI or CMI schools) Why or why not?
8. Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?
9. Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?
10. How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?
11. If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?
12. How would your students possibly react towards the lesson? Do you think they would enjoy the lesson? Why or why not?
13. Do you think it is suitable to make Shakespeare a compulsory unit in the NSS curriculum?
14. Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?
15. What would be the challenges of the lesson (in terms of lesson preparation, practical implementation in classroom, post-lesson work management)?
16. Do you think you would receive resources or support if you choose to teach Shakespeare in classroom?

[This is the end of the interview. Thank you for your participation!]

\*The order of questions asked may vary, depending on the response of the Interviewee.

## Appendix 4: Interviewees' Personal Information and Transcripts

### Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T1

Name of Interviewee: Leung

\*Pseudonyms preferred: ~~Yes~~ / No

Age Group: 18 - 23

Occupation: Pre-service Teacher

~~Workplace~~ / School: The Education University of HK

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = Leung

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

Leung No.

Chan To start with, how long have you studied English for?

Leung I have studied English for 17 years, 6 for primary school, 6 for secondary school and the fifth year for tertiary education.

Chan I see. So what is your current occupation?

Leung I'm a pre-service English teacher.

Chan Okay, preservice English teacher. What are your thoughts on the NSS English Curriculum?

Leung As a student who had firsthand experiences on receiving lessons designed by the Curriculum, and now a teacher who sometimes teach senior form students, I think that there are some prevalent and uncommon themes and topics being covered. Let me take writing topics as an example. There are relatively common topics, such as learning English through workplace communication, in which on the other hands, topics about learning English through poems or dramas are some topics that students are not quite familiar with. In my opinion, the curriculum

attempts to provide different choices for students respectively at first glance, however in the end, most students would be choosing those familiar topics, such as social issues.

Chan Interesting. What do you think would be the reason behind this phenomenon? Why would all students choose to answer questions of the module “Learning English through social issues”?

Leung I think the examination makes everyone practical. They would be reluctant towards some topics that are not quite practical, such as poems and songs.

Chan I see. What is your impression of teaching language arts in NSS English curriculum? Do you find it meaningful? What are the benefits and limitations of introducing language arts in the curriculum?

Leung According to my experience, as the NSS curriculum required schools to incorporate certain amount of the language arts curriculum, many schools have no choice but to put the language arts modules into their curriculum. In terms of materials, I think some teaching materials are not well-designed. Students would feel even more difficult to comprehend and understand what is taught if the materials are not well designed. When teachers prepare to teach language arts, he or she would be affected by many factors. For example, to catch up with the schedule, teachers might stop in the middle of a short story. Take Charles Dicken’s A Christmas Carol as an example. I have once heard that a teacher simply ask their students to read the uncovered novel at home as an extra reading materials. This lowers the effectiveness of learning language arts as it requires students to understand the text, which most of them are not independent enough to do it on their own, let alone doing follow up tasks like reproducing texts. It would be a total waste.

Chan I see. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?

Leung Not quite. It’s something personal. According to my experience and what my teacher had told me, Shakespeare is something that is quite difficult to study. Meanwhile, it had not to do with my academic results. That’s why I could have the option to dislike Shakespeare. There might be some subjects or themes that I still had to study if I hate them, but Shakespeare was not the case.

Chan I see. Have you ever come across Shakespeare in your learning career?

Leung Only during secondary school times. In university I could choose to study Shakespeare as an elective, but I simply didn’t do so.

Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools.

Leung I don’t think Shakespeare should be a compulsory element in the secondary school curriculum. It really depends on students’ ability. Let me put it in this way. I would think that each student

should learn about the cultural, literature or values behind Shakespeare. For example, in Chinese, we got “The Three Kingdoms” and “Sun Wu Kong” as the emblematic icons in Chinese literature. In English, I would say Shakespeare plays such role. I think it really depends on how students learn Shakespeare and which type of students. Let’s talk about students from band 1, band 2 and band 3 respectively. For band 2 and band 3 students, I would say that it is not quite possible for them to understand and interpret Shakespeare on their own. They couldn’t read the entire reading material by themselves, which in return, the explanation section would be emphasized on. What activities can teachers and students do? I think it would be some activities that could reproduce the feelings of the characters in the play. Some productive work could be done too. For instance in Romeo and Juliet, students could be asked to rewrite the fate of Juliet. I think students from band 2 and 3 could manage to write a short piece of writing. I think at students’ age, they might be interested in these topics about love and dating. They might be interested in these stories, and hence, not feeling so reluctant towards these literature works. For band 1 students, although they also require guidance during the while-reading stage, students might be able to do some large-scale productive plays. Or perhaps it would be something that’s more inspirational, such as asking them what they think about the stories.

Chan Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?

Leung I think it would be something about ancient English language. I think it would be a good lead-in to experience the difference between ancient language and modern English. But is it something that everyone needs to know? I doubt. Another thing that students could learn would be about literary devices. Shakespeare’s poems are perfect teaching materials for teaching simile and metaphor, especially for poems about love and romance. For example, Shakespeare used words such as “roses”, “dim” and “darkness” to highlight the theme of his poem. But for simple techniques, such as alliteration, rhyme, they don’t have to be taught with Shakespeare’s poems. Instead, if you choose more simple poems, students might be even more interested in it.

Chan Apart from language skills, do you think they can learn more about western cultural values?

Leung I think not much to be honest. According to what I studied in secondary school, sometimes Shakespeare are something that contains vulgarity. If I really want to find some values that students should learn about, I won’t limit myself to Shakespeare’s works.

Chan Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today’s context or to students’ lives?

Leung Yes, as I have mentioned, content about love and romantic relationships, these are themes that students would find related.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare’s works in your classroom? Why or why not?

- Leung I would say that the authority would be attempting to reform the English curriculum. Let's say if the education bureau is trying implement Shakespeare's content, which would carries more than 20% of students' final grade, I would say the Bureau would try to change the examination oriented system. If I have to interpret this move, I think that authority is trying to emphasis the English curriculum from the appreciation perspective, as perhaps they would think that they had done enough from the practical perspective. I don't like this idea. In Hong Kong, which English is regarded as the second language, I don't think it would work.
- Chan If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?
- Leung If there are no explicit instructions on how to teach Shakespeare in an NSS classroom, I would start by teaching something that starts with easy to difficult; from light workload to heavy workload. Let's take poems as an example. I would gather some poems that I would teach and publish a booklet, which there would be Chinese translation and the connotations as well. I would set a clear target, let's say I would only teach 5 poems in each school term. If plays are taught, it would be once again reminding students what a story plot looks like. Tasks such as asking students to rewrite the ending of the story would be adopted too. Because it's something that's new, probably I would use some teaching approaches which students are familiar with. They would be more reluctant towards learning English otherwise.
- Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?
- Leung No
- Chan I see. What challenges will you encounter when you are implementing a lesson teaching Shakespeare?
- Leung I think teachers would be the biggest challenge. As teachers, we have to prepare much more than students ought to receive in class. Whether teachers are qualified or whether they have received training in this area remains questionable. Teachers' massive workload is also one of the biggest challenges. I think there would even be a result of "random teaching", which means teachers might just read it once as teaching it, which makes the whole idea meaningless.
- Chan Do you think you would receive resources or support if you choose to teach Shakespeare in classroom?
- Leung I think net teacher would be one of the resources. Apart from him or her, there won't be much other things much. There are not much textbooks or even media platforms about teaching Shakespeare.
- Chan What modifications would you make if you are going to teach Shakespeare in the senior classroom?
- Leung I think I would only teach poems in junior forms, or perhaps simplified plays. I think senior students would not be afforded to spend so much time on the Shakespeare's works.



