

A Project entitled

**THE JUNIOR SECONDARY ENGLISH EDUCATION CURRICULA IN
HONG KONG AND GUANGZHOU: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Submitted by

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Abstract

Since the handover of Hong Kong in 1997, communication between Hong Kong and mainland China become more frequent in a wide range of coverage. According to the trend of recent communication and collaboration, it can be noticed that the focus of the development framework of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has been advocated for promoting regional cooperation for fostering competitiveness in all fields. This thesis is an intra-cultural and inter-regional comparative study of the English Language curricula in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Apart from identifying the similarities and differences, convergences and divergences in the Junior Secondary school level, the social values of the curricula and implication in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area are also discussed for enlightening future curriculum development in both cities.

Keywords: Comparative Education, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, English Language Education, Curriculum, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

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Declaration

I, CHEN Yunfei declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. Carla Marie BRIFFETT AKTAS, and that has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed: _____

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1. Introduction

Hong Kong and Guangzhou are two influential cities located in southern China. Relying on the closeness in geographical features, the communication and collaboration between these two cities are frequent. Even though these two cities differ in historical background and ideology, the foundation of collaboration can be established upon geographical proximity, affinity and cultural homology (Lu, 2019). The convenience of geographical connection leads to the exchange of culture. Sharing the similarity in Cantonese culture, a sense of affinity between these two cities is significant.

With the benefits on connections, the collaboration between Hong Kong and Guangzhou has been promoted in the National Development Strategy with the development framework of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong Kong SAR Government, 2019), which is also known as the Greater Bay Area, aiming at actualizing advantage of locality and promoting regional development for the area. The Greater Bay Area is expected to establish a community with a high concentration of key factors of innovation and an advanced level of internationalization (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong Kong SAR Government, 2019).

The goal of establishing an internationalized region requires a high level of English Language proficiency, since English is a Lingua Franca which is used globally for inter-community communication (Pölzl & Seidlhofer, 2006). It is evident that the

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mastery of the English Language has been influencing intercultural communication and leading to the enhancement of global competitiveness. Owing to the importance of English, English Language Education has been integrated into the education system for many years.

The Greater Bay Area Framework (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong Kong SAR Government, 2019) constructs an all-rounded collaboration, emphasizing the building of an education community. The current practice on promoting mutual learning environment has been started from the tertiary education level and the establishment of Sister School Scheme for primary schools and secondary schools within the Greater Bay Area (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong Kong SAR Government, 2019). It is a foreseeable trend that the cooperation will be extended to a broader range.

Based on the understanding of the social context, this thesis aims to compare and contrast the existing English Language framework in Hong Kong and Guangzhou while examining the feasibility of implementing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to identify possible improvement in curriculum development. Therefore, the research will be expected to answer the following questions:

- How do the English Language curricula differ in Hong Kong and Guangzhou?
 1. What are the similarities and differences?
 2. What are the benefits and drawbacks of the curricula design respectively?

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- How do the curricula reflect on the updated policy: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area?

1. In what way the curriculum needs to be updated?
2. What implications can be made for the adjustment?

In order to understand the curricula between Hong Kong and Guangzhou and draw attention to the future curriculum development in the Greater Bay Area, first, a literature review will be conducted to compare the two regions and their educational structure. Next, the methodology for the project will be discussed. Lastly, findings will be presented alongside the discussions drawn on the comparative study between Hong Kong and Guangzhou curriculum with the implication on the curriculum development.

2. Literature Reviews

Comparative Education

Comparative education tends to evaluate the educational system in different areas. Getao (1996) defines it as a type of educational study for understanding similarities and differences among the education system. Bray and Thomas (1995) identify comparative education as “studies that inspect similarities and/or differences between two or more phenomena relating to the transmission of knowledge, skills, or attitudes from one person or group to another” (p. 473). King (2011) expresses that comparison education is established on the restriction in investigating solutions and problems within the country. Drawing attention to the comparison between two similar education systems

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will be able to reflect on the effectiveness of one another. Trethewey (1976) states that comparative education “may take the form of a study of responses in other societies to problems that appear very [much] like the ones you recognize in your own educational system” (p.2). Therefore, comparative education is able to shed light on the understanding of the problem and enlighten future modification and design on education.

Comparative Education Between Hong Kong and Guangzhou

Concerning the cultural background and geographical location, Hong Kong and Guangzhou share similar features in education. Under the context of the Greater Bay Area policies, the trend of building an education community in this area, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, as two core cities, the analysis of the education systems will foster the regional development. Many studies have been done between Hong Kong and mainland China cities, among which there is only one related to Guangzhou in all the published authoritative journals in the 1990s (Bray & Qin, 2001). There was an increase in the field of comparative studies after the Handover of Hong Kong, since the potential and necessity of comparative studies between these cities are revealed because of the frequent inter-city communication, covering the curriculum level as well as subject level, including the analysis of education systems respectively and some subject-related pedagogical practice. Lee and Li (1992) researched the general compulsory education between Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Stimpson (1997) conducted a comparative study

on Environment Education between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, while Yang (2012) studied Information Literacy Education between Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Most of the current studies only involve the analysis on the general education system levels as well as the non-core subjects. Nevertheless, there are few comparative studies regarding core subjects. Though Tang and Nesi (2003) compared English vocabulary acquisition between Hong Kong and Guangzhou in the classrooms, they did not analyze the influence of the curriculum on vocabulary learning and teaching, which cannot be omitted. The lack of comparative studies in basic education is not beneficial to establish a powerful foundation for education communication within this region. Comparing the curriculum between these cities can help facilitate the environment of mutual learning so as to establish an education community in an effort to improve education in both regions.

Curriculum

The curriculum provides a holistic guideline for learning and teaching on the subject level. It is generally acknowledged that the curriculum is the collection of written documents containing information on specific subject learning and teaching. Wiles and Bondi (2007) define curriculum as “a set of desired goals or values that are activated through a development process and culminate in successful learning

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experiences for students” (p.2). Morris (1996) summarizes six key aspects of curriculum:

- 1) the disciplined study of permanent subjects such as grammar, logic and reading.
- 2) should consist entirely of knowledge which comes from the established disciplines.
- 3) all the planned learning outcomes for which the school is responsible.
- 4) the experiences the learner has under the guidance of the school.
- 5) those subjects that are most useful for living in contemporary society.
- 6) a passage of personal transformation (for both the teacher and the pupil). (p.1)

It can be concluded from the definitions that the curriculum involves the nature of what should be taught, the outcomes that are expected to achieve, the experience that students are involved and the values of the society, implying that there are three levels of influence that can be drawn from the curriculum. The foundation is further acknowledged as for basic question by Morris (1996): “1) What are its intentions? 2) What is the content? 3) What methods are used to deliver it? 4) How is it assessed?” (p.3)

These questions align with Tyler's curriculum development model which is pinpointed in his work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (2013), involving objectives, selecting learning experience, organizing learning experience and evaluation. The model outlines the structure of the curriculum framework and enables the enlightenment of curriculum development relatively. Concerning the relationship among the elements in the curriculum, a sequential pattern is shown, determining the objective first, which pilots the learning experience through the selection of contents and teaching methods and being evaluated by assessments accordingly.

Curriculum Components

Objectives.

Tyler (2013) prioritizes the objectives among four curriculum components since it is the foundation of curriculum, referring to the purpose of education. Objectives are specific and measurable goals for education. Bloom's (1956) taxonomy classifies the objectives into three domains: cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes of learning. Cognitive outcomes are at the intellectual level, which are connected to knowledge. Affective outcomes focus on the attitudes, values, interests, and appreciation of learners. Psychomotor outcomes center on the ability of learners to physically accomplish tasks and perform movement and skills. Based on the theory, the

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practice in curriculum documents can be revealed by identifying the learning outcomes on knowledge, attitudes and skills accordingly.