Chan      That's all for the interview. Thanks for your time!

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T2

Name of Interviewee: Chan

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No

Age Group: 18 - 23

Occupation: Pre-service Teacher

~~Workplace~~ / School: The Education University of HK

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = KC

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

KC No.

Chan To start with, how long have you studied English for?

KC I have studied English for 17 years, 6 for primary school, 6 for secondary school and the fifth year for tertiary education.

Chan I see. So what is your current occupation?

KC I'm a pre-service English teacher.

Chan Okay, preservice English teacher. What are your thoughts on the NSS English Curriculum?

KC Personally, I think it is an ideal curriculum for English learners in Hong Kong. I think the role of English in Hong Kong is quite practical, which the NSS English curriculum helps students learn different language skills efficiently. Take DSE's paper 3 as an example, students are often required to help their seniors or bosses to write Email replies, articles or other texts in their integrated tasks. This is how English is used in Hong Kong. I think some parts in the NSS curriculum are really quite useful for students in the future.

Chan I see. What is your impression of teaching language arts in NSS English curriculum? Do you find it meaningful? What are the benefits and limitations of introducing language arts in the curriculum?

- KC I would say the rationale is justifiable. However, when it comes to implementation, I am not certain about its feasibility. According to what I have learnt in the past 5 years in the university, the language arts that the bureau is referring to are not something that is too complicated. As we pre-service teachers are taught, songs, poems, short stories or any cultural elements could also be language arts. I think introducing these language arts items in an English class might arouse students' interest towards the English, as it is imaginable that students would become quite hyper when they heard Ed Sheeran's songs, let's say. But according to my field experience, many schools do not even have time for a song in their lesson. It's already a blessing if teachers can finish what they have planned on time. So, it makes teaching language arts items not quite feasible.
- Chan I see. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- KC Not at all. Shakespeare is something that is quite old and outdated. It's like Chinese's conventional writings back in the Tang dynasty. The language is always a barrier. It takes a lot of information browsing. You also have to spend a lot of time understanding the context of the text, or else, you might not make sense of the text even if you understand every single word.
- Chan Have you ever come across Shakespeare in your learning career?
- KC Well, yes. As a secondary school student, I have read about Romeo and Juliet. Not I did not read the whole thing. The teacher picked sections for us to read. Towards the end of the class, I still remember my English teacher picked one boy and one girl to be Romeo and Juliet respectively, which was hilarious. But our English teacher concluded the Shakespeare module with a quiz, which most of us failed. So it ended not quite happily.
- Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools.
- KC Yes, to some sort of extent, I think English learners should approach Shakespeare's works. I think although it's difficult to understand, they are emblematic icon in English culture. To facilitate students' acquisition, they should always be immersed in the English culture. I think learning Shakespeare is something like learning old poems in Chinese language. It has the similar concept.
- Chan For both EMI and CMI students?
- KC Why not? Although I am not a big fan of Shakespeare, I know that there are different levels of Shakespeare works. I think both students from EMI and CMI schools can try. For CMI student, perhaps teaching them the best quotes of Shakespeare would be a good try. Quotes like "Sweet are the uses of adversity" or "The time of life is short; to spend that shortness

basely, it would be too long”. These would be good enough for CMI schools. For EMI students of course, they could try something that is more challenging. Sonnets, poems or even plays could be discussed in class or maybe after class as well.

Chan Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?

KC Yes, I think students would be benefited from learning Shakespeare, which however, how much they are benefited profoundly depends on how in-depth their activities are. I think generally speaking, students could develop their creativity. Shakespeare’s works are always inspiring, as they are always a lot of magical moments in his works. Perhaps this would help inspire students to write innovative stories. Another thing that students would be benefited is the reading. Reading Shakespeare requires a lot of analysis. I think most reading practices in the NSS curriculum are simply designed for reading comprehension, which indeed students simply locate the answers and copy them to the answer book, which not much thinking is involved during the process. You can never do that when reading Shakespeare, according to my experience. As I remember, a single line could be explained in many different ways, which you could hardly get a definite answer from it. This fosters students to analyze and reason their suggestions.

Chan I see. Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today’s context or to students’ lives?

KC I think some of themes are very much co-related. Well for example, the theme of love would never be outdated, and it is something prevalent to our lives. Well of course, for something about life, perhaps it might be too difficult to be understood by teenagers, which hence, might be irrelevant from students’ perspectives. And you know, our system just focuses on examination. So if it’s not SBA or DSE, not much people would care.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare’s works in your classroom? Why or why not?

KC I won’t say it’s totally unfeasible, but it would be very difficult to incorporate such idea in all of the schools in Hong Kong. I think time would be a great concern, which there is already a lot to teach already. Another thing is that I think not many teachers are familiar with literature works, let alone Shakespeare’s works. Putting Shakespeare as a compulsory topic in the NSS classroom might add burden to my students. I’m a bit sceptical in terms of their patience. How many of them would be willing to sit for 3 doubles to analyze one single piece of poem? I’m not too sure about it.

Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?

KC No.

Chan I see. If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?

- KC I think the lesson must be set in a relaxing atmosphere. I would not want my students to feel stressful about learning Shakespeare first. Instead of giving them the whole piece of reading material, I think I would just provide them with the most intriguing parts and go over with them in class. Of course, it should at the same time be the easiest part so that they can follow.
- Chan Do you think students would enjoy your lesson?
- KC Yes, I think as long as they know what's going on, at least they won't feel resistant towards Shakespeare's work.
- Chan Good point to note. What challenges do you think you might encounter when you are trying to teach Shakespeare?
- I think I really have to convince members in the English panel to give a try. I think most of them would prefer using the curriculum that they could be using for many years. And I have also mentioned that many students might think that this not relevant to them.
- Chan Do you think you would receive resources or support if you choose to teach Shakespeare in classroom?
- KC I don't think there will be much resources at usual, which the responsibility should not be bear by the school. To be honest, the authority which most likely, should be the HKEAA or the Education Bureau, should give clear instructions and also a user-guide handbook for teachers, telling us what to teach, how much we should teach and suggest what Shakespeare's works to teach. But it think there should be a lot to find on the Internet, or in the reference books.
- Chan What modifications would you make if you are going to teach Shakespeare in the senior classroom?
- KC Probably it would be translating the whole thing into Chinese so that students could easily follow in class. Handouts would also be given out for my students to follow the lesson easily. Instead of me reading for the entire lesson, students should always be invite
- Chan That's all for the interview. Thanks for your time!