Contents

Contents are the aspects that need to be involved in learning and teaching in education for achieving the objectives, which refers to the important facts, principles and concepts to be taught at the subject levels. The contents provide a guide for teachers to plan and guide students' learning. The curriculum contents reflect the social expectation on the targeting subject knowledge. According to Apple (1993), there are seven principles for content selection: significance, validity, social relevance, utility, learnability, interest. The design of the curriculum content should be in line with the needs of curriculum objectives.

Methods

Methods are the offered learning activities of how the contents are delivered in teaching and learning, which are designated to support learners on the acquisition of contents and thus achieve the objectives (Print, 1993). Although the objectives are presented in the curriculum, the pedagogy differs in different classroom contexts. Regarding the learning experience, there are mainly two types: use of strategies and use

of resources. The strategies are the mode for organizing teaching-learning activities while the resources are related to the materials integrated into the experience.

Assessments

As the last section in the curriculum framework, assessments are adopted for teachers and students to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Morris (1996) summarizes six major purposes for assessments: grading, selection, mastery, guidance, prediction and diagnosis. The effectiveness of the teaching and learning experience can be examined for reviewing learning and teaching in order to prepare for further improvement. There are two common practices of assessments used in the school context, which are formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessments, as ongoing assessments, are used to visualize students' thinking for both teachers and students (Henson, 2015). Summative assessments provide ways of eliciting evidence of student achievement, and used appropriately, can prompt feedback that moves to learn forward (Black & Wiliam, 2009). All the assessments are expected to follow the principles of reliability and validity, which should reflect the "individual items on the test agree with each other" (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012, p. 124), and the content should be "truly representative of the domain being assessed" (Domino & Domino, 2006, p.53).

3. Methodology

Research Design

Curricula of English Language Education in both cities are documented as a collection presenting the objective, content, method and assessment. The comparative study is designed as qualitative research, which requires close observation of the words. Tavallaei & Talib (2010) pinpointed the numerous forms of data or information are collected for further examination through a variety of angles or from different peoples involved in the qualitative research. The interpretation of the data sheds light on a significant perspective. The purpose of qualitative research design is to "get grasp, hear, catch and comprehend" what something means (Grant, 2008, p. 1). The adoption of qualitative research is beneficial for generating genuine ideas from the original content, which can foster the formation of new insights.

Data Collection

The comparative study was based on the content analysis of the curriculum documents. The curriculum documents of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 6)* (Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong (CDC), 2017) and *Compulsory Education: English Curriculum* (Ministry of Education of China (MoE), 2011) were used for comparison. *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum*

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Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 6) (CDC,2017) is the latest version of the curriculum framework that provides a new phase of updates under the curriculum development context, which supersede the 2002 version and present an updated framework of Key Learning Area's (KLA) curriculum aims. Owing to the adoption of the national curriculum in Guangzhou, the local teaching and learning resources were also used for better understanding the curriculum in practice.

The research focus was the Junior Secondary Level. The difference in Primary School structure in English education will affect the effectiveness in comparison. English is regarded as a core subject formally instructed from Primary 1 in Hong Kong (CDC, 2014). Comparatively, in Guangzhou, with the adoption of the national curriculum, English is included in the compulsory education framework from primary 3 (MoE, 2011). Furthermore, the Senior Secondary levels in both cities are strongly affected by the public examination, namely, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and The National College Entrance Examination, which cannot demonstrate the objective of the curriculum clearly. Therefore, the three-year Junior Secondary level was filtered out as research focus.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was a major used approach throughout the data analysis stage. Weber (1985) defines content analysis as a research methodology that “utilizes a set of

procedures to make valid inferences from text” (p.9). The data analysis was twofold: analysis of the curricula in Hong Kong and Guangzhou and contextualization of the curricula in the Greater Bay Area Outline. The four key elements of curriculum have been revealed and connected, showing the cyclical pattern of curriculum planning. The content analysis on curriculum started from the objectives, followed by contents and methods, and end with the evaluation, following four elements pattern. The adoption of content analysis can reveal the pattern of curriculum design in Hong Kong and Guangzhou respectively, by analyzing the convergences and divergences of the curriculum structures. The Greater Bay Area policy was incorporated at the second stage of content analysis for examining the social values of the curricula in the current context.

4. Findings and Discussions

Objectives

The aims of English Language Education in Hong Kong and Guangzhou both are to foster the development of English proficiency. English Education in Hong Kong is “to provide every student of English with further opportunities for extending their knowledge and experience of the cultures as well as to enable every student to prepare for the changing socio-economic demands” (CDC, 2017, p. 18). In Guangzhou, English Language Education is “to establish the students' overall ability in language use, to

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promote mental development and to improve comprehensive humanistic quality” (MoE, 2011, P. 8).

Based on the overall aims of English Education, Hong Kong and Guangzhou demonstrate two objective frameworks (See *Figure 4.1* and *Figure 4.2*).

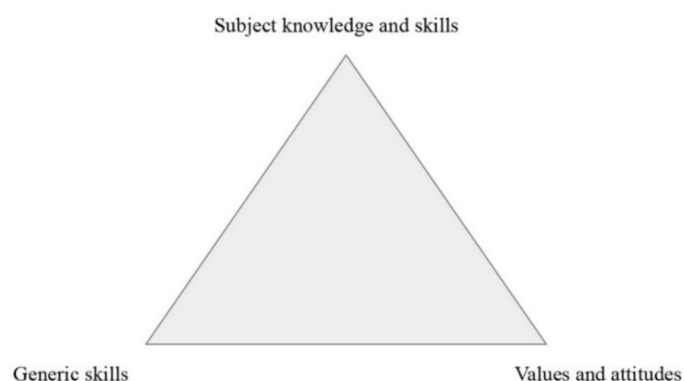


Figure 4.1 Hong Kong English Language Education Objective framework. This figure demonstrates the objective structure of English Language Education in Hong Kong curriculum (CDC, 2017, p.4)



Figure 4.2. Guangzhou English Language Education Objective framework. This figure demonstrates the objective structure of English Language Education in Guangzhou curriculum. (MoE, 2011, p.9)

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Hong Kong proposes a triangular structure of English language proficiency, including subject knowledge and skills, generic skills, as well as values and attitudes (See *Figure 4.1*). The description of the learning objectives reflects the incorporation of English language knowledge (i.e., language forms and communicative functions, language skills and development strategies, attitudes specific to English language learning) and other generic skills and attitudes (CDC, 2017). The objective framework in Guangzhou is detailed and subject related. There are five domains considered: language skills, language knowledge, affection, learning strategies and cultural understanding (See *Figure 4.2*). It builds up the structure for understanding the English Language upon the principles of quality education and focuses on developing students' creativity and practical language abilities (Wang, 2007).

Given the curriculum structures of Hong Kong and Guangzhou, with similar goals for developing language proficiency, both cities emphasize the integrating use of language. English language, as one of the subjects in the general school curriculum, is expected to promote and enhance students' holistic development through language acquisition. With the demonstration of the figures above (See *figure 4.1 and figure 4.2*), the Hong Kong model provides a more general structure while the Guangzhou model is more subject related. Though the frameworks are different, the objectives of English Language education of Hong Kong and Guangzhou are both structured based on Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), covering cognitive, affective and psychomotor outcomes of learning, leading to the expectation on knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

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Table. 4.1

Classification of Hong Kong and Guangzhou Objective Framework

<i>Domains of learning outcomes</i>	<i>Hong Kong</i>	<i>Guangzhou</i>
<i>Cognitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language forms and functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language knowledges
<i>Affective</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attitudes specific to English Language Learning ● Values and attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affection ● Cultural understanding
<i>Psychomotor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generic skills ● Language development strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language skills ● Learning strategies

Table. 4.1

Guided by the Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), the learning outcomes of the English Education curriculum in Hong Kong and Guangzhou can be classified into different categories, corresponding to different levels of learning in English Language Education (See *Table. 4.1*).