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T3

Name of Interviewee: Wong

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No

Age Group: 18 - 23

Occupation: Pre-service Teacher

~~Workplace~~ / School: The Education University of HK

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = Wong

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

Wong No.

Chan To start with, how long have you studied English for?

Wong I have studied English for 17 years, 6 for primary school, 6 for secondary school and the fifth year for tertiary education.

Chan I see. So what is your current occupation?

Wong I'm a pre-service English teacher.

Chan Okay, preservice English teacher. What are your thoughts on the NSS English Curriculum?

Wong As a student who had firsthand experiences on receiving lessons designed by the Curriculum, I would say I am not quite aware of how the curriculum works. I was aware that there are different modules, such as learning English through sports communication, learning English through watching movies, to name but a few. They only make a difference when it comes to which question I should choose for my writing paper. However, as a student teacher who has received training through our institute's pedagogical courses, I would say the curriculum attempts to expose students towards different context of using English, which I would think is the primal objective of teaching English to students. With the aid of TBLT, I think students could benefit by experiencing and practicing how to use apply English in their daily context.

- Chan I see. What is your impression of teaching language arts in NSS English curriculum? Do you find it meaningful? What are the benefits and limitations of introducing language arts in the curriculum?
- Wong I would say themes about language arts are interesting. According to my understanding, there are many types of language arts, such as movies, poems and songs, etc. I would say that ideally, we as teachers should always introduce students to different environments in using English. Apart from authentic and practical situations, appreciating literary works should also be an objective when I design my lesson in the future. However, from my FE experience, I would say that some in-service teachers do not recognize the significance of teaching language arts. They regard language arts as something hard to understanding, which they would not bother trying to teach language arts. I think the examination orientated system also discourages students in learning language arts too.
- Chan I see. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- Wong Personally, I am not quite interested in Shakespeare. I think Shakespeare is something that is too mysterious for me to investigate. It has a lot to with history, something that I hate studying. Shakespeare for me, is something far too difficult to be understood by me.
- Chan Have you ever come across Shakespeare in your learning career?
- Wong Not really. I came from an CMI secondary school. Last year when we got to choose Shakespeare as an elective, I skipped it too.
- Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools.
- Wong Well, I don't think secondary students should learn Shakespeare in their English lessons. I think for students who are interested in English Literature, they would have taken English Literature elective course. For other students, I think the purpose of learning English sadly for many of them, is to pass the DSE examination. English lessons should always be practical for them. To arouse their interest, of course there could be activities incorporated in lessons, which may arouse students' interest in terms of participating actively in class. But for Shakespeare's work, I would say it is some "luxurious items", which of course it's good for students to explore more English classics. However, from a target-oriented perspective, I don't think students should study Shakespeare's works during secondary school times.
- Chan For both EMI and CMI students?
- Wong I think so. It's not quite necessary to introduce Shakespeare's works in English classes. For CMI students, Shakespeare's works would definitely be a burden, which is foreseeable that students and teachers would struggle in the lessons, with one trying to explain everything in

detail and the others snoozing during the class. For EMI students, yes, Shakespeare's works could be introduced, but perhaps as after class English activities instead of something to be taught in lesson time.

Chan Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?

Wong If students got to learn Shakespeare's work, I think they would be benefited in terms of vocabulary acquisition. I think the word choices of Shakespeare's works are elegant and superior, which we could seldom approach in our daily lives. Reading Shakespeare's work could definitely enrich their vocabulary bank. I think it could also improve students' creativity when they write, as I think Shakespeare's works are always imaginative and mysterious. I think reading more of Shakespeare's work could also sparks students' creativity as well.

Chan Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?

Wong No, I don't think so. I would say Shakespeare is something that is outdated, as I believe it is written in something like the 17<sup>th</sup> century, right? Even some words in the works might be obsolete, let alone speaking of our daily context.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?

Wong Well, I would say it's not feasible at all. Again, from my experience in FE, the schedule is extremely packed. Teachers are rushing to complete numerous exercises every day. Take my FE school as an example. Within a month, we are directed to complete 3 pieces of reading comprehensive exercises, teach 3 grammar items, complete 2 pieces of 200-hundred words writing, 2 listening assessments and 1 speaking practice for a S4 class. It is impossible to complete all the work, as our students need a lot of scaffold and guidance for each class. From this schedule, you could see that it already makes teaching other so-called irrelevant topics, which indeed might be beneficial in some sense, impossible.

Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?

Wong No.

Chan If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?

Wong I think I would set it as an extra piece of reading material. Students have enough comprehension exercises, so perhaps something to just read for pleasure, instead of locating information and answer relevant question. If there are video clips of the play, I would play the video in class. But to be honest, even if I played video clips, students would not be interested in it at all.

Chan So you think students would not enjoy it at all?

Wong No, bit at all.



- Chan I see. What challenges will you encounter when you are implementing a lesson teaching Shakespeare?
- Wong As I have mentioned, probably it would be time constrain, and also the reluctance from the schoolteachers. For many in-service teachers, they have a lot of administrative work to handle on a daily basis. If you asked them to teach something that they are unfamiliar with, probably they would not support it because they would have to spend a lot of time preparing for lesson materials. Well, indeed, I think many of them would be starting all over again and learn the reading material. This should explain why they are reluctant towards the implementation.
- Chan Do you think you would receive resources or support if you choose to teach Shakespeare in classroom?
- Wong No. I think the panel head would simply handover stacks of materials and instruct me to read them on my own. In terms of resources, it would probably be some websites, with some worksheets provided on it.
- Chan What modifications would you make if you are going to teach Shakespeare in the senior classroom?
- Wong Probably it would be translating the whole thing into Chinese so that students could easily follow in class, if I really had to teach it.
- Chan That's all for the interview. Thanks for your time!

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T4

Name of Interviewee: Kwok

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No

Age Group: 24 - 30

Occupation: In-service Teacher

Workplace / ~~School~~: PHC Wing Kwong College

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = Kwok

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

Kwok No.

Chan To start with, may I know how many years have you taught English?

Kwok 13 years

Chan What is your current occupation?

Kwok A secondary school teacher

Chan What are your thoughts on the New Senior Secondary English curriculum?