Nevertheless, the description of the expected learning outcomes is various between these two cities, which are significantly presented in the use of action verbs in objectives respectively. Referring to the language skills that should be attained in the Junior Secondary level, in Hong Kong, the curriculum focuses more on the application of the use of the English language, including the ability in comprehension, analysis, presentation. In contrast, the curriculum in Guangzhou is expected in anticipation of the language and its related culture. For example, in the presentation of listening skills

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in both curricula, the differences can be revealed. In the Hong Kong curriculum, the students should be able to:

- identify key ideas in a passage, discussion or conversation
- extract information and ideas in spoken texts
- identify the sequence of events, causes and effects
- understand levels of formality and informality
- discriminate between different intonation for various feelings and attitudes
- make connections between ideas and information with the help of discourse markers. (CDC, 2017, p. A39)

While in the Guangzhou curriculum, the students are expected to be able to:

- understand the intention according to the intonation and stress of the speaker.
- understand conversations on familiar topics, and extract information and ideas from the conversations, and identify the speaker's attitude for different intonations
- get a general idea and overcome the barriers of new words with the aid of context.
- understand the stories and narratives in a normal speed, understand the causality of stories.

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- respond properly when listening.
- take simple notes on the listening contents. (MoE, 2011, P. 17).

There are various action verbs used in the Hong Kong curriculum providing a wider range of applications in English to foster the development of language proficiency. Comparatively, the phenomenon of overusing the cognitive level of action verbs can be noticed in the Guangzhou curriculum. In terms of that, the description in the Hong Kong syllabus is tangible and measurable from students' performance. Oppositely, the Guangzhou syllabus may lead to the ambiguousness caused by the subjective interpretation of the levels of understanding.

The designs of the curriculum intent in these two cities reflect the features of instrumentality and humanity in language education. Cook (2007) identified two goals for language learning, external goals, that is, information exchange, and external goals, which are for personal development. The instrumentality of language reflects on using the language as a tool while humanity is related to the cultures, values and affections involved (Cai, 2017). Nevertheless, the differences can be shown from the focus. The instrumentality is stressed more in the Hong Kong context, which advocates the application of English in a wide range presenting the skill-based objectives. On the other hand, the content-based curriculum in Guangzhou emphasizes the experience in intercultural understanding, which aims more at humanity. In the demonstration of learning objectives of listening skills, the action verbs or verb phrases used in the Hong Kong English curriculum like “identify, extract, discriminate, make connection (CDC,

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2017, p. A39)” aim to guide students to apply English Language as a tool for solving problems. In the Guangzhou curriculum, verbs or phrases like “understand, get a general idea” (MoE, 2011, P. 17) are more common and prioritized, which aim to let students get a preliminary understanding of the English Language.

The consequence can be referred back to the differences in the roles of English respectively. English in Hong Kong is used as one of the official languages alongside Chinese as well as the Lingua Franca for promoting communication (Li, 1999; Sung, 2014). Align with the social context, English Education emphasizes more on practicality. Contrastively, the role of English in Guangzhou is not as prominent as the one in Hong Kong. The focus of English Language Education is still at the level of anticipation of the cultural awareness, since it leads to the promotion of enhancing the social status of China in the trend of globalization which is regarded as necessary for acquiring technological expertise and for fostering international trade (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

Contents

The organization of the content specifies the expected curriculum objectives. The analysis of content can be divided into two aspects, scope and sequence, which are defined as the breadth of the curriculum whereas the order of the topics relatively (Henson, 2015).

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Based on the acknowledgment of aims and objectives, in order to better facilitate students with the four basic language skills, the teaching contents in Hong Kong and Guangzhou covering the learning and teaching of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and text type, with the coverage of linguistic features involving phonology, morphology, semantic, syntax and pragmatic level (Fromkin & Rodman, 1974).