Kwok As it links to DSE directly, I don't like it personally. In terms of language arts, although it claimed that it may help students in their writing and the teachers could choose what elective to teach, I don't think it help students learn English at all. Looking back when I learnt English in the old days, I did not learn English thorough "Sports communication". That's not the way I learnt English when I was a student. I learnt English by reciting phrases from the dictionary, jot notes and memorized what the teachers said and looked for chances to practise my spoken English, that's the most explicit difference between language subjects and other subjects. For many students, they don't even know much about sports. What they know are only limited to basketball or badminton, which made them not capable of handling the lessons at all. For other electives, such as Learning English through workplace communication, at first glance, for

example, the writing topics such as learning how to write a resume might be useful in their daily life, however, they are only applicable 4 years after the lesson. Will they still keep their notes after 4 years, I don't think so. That's why I don't like the NSS curriculum at all.

Chan I see. So you have mentioned language arts in the curriculum. Would you see any benefits from teaching language arts?

Kwok To be honest, there is a need for students to explore more about different topics. As I have shared with you before, some of our students might feel scared simply when travelling to Causeway Bay. They would be scared of investigating in places out of this Wong Tai Sin district. They are confined in this community. Only when teachers are able to scaffold them, they could feel confident to explore more. The benefits of teaching Language arts to student, such as Shakespeare's works, they would know more apart from Romeo and Juliet, there would really be more exposure. But if you ask whether they can apply what they have learnt from language arts, I would really doubt.

Chan As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?

Kwok I love classical literature works personally. As I did not come from a literature programme and my school didn't expose us to these works, I did not investigate much in English literature as well.

Chan What about during the time when you were a university student, have you ever come across with courses about Shakespeare?

Kwok No. As my course only focuses on English pedagogy, I received training about teaching the four English skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Chan I see. Do you think that students should explore and learn Shakespeare's work?

Kwok Which category of students are you referring to?

Chan Perhaps lets focus on senior students, those with better the English proficiency.

Kwok EMI students should try, but CMI students don't have to.

Chan Why do you think that EMI students should try exploring more about Shakespeare?

Kwok To be honest, Shakespeare is relevant with English literature, If you want to learn more about its language sense or interpret Shakespeare's work, it really involves of teaching. The first and foremost would be vocabulary richness. If you don't recognize most of the vocabulary, you simply couldn't understand the play, and hence, you wouldn't feel the passage. Most EMI students have a rich vocabulary bank. It would understandable that they are willing to read more English books and hence, willing to learn more about Shakespeare. On the contrary, CMI students, especially band 2 or 3 students, they would love to see something that's more practical, while learning Shakespeare is not practical for them at all. They would rather want 2 more lessons, or perhaps 2 sets of listening exercises. Their primal focus would be the DSE

examination. For EMI students, although they have to cope with the examination, they still have room for them to explore other readings or culture.

Chan I see. So what do you think EMI students could learn from reading Shakespeare?

I think it would be their writing skills, especially when they are writing stories. They could apply the atmosphere of Shakespeare's work into their story. Their speaking skills could be improved as well. As you would know that, Shakespeare's works were very elegant. When they are speaking, they could speak elegantly, which would cope with the problems of their pronunciation. It could definitely improve students' reading skills as well. As you read more, you could improve easily. If Shakespeare could develop students' reading habit, it would be even better.

Chan Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?

Kwok If you only love watching plays or musical, you might find Shakespeare's work relevant. Otherwise, it's quite difficult, as Shakespeare's works often invite us into a fantasy world, from my personal perspective. Comparing it with our realistic world or our English lessons, it does not seem relevant for me.

Chan Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?

Kwok No.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of making Shakespeare's work as a compulsory reading material in an NSS English classroom?

Kwok That's fun. I would say it's not feasible. It would bring disadvantage to CMI students. If it would be a compulsory element, the grades of CMI students would be lowered. But for EMI students, I wouldn't say all of them would be excited about this, but at least they would have more ability to approach Shakespeare's works.

Chan If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?

Kwok I would first look up for relevant background information about the poem, such as under what circumstances did Shakespeare write this poem, what messages the poem convey, which lead them to enter a section of what they can learn. Practically, I may focus on poetic tools.

Chan What about role plays?

Kwok I think we can try, but I could foresee that they can do nothing.

Chan What would be biggest challenge if you have to teach a lesson of Shakespeare in this school (Wing Kwong College)

Kwok I think there are two perspectives. One would be their ability and their interest. Students should always be the focus of the lesson. Their learning needs should be considered first. Another challenge would be on teachers. Do teachers have the background of teaching literature? If I

have to teach, I would have loads to prepare, which our schedules have already been extremely tight already.

Chan If you are teaching Shakespeare at this school, what resources do you think you would receive?

Kwok I think I would approach the net teacher first because they usually have better resources, which would be useful. We also have to attend professional workshops provided by EDB. Whether they are sufficient depends on what we receive through these workshops.

Chan That's all. Thank you for participating in the interview.

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T5

Name of Interviewee: Ngai

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No

Age Group: 31 - 40

Occupation: In-service Teacher

Workplace / ~~School~~: PHC Wing Kwong College

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = Ngai

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

Ngai No.

Chan To start with, how many years have you taught English for?

Ngai This is the second year since I have completed by PGDE programme. I graduate with a bachelor's degree in arts from The Hong Kong University.

Chan I see. Are you currently teaching senior secondary English classes?

Ngai I have been assigned to teach one junior class and two senior classes.

Chan What are your thoughts on the New Senior Secondary English Curriculum?

Ngai To be honest, I would say that the components between units and modules in the curriculum are segregated. They are not cohesive. Take this term as an example. I have been preparing my students for their SBA assessments and therefore, teaching them writing up a book report for a printed fiction. After this term, we would move on to another topic, let's say non-printed fiction. I'm sure students would know what is happening within this unit. However, when it comes to the connection between the units, it might be confusing for them.

Chan As a great part of this curriculum stresses on teaching language arts, how would you comment on this part? Do you think it brings advantages for students?

- Ngai Take our school \* as an example. Our students have relatively low English proficiency. Hence, English teachers, that means we, primarily focus on teaching basic grammatical knowledge and examination skills to help students cope with the HKDSE examination. Hence, a greater proportion of lessons would focus on the non-language arts section. On the contrary, I personally think that language arts are something that could be understood only if you have basic English proficiency. For example, if you don't understand the lines of the poem, it's impossible for you to appreciate the poetry and its message. Therefore, our school does not put emphasis on language arts because students do not have the ability to handle topics about it. In addition, we don't even have enough time to handle parts about non-language arts, let alone coping with the troublesome language arts section.
- Chan How would students react if you try to incorporate sections about language arts in your lessons?
- Ngai I think students' reactions may vary. For those who understand what I am teaching, they would raise a question – “Why are we doing this?”. To be honest, take my elite class as an example, the way that I could draw students' attention would be telling them “hey, this part would appear in the final examination”. I can't quite imagine whether they could focus if the content is out of the examination syllabus. Even if I am teaching components about SBA, I put it in a very straightforward way, i.e. “do it because it contributes to your final grade”. It becomes a very practical thing, and I couldn't quite imagine how my students would react if I simply invite them to appreciate a poem. For weaker students, they wouldn't even understand the poem and hence, the whole lesson would be about translating every line to Chinese, which is very tedious for my students and for us teachers too. Therefore, it's very difficult to teach language arts in our school.
- Chan I see. s you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- Ngai Not quite. In terms of literature, I usually read about contemporary literature. Shakespeare for me is a bit too far away.
- Chan I see. Have you ever come across Shakespeare in your learning career?
- Ngai Not at all. Shakespeare's works have usually been an option, but I tend to skip them. I skipped every Shakespeare course in my B.A programme as I am not interested in Shakespeare's works at all.
- Chan I see. Do you think students as English learners, should read literary works, such as Shakespeare?
- Ngai Well, I think it's a good idea. Apart from teaching English for its communicative purpose, there would be a room for students to correlate literature elements with our daily life. That's

a good idea indeed. However, when it comes to implementation, I think its not quite feasible in regards of our student's poor English proficiency.

Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?

Ngai No.

Chan Speaking of feasibility, if Shakespeare's works are assigned as a compulsory part in the NSS curriculum, what effects would be aroused?

Ngai I think it depends on the amount of content and the depth of the unit. As I have mentioned earlier, we have been running out of time when we are only handling non-language arts courses. Incorporating Shakespeare's works in the NSS curriculum might even decrease the time for us to teach non-language arts parts. It might pose such disadvantage on our schools. But I still think the idea is good, which might worth for a try. But when it is really something for us to teach, the Education Bureau should really provide clear instructions with how much we should teach. It is totally fine to cover famous works from time to time. However, if the content is too rich, students may not be capable of handling the lessons.

Chan If you are really required to teach Shakespeare to your class, what resources would you adopt? For instance, would you seek advice from the school's net teacher?

Ngai I think the help from net teacher is critical, as we local teachers seldom approach language arts when we are a student. I guess they would have more exposure towards language arts and they would have a better understanding towards these literary works. If they are in charge of these lessons, it might be easier.

Chan If teaching Shakespeare's works become compulsory and you are in charge of the lesson, how would you conduct the lesson?

Ngai To be honest, I don't know. When I'm a student in my PGDE course, I didn't learn much about teaching language arts. And I think most of us would not recognize language arts as an important element in the syllabus.

Chan Let's say a poem ...?

Ngai I think I will start with comprehension exercises. I would slowly translate every single line, then break down stanzas to try and guide students interpreting the hidden message of the poem. Apart from allowing them to understand the literal meaning, I would see whether I can move on and go beyond the poem. You would know that indeed, from my conversation, I am very uncertain about what I should do.

Chan That's all for the interview. Thank you very much.



## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T6

Name of Interviewee: Chin

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No

Age Group: 31 - 40

Occupation: In-service Teacher

Workplace / ~~School~~: PHC Wing Kwong College

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = Chin

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

Chin No.

Chan To start with, how long have you taught English for?

Chin I have taught English for nearly 8 years now.

Chan I see. May I ask more about your educational background? Like what your major is in university?

Chin I studied law for my degree and took PGDE before teaching. So I haven't read Shakespeare before.

Chan Great, that means you have received training about how to teach the NSS curriculum. As a student and pre-service teacher, can you tell me your thoughts on the curriculum?

Chin I did not like the curriculum very much. I think it is kind of stubborn when it comes to assessment. Yes, it somehow tries to expose students to different themes using English, but it never goes deeply into every topic. Or let me put it in this way, the themes that students study in English elective modules are never up to date. Let's say for popular culture. I remember some writing materials are still about 3D movies in cinemas, which they were regarded as "new technology". The topics are never found to be relevant to our daily lives from my

perspective.

- Chan I see. What about the language arts section? How do you perceive it?
- Chin I'm sorry but I don't find it effective and useful at all. I think I have only heard of the name when I'm studying literacy during my PGDE course. As a student many years ago, I never recognized that my teacher has taught anything about language arts. Yes, he might have distributed some worksheets about movies or songs; however, we never did any activities about these modules. It was basically the same, in terms of what we have done during language arts and non-language arts English lesson. In classroom now, I simply distributed a piece of reading comprehension about that module, asked my students to write a piece of writing with regards to that so called "taught module", gave us a set of listening mock paper which has nothing to do the module and finally, assessed our speaking skills with a piece of some random topics.
- Chan I see. Can you suggest a simple reason of why the language arts system failed to work?
- Chin Well, because my students' English proficiency is really below average!
- Chan I'm so sorry to hear that. Let's talk about something else. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- Chin No, not at all. I am not a fan of Shakespeare because of a few reasons. The first one is that Shakespeare's works were totally out of date, which the context of his works was so hard to be understood. For instance, many expressions or content were about ancient Greek myths. They were simply not understandable! Talking about something that it was hard to understand, probably the absurdity of plays made things worse. There were content of persecution of Baptists or the burning of witches. In Romeo and Juliet, it even involved in something about a bear being torn by a bunch of hungry dogs. I mean, what? Till now I still couldn't get what that was. And of course, old grammar was a terrible thing to learn.
- Chan I see. Your response suggested that you had lessons about Shakespeare before. Am I right?
- Chin Nope. I read about these ridiculous things from the Internet, but I haven't read Shakespeare's works before.
- Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools?
- Chin Well personally I don't believe that students should be forced to read Shakespeare in such a young age. I think Shakespeare could be introduced in English literature elective, which is designed for students who love English literature. But for mainstream students, probably they would like to see some new and up-to-date topics to be discussed in their daily English class. I am certain that if I ask my students to write something about the latest iPhone, or perhaps, something about the latest James Bond movie, they would react more responsively towards a

lesson about Shakespeare. If we introduce Shakespeare in every class, including classes which students' English proficiency were low, it would be disastrous. Think about band 3 schools. I have encountered students from remedial classes who didn't even know the word "fly". Now you make them read Shakespeare. It's just a joke! For students in CMI secondary schools with better bandings, students might somehow managed to read the text under a lot of scaffoldings, and yes, they would be exposed to traditional western culture, but it brings too much pressure on them and their teachers as well, which will be no good.

Chan Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?

Chin Well, yes if you really want me to name some. If students really understand what is happening, remember, the prerequisite is that students could follow what's happening during class, they could be exposed to western literature works, as Shakespeare would definitely be an emblematic icon of it. Another thing would be students' analytical skills would be improved as they have to learn how to interpret the message behind Shakespeare's work.

Chan I see. Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?

Chin In my opinion, Shakespeare is not quite relevant because the social setting is totally different. It makes it even harder to be understood.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?