Pronunciations

The English curricula in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou pinpoint the focus on the contents on segmental (i.e., phonics) and suprasegmental (i.e., intonation, stressing, linking) (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011). The teaching content related to pronunciation starts from segmental level, presenting the letter-sound relationship, to introducing the inter-sentential features focusing on using intonation, stressing and linking (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011). Apart from the mutual phonics knowledge, the English curriculum in Guangzhou involves the requirement of teaching international Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in the Junior Secondary stage. The acquisition of 48 IPA symbols with 20 vowels and 28 consonants functions as the supplementary knowledge for assisting students in understanding the relationship between sounds and forms in phonics. However, the teaching of IPA is not mentioned in English language teaching in the Junior secondary curriculum in Hong Kong. The uses of IPA and the letter-sound system demonstrate the differences between explicit and implicit learning outcomes in phonology. IPA is more explicit that the words can be transcribed, showing the stress and syllables

accurately, while the letter-sound system is more implicit that is usually equipped after a specific level of immersion of pronunciation input.

Vocabulary

Moving upward to the morphology level, as one of the key components in English language learning, the importance of vocabulary teaching can be revealed in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Teaching related to vocabulary, including the target words teaching and the introduction of a wide range of vocabulary-building strategies, including using affixes to acquire new words (CDC, 2017, MoE, 2011). Both cities stress the contextualization of using vocabulary, which means that students are expected to apply the vocabulary in specific situations rather than limiting in knowing the meanings of the words only. Hence, students in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou extend the learning of the vocabulary to phrasal verbs, idioms and other fixed expressions (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011). Consequently, the prescribed use of word lists is not suggested in learning and teaching. In terms of vocabulary-building strategies, both cities highlight the importance of the knowledge of word formation in the curriculum documents.

Guangzhou provides a requirement for vocabulary acquisition “with a mastery of 1,500–1,600 English words and 200–300 idioms and collocations” (MoE, 2011, p.19). On the contrary, there is not a specific number for assessing the acquired vocabulary in

the Hong Kong curriculum. It is controversial to use a word list to set as the vocabulary learning outcomes. The given word list is undoubtable that provide more concrete guidelines for teachers and students and cater to the average student's language proficiency. Nevertheless, even though it is said that "the words are listed without mentioning Chinese meaning in order to prevent rote learning of vocabulary" (MoE, 2011, p.49), it is doubtful if it can achieve its purpose and somehow restrain the possibility of widening the range of vocabulary acquisition.

Language items and communicative functions

Language items include a range of grammatical form structures that students need to develop as they perform various communicative functions. Both Hong Kong and Guangzhou are advocating grammar teaching in context, preventing the isolating teaching on forms. Yet, the presentation of contents related to language items and communicative function is different in the curriculum documents.

The curriculum document for Hong Kong keeps using the term "Language Items and Communicative Functions" consistently throughout the whole document presenting the undividable connections between forms and meanings. However, for Guangzhou, the language items, which is called with the term "Grammar" in the document, which does not show the interrelation between forms and functions. For instance, the knowledge of modals is presented in both curricula. The curriculum in

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Hong Kong focuses on the integration of the use of language forms, modals, for the purposes of giving advice, while for Guangzhou, the purposes and the forms are separated into two sections. Even though “Language Items and Communicative Functions” and “Grammar” are both related to the correctness of using language forms in expressing meaning, the different terms used represent different focuses in language teaching, which are function-based and form-based. In the Hong Kong syllabus, the requirement of consolidation and extension of the learnt language to a greater level of complexity moving towards a higher level of learning for general communication, academic purposes, as well as to support other subjects learning (CDC, 2017) targeting the development of the fluency. For the Guangzhou curriculum, yet the contextualization of the language is pinpointed, because of the diverse students’ levels and the influence from the mother-tongue, the focus of teaching language form for fostering language accuracy still can be identified from the documents (MoE, 2011). It is apparent the trend of moving form-focused towards function-focused can be revealed.