Chin As I have commented before, I don't see that how it can work in anyway, whether it's in an CMI school or an EMI school either. As I have mentioned, teachers like me don't know how to teach Shakespeare, which any lessons about literature are extremely boring. We would simply tell students to read aloud the text, break into groups and discuss several questions, and end the lesson with some sort of presentation.

Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?

Chin No

Chan Do you think that teachers' incompetence of teaching Shakespeare is the main reason contributing to the low feasibility of teaching Shakespeare in secondary classrooms?

Chin Yep, that's what I would like to point out.

Chan I see. If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?

Chin First of all, I would take away every reading worksheet that teachers usually implement when they teach literature! If students could read aesthetically in the lesson, it would be much better! They could be focused in the content or dialogues between characters rather than extracting the information to answer the questions on the worksheet. Of course, for some students who possess lower English proficiency, I would say attaching a copy of translated version of the

text would be the easiest way for them to understand the reading text. Playing movie adaptations of the plays might be another good way as there would be visual stimulation.

Chan In that way, do you think students enjoy the lesson as you have planned?

Chin Yes, I think so, except for those who are extremely reluctant towards English literature. Those kids require extra help and they should not read Shakespeare at all.

Chan Do you think it is suitable to make Shakespeare a compulsory unit in the NSS curriculum?

Chin No, it should be an elective, as mentioned, not every student has the ability and interest in studying Shakespeare. Putting Shakespeare in the elective syllabus allows students with interest to explore Shakespeare. If you don't like it, don't choose it.

Chan What would be the challenges of implementing the lesson if you are the teacher-in-charge?

Chin Well, I think it would be students' ability. Within a classroom, as we all have already experienced, there could be significant learning diversity among students. This will make teaching literature even more difficult.

Chan Do you think you would receive resources or support if you choose to teach Shakespeare to your school?

Chin No, I think the teachers have to really depend on themselves.

Chan I see. That all for the interview. Thank you very much for your time!

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T7 Name of Interviewee: [NOT APPLICABLE]

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / ~~No~~ Age Group: 41 - 50

Occupation: In-service NET Teacher Workplace / ~~School~~: [NOT APPLICABLE]

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = T7

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

T7 No.

Chan To start with, what's your current occupation?

T7 I have been a NET Teacher and taught English for more than 25 years now.

Chan Great, that means you have received training about how to teach the NSS curriculum. Can you tell me your thoughts on the curriculum?

T7 I think it's a curriculum that doesn't work quite well sadly. At first, everyone was quite excited about the curriculum because at first we expected that assessments would no longer be the highlight the new curriculum. But eventually, everything points towards assessments, i.e. DSE of the subject.

Chan I see. What about the language arts section? How do you perceive it?

T7 That's the point which annoys me a lot. Well, as the NET in school, my job is to arouse students' interest in learning English. And therefore, I got to design quite a number of activities for students to learn English outside the classroom. Although this is not identical with the official definition, somehow language arts foster students using the language rather than reciting it. However, whenever I tried to organize activities for my students, it seldom got approved as they were regarded as not academically related. That's exactly a ban towards

the idea of teaching language arts, which is students should try to use English to appreciate or communicate.

Chan I see. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?

T7 Well yes, Shakespeare's works are a world of fantasies. You got a lot of romantic yet tragic stories, you got thrillers about the sons killing their fathers, you got a lot of sentimental poems. It's just unbelievable.

Chan I see. Your response suggested that you had lessons about Shakespeare before. Am I right?

T7 Yes, you are. I studied Shakespeare in my high school and university times.

Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools?

T7 Well yes, I think everyone could try to read Shakespeare. Basically, there are a lot that students could learn from reading Shakespeare. I kind of understand why you put your question into this way. I'm sure that many teachers possess a view that weak learners are not capable of learning Shakespeare, which I don't think that's the case indeed! I think that there are always ways to help students learn as long as they want to. And there are very difficult Shakespeare's plays, meanwhile, there are also very easy Shakespeare plays. Let's say the phrase "Tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow ...". That's a very famous phrase from Macbeth. And come on, are there secondary school students who can't tell you what the word "Tomorrow" means? Come on, of course there wouldn't be. I'm sure that there won't be at all. You can see that the major problem is that teachers should choose appropriate reading materials, but not randomly something from Shakespeare's works. But of course, there are really a lot to teach for English teachers in their curriculum. And most teachers aren't not well prepared to teach Shakespeare at all.

Chan I see. Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?

T7 Well there are quite a lot to be honest. I think all the four skills, including reading, writing, listening and speaking could be enhanced. I think reading skills and analytical skills are the most improved among all other skills. As there are always different interpretations between Shakespeare's works, students have to come up with a logical evidence to support their understanding, and there's no model answers for many texts. Reading Shakespeare's works is no way similar with reading DSE Paper 1. You got to really think and there's no way for you to directly locate the answer regarding writer's point of view. Students have to interpret Shakespeare's words by themselves. And also it's very hard for teachers to say that students' interpretations are wrong, as there are no rights and wrongs in Shakespeare's worlds. As long as they try, they could easily build up their confidence in using English surprisingly."

- Chan I see. Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?
- T7 Yes. Prevalent Shakespeare's concepts are also prevalent in our daily lives too, The concept of love, betrayal or families, would never dye as long as we are not extinct.
- Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?
- T7 I don't think it could quite work in the compulsory curriculum, but I think it will be more feasible to increase students' who study English Literature examination exposure first, as they are more willing to study Shakespeare.
- Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?
- T7 Yes. It's a chapter in one of the courses about teaching literature to my students.
- Chan I see. If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?
- T7 According to my experience, I would say providing students with Chinese translated version would be the best thing to do. It direct, it's simple. I think Shakespeare's classes should also be more interactive too. Rather than asking my students to sit there and listen to me reading aloud The Tempest for an hour, I would ask them to do some rewrite or story-telling. Sometimes E-platforms or even mini quiz would initiate their responses as well.
- Chan In that way, do you think students enjoy the lesson as you have planned?
- T7 Yes, according to my experience, students' would think that's fun, and at least they won't fall asleep in class.
- Chan Do you think it is suitable to make Shakespeare a compulsory unit in the NSS curriculum?
- T7 It could be a compulsory element in an unit, but perhaps it won't be assessed.
- [Due to T7's personal reasons, the interview ended earlier with two questions not being asked]*

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T8 Name of Interviewee: [NOT APPLICABLE]

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / ~~No~~ Age Group: 31 - 40

Occupation: In-service University lecturer Workplace / ~~School~~: [NOT APPLICABLE]

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = T8

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

T8 No.

Chan To start with, what's your current occupation?

T8 I am a lecturer at [Name of Institution]. I have been teaching for 5 years in secondary education before becoming a lecturer.

Chan Great, that means you have received training about how to teach the NSS curriculum. Can you tell me your thoughts on the curriculum?

T8 I think it's a curriculum that tries to cater for learning diversity as it tries to incorporate both language arts and non-language arts in one curriculum. The non-language arts section is targeted for stronger students; which somehow from my perspective, prepare students to use the language outside the classroom. For example, the integrated task tests required students to handle different sets of data and then, write a text based on the its writing purpose, tone and their role. Well, different levels of students can manage it; for weak students, they could just copy everything into it, while for strong learners, they could take other factors, like what I have mentioned into consideration.

Chan I see. What about the language arts section? How do you perceive it?



- T8 Well for language arts, it doesn't work quite well I would say. At first, the authority would like to motivate weak learners' motivation by using those appealing and popular texts or media in class. In Hong Kong when you come with language arts, weirdly English literature isn't regarded as a critical part of language arts. So when teachers start teaching language arts, weaker students, their target audience, are not interested in it at all! They want something more practical, which actually, are the modules on non-language arts. This makes the module of language arts looks a bit redundant, despite its value in the curriculum.
- Chan I see. As you are aware, I am interested in knowing more about your views on Shakespeare. To start with, personally are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- T8 Yes, definitely. Shakespeare's works are a mystery and sometimes, very romantic. Also, I think as an English teacher, I got to read and appreciate the language itself. I mean, how could you expect students to learn English when their teachers do not read English?
- Chan I see. Your response suggested that you had lessons about Shakespeare before. Am I right?
- T8 Yes, you are. I studied Shakespeare in my high school and university times. The very first time when I was exposed to Shakespeare was when I was in form 1. My teacher gave me a copy of Twelfth Night, and since then, I start reading Shakespeare. Till now, whenever I got a chance to go and see a Shakespeare play, I would go anyway.
- Chan I see. Do you believe that secondary school students should study Shakespeare? You may want to try and talk about students with high and low English proficiency, or compare students from EMI and CMI schools?
- T8 Well yes, I think everyone should really get a chance to be exposed to Shakespeare. I think both EMI and CMI students should get a chance to at least, be exposed to Shakespeare. Students' English proficiency may decide how far would teachers' discussion go; actually, it is controlled by the teacher in charge; if students are capable of doing it, then the discussion could go further, vice versa for weaker students.
- Chan I see. Do you believe that students would benefit from learning Shakespeare? What benefits?
- T8 Of course there are benefits. The most apparent one would be developing students' reading skills, as students got to read somehow. And, at the same time, because the reading activities usually come with worksheets and questions, students have a chance to develop their analytical skills. If students are required to produce a play, then basically their writing and speaking skills would be enhanced.
- Chan I see. Do you think Shakespeare is relevant in today's context or to students' lives?
- T8 Of course. Some concepts in Shakespeare's plays won't die. For instance, love and social equality would be some very related themes that would not die.
- Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?

- T8 It's only feasible when the teachers are ready. To be honest, I don't think that most teachers are ready to teach Shakespeare. At the same time, some of them are so reluctant to make changes, which is a horrible thing. It's not that easy to move what had been established for years; even if it's not working, not every panel heads or even principal are willing to make a change even if the change is justifiable, as this may indirectly prove that they are at a wrong direction, perhaps for the last 10 years.
- Chan Right. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?
- T8 Nope.
- Chan I see. If you are required to teach Shakespeare to your students, what considerations or approaches would you adapt?
- T8 According to my experience, I would say I got make sure my colleagues know something about Shakespeare first. From my experience, if a teacher works alone to plan everything, it's extremely challenging. But that's the case, as only very limited number of staff possess knowledge of Shakespeare. I think that's when teacher training has to come in and equip teachers with better subject knowledge first
- Chan In that way, do you think students enjoy the lesson as you have planned?
- T8 Yes, according to my experience, students' would think that's fun as it's something that is unusual. I think it would be something that's rewarding for them too, especially for weak learners. However, If Shakespeare has to be implemented, weaker learners learning needs should be catered so that they won't feel deterred by the complexity, which might crush their confidence in the worst case. So again, it depends on how the teacher manages the lesson.
- Chan Do you think it is suitable to make Shakespeare a compulsory unit in the NSS curriculum?
- T8 Yes, it should be part of the compulsory curriculum. I mean, students got to read some Chinese literature in the compulsory curriculum. Why don't they have to do so when it comes to English?
- Chan I see. Do you think you will get sufficient support from the school if you are teaching Shakespeare?
- T8 No sadly. Its still not a popular thing. And as I mentioned, not every school is willing to innovate their curriculum. That's why.
- Chan That's all for the interview! Thank you very much!

## Interviewee's Personal Information

Interviewee Number: T9 Name of Interviewee: D

\*Pseudonyms preferred: Yes / No Age Group: 51 - 60

Occupation: In-service University Professor Workplace / ~~School~~: EDUHK

*\*If the interviewee preferred to use pseudonyms in this study, his / her name, workplace or school would be not stated in this report to protect respondents' anonymity. He / She would be referred with his / her Interviewee Number throughout this research report.*

Consent to participate in the research project: Yes / ~~No~~

### Transcribed Interview

Interviewer = Chan / Interviewee = D

Chan Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! This research aims to investigate in teachers' attitudes and perception towards teaching Shakespeare and analyze its implications and feasibilities in NSS English classrooms. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes. I will ask you questions about your personal background and your practices, believes, opinion and experience. You have the right choose to not answer any questions, or to modify your opinion at any time. Do you have questions before we begin?

D No.

Chan To start with, how long have you taught English?

D I started as an English teacher with refugees and that was in 1981.

Chan Refugees! In which country?

D In Canada. I'm from Canada. And at that time there were Soviet Jews, so Russian speaking people, Vietnamese ... There were still refugees coming from the Vietnam war. I started teaching Literature much later. The first literature course that I that about Shakespeare, and that was in Washington DC in 1995. Actually, I taught French literature long time ago.

Chan I see. What about Hong Kong?

D I came to Hong Kong in 2004. I was the first specialist of literature ever hired to this department. That's over 15 years.

Chan That's really a long time. So what is your current occupation?

D Occupation? I'm a lecturer in the Education University of Hong Kong.

Chan Next thing I would like to know would be are there any thoughts and comments on Hong Kong Secondary School's English curriculum?

- D I find it strange that English language literature is separated. The experience that I had before is that when students are advanced enough, they would do English literature in the programme. As a result, there are only very limited students doing English literature in DSE. And mostly it's the band 1 girls schools. And one result is that the Literature in the programme is very difficult.
- Chan In your opinion, what are the benefits and disadvantages of teaching language arts to secondary school students?
- D I think the definition of language arts in Hong Kong is to use the appeal of the story to get material and use it to teach language. I mean you have very little to with teaching literature, and there are a lot of attention drawn to the vocabulary and the text that you can teach. I would want to see more actual teaching of literature in the classroom.
- Chan I see. Now let's talk about Shakespeare. Personally, are you interested in Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- D Of course! I got to like Shakespeare more than anything through performance when I was a teenager. When I was 13, the mother of my friend took me to see a production of *Twelve Night*, which was really kind of wonderful. And I studied Shakespeare in high school. First *Macbeth* and then *Hamlet* and then *Macbeth* really hit me hard. I really love *Macbeth* and I still do. Over the years then I studied Shakespeare. I studied Shakespeare in university. I did my BA in French Literature and of course there was a course called Shakespeare and then I read most of the plays at that time.
- Chan I see. Have you ever received training about teaching Shakespeare?
- D I think I just teach what I have read and what I know.
- Chan I see. So do you believe Hong Kong students should study Shakespeare during secondary school? Do you think they should read or learn, let's say for EMI schools or CMI schools?
- D Of course! There are a lot from Shakespeare that young people can get really excited about. I can't speak to proportions but certainly are some. It certainly appeals to some teenagers very much. Of course the barrier of the language is an issue. When you took my Shakespeare course, you know, I spent a month doing speeches, dialogues and extracts. Actually I lectured to you about Shakespeare grammar. That reason that I think this can work for students like you is that you know about grammar in such a way that you have studied grammar. If I tell you that thou and thee are you know, secondary person singular, and that is the subject and thee is the object, you know what I am talking about, don't you? I wouldn't suggest teaching in that way to secondary students. I think that there are in students in Hong Kong schools who can deal with Shakespeare's language without any difficulty like a native speaker did but, no, it's a barrier. You have to figure out a way to deal with it. I mean there's a group called Shakespeare for all. And they do Shakespeare in schools and they even do it with young

children. They have their means in doing it. But that's a theatre group. That's not studying it as literature but producing it.

Chan I see. So you mean that body movements or actions are another ways that facilitate students learning Shakespeare?

D Well, I don't think those bottling movements would help a lot. I've shortened the plays for production in this university before. I haven't done it for some years. I have also simplified the language. I haven't ever taught Shakespeare to secondary level students.

Chan Okay. I see. Do you believe that students would be benefited from learning Shakespeare at their age?

D Okay if we can set aside the barrier of the language, then the answer is definitely. There are a lot of materials in these plays that are thinking the human condition, humour of what people are like; some teenagers just really really get to like teenagers from school. If you are a teacher at school and you are thinking, can I teach Shakespeare to class? That would be a very complicated question. And you have to really think about the language barrier. You have to deal with the barrier of the language in an orderly way.

Chan Well yes, from your course last year, I would find that Shakespeare is really relevant to our daily lives. But when I speak with English teachers during my field experience, they seemed to be very reluctant to the idea that Shakespeare could be everywhere and the ideas behind Shakespeare could be very simple.

D Well they are not wrong in some sense, as Shakespeare's works could be quite complicated syntactically. There're difficult parts of Shakespeare's plays that are difficult since their first performance. I mean it's a lot of material. It's not same at all. Like King Lear. It's an example of a piece of linguistically difficult play.

Chan Any simple plays that you could think of, which would be easy to be simplified and to teach?

D I think Macbeth would be a good starting point. Not every part, but there are a lot famous and well-known sayings, like double-double toil and trouble. And tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow ... There are certainly parts and passages in Macbeth, you know you could teach.

Chan Apart from language barrier as you have mentioned, are there any restrictions that might stop the idea of incorporating Shakespeare in a classroom?

D I don't think the average secondary school reads the length of the text of a play in school. Even text with easy language, like a book. It's likely to be very short even if they read a book. Now plays are not long compared to novels but I still think the length will potentially be an issue. Getting enough time in the classroom to do it, I think you would want to do drama. However you have to book the activity room, and it takes extra time. I think that if you are working in a difficult language, its difficult to orient your students in the passage. So that one

thing that you might to is that you may take a complicated speech and a much simpler speech with only a few lines which would trace out the shape of the text you read.

Chan What about Chinese versions?

D Yes. Do you remember last year I told you when you are starting the class? Please don't use simplified English versions? I would find it better if you use a Chinese parallel text than a simplified English parallel text.

Chan How would you comment on the idea of teaching Shakespeare in NSS classroom? Do you think it is feasible to add Shakespeare's works in your classroom? Why or why not?

D It would be difficult as I have pointed out. Well, the school system is not very good at encouraging students to read in general. Y

Chan But hmm, many schools have tried to implement reading programmes or bringing students to the library during English lessons.

D Well I recognize that there are efforts. Some students for example, before they come, they are enthusiastic readers. You think the situation is become better?

Chan Nope. I think there's still a gap between what the school wants to do and what students do. I always think that these policies are usually done because they have to be done.

D Ultimately, we would want to see students who himself or herself enjoys reading. Going through the motion because that's what the policy said, of course there's a difference. But from my opinion, setting up a structure which is an empty thing could be used later on. I'm not against in setting up the structure in that way.

Chan I see. Do you think that a school could get enough support if they are really launching lessons about Shakespeare?

D I think there's a general view that literature is hard. And I think that people usually think that Shakespeare is especially hard literature, which is not false, as there are a lot of easier literature up there. So yeah, you would encounter scepticism. It would probably be a good idea to look for support from people like me. That would be pretty interesting actually. That would be what we called a knowledge transfer project. We can get resources from university. Also someone gives us credit for delivering knowledge. And in recent years, the university is giving us credits for doing knowledge transfer, which make in-service teachers easier to look for support.

Chan So there would be courses or workshops for in-school teachers?

D Yes. If I were really involved in this, I would really want to have a dialogue with teachers involved and start with not the workshop in the first place as I know everything in place. I know only one side to it. But I don't know what's going on in the classroom or what's the potential in it. I think you would want to start with a meeting, a brainstorming and trying to figure what resources.

Chan        I see. That's all for the interview. Thanks a lot!

## Appendix 5: A sample of consent form signed by interviewees

**THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**English Language Education Department**

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

English Teachers' Attitude and Perception on teaching Shakespeare in Hong Kong's senior ESL  
Classroom

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent to participate in the captioned project supervised by Dr Wong Ming Har, Ruth and conducted by Chan Chun Hei Alex, who are staff and student of English Language Department in The Education University of Hong Kong.

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 negative consequences.

Signature:

Name of Participant:

Date:

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## **Epilogue: Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all participants and everyone who have made this research possible. Among all, my deepest gratitude, without any doubts, goes to my supervisor, Dr Wong Ming Har, Ruth. Her patience, insightful comments and invaluable ideas given since our very first meeting back in early 2019 have been extremely crucial and meaningful. Dr Wong's comments have specially enriched my knowledge about English Language education and research methodology, which I believe would help me embark on my future teaching career and perhaps, my future researches.

Once again, I must thank all participants in this study, as all of their experiences and opinions provided me so much insights for writing up this paper.

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