Text types

As to facilitate the promotion of teaching language in context, different text types are introduced in Hong Kong, in particular, to assist students in their development as proficient users of English. Text types refer to different forms of speech and writing, which provide a context for the learning and purposeful use of specific language items and vocabulary containing different natures like narrative, informational, procedural,

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expository, persuasive (CDC, 2017). The explicit learning and teaching of text type further contextualize the use of language items and make the connection between forms and functions. The awareness of the demands of different text types is essential for successful and effective communication since the range of text types widens at a higher level of learning. The students are expected to expose to different text types and facilitate the production of different text types. In Guangzhou, a full explanation of text types is absent while topics are used instead with the text types incorporated in the category (MoE, 2011). For instance, the common text types like stories, poems, short plays are only put under the topic “Stories and Poems” (MoE, 2011, P99)

Though the curriculum contents follow the basic structure of linguistic, the sequence of the presentation of the contents is different in the curricula. In Hong Kong, the curriculum prioritizes the text type at the top of other language items. Oppositely, the sequence of content in Guangzhou strictly follows the linguistic structure, from phonology to pragmatics. According to the content selection principles, both cities demonstrate significance, validity and utility. They present the nature of language learning. The difference in organization illustrates the differences in social relevance and learnability, which basically still reflects the distinction between skills-base and content-base. Nonetheless, the respective curriculum can fulfill the corresponding objectives.

Methods

Teachers play a significant role in implementing the English Language curriculum effectively (CDC, 2017). Concerning the complexity of students' abilities and learning needs, in order to align with the objectives of English Language Education, guiding principles are offered for teachers to develop effective learning teaching through the implementation of different strategies and materials in classrooms.

Use of strategies

In terms of the use of strategies, there are three major principles presented in the curriculum in both Guangzhou and Hong Kong: Students-centeredness, Task-based Learning and Teaching and Cross-curricular planning (CDC,2017; MoE, 2011).

Student-centeredness is advocated to promote learner independence, which lays the foundation of effective learning and teaching in the classrooms. The values of student-centeredness can be revealed in both cities. In Hong Kong, student-centeredness is promoted through:

- designing of learning activities that cater students learning experience and learning styles;
- engaging students in group work or pair work for genuine communication;
- applying suitable questioning skills techniques; and

- encouraging students to contribute to the learning process. (CDC, 2017, p.67)

Similarly, in Guangzhou, student-centeredness involves the teachers' considerations of students learning styles and abilities, organization on various interactive classroom activities (MoE, 2011). Jones (2007) pinpoints the features of a student-centered classroom with students' involvement in the learning process, becoming committed to improving their English, and accommodation of different learning styles that students can help each other to develop their skills.

Align with the trend of communicative language teaching in second language acquisition, both Hong Kong and Guangzhou emphasize the use of authentic context and task in English Teaching, which is the implementation of the Task-based Learning and Teaching (TBLT) approach in English Language education. This approach differs from traditional approaches by emphasizing the importance of the natural acquisition of language by engaging learners in the performance of tasks that draw learners' attention to form (Ellis, 2017). TBLT establishes the relationship between language learning and real-world language use for students, guiding students to focus on the meaning of the language accompanying linguistic structures. In Hong Kong, through the use of tasks, enhancing the process of thinking, students are able to "learn and use English for purposeful communication, and develop generic skills as well as positive values conducive to independent and lifelong learning" (CDC, 2017, p.65). Likewise,

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in Guangzhou, learning and teaching are advocated to be based on the authentic context to foster students' ability in using English for dealing with some tasks.

The most significant difference is presented in the adoption of cross-curricular planning. In Hong Kong, English is considered as the Medium of Instruction (MoI) in other subjects, which emphasizes the curriculum of cross-curricular planning, collaborating with teachers of other non-language subjects (CDC, 2017). Because of the fine-tuned MoI arrangements for secondary schools erected in the 2010/11 school year, the use of English has been extended to other non-language subjects, which provides students with more opportunities to be exposed to English (CDC, 2017), which is acknowledged as the Language across the curriculum (LaC) strategy. LaC focuses more on the integrating use of English since the context of English learning can be established by other non-language subjects, so the implementation of English as a tool can be presented through cross-curricular learning and teaching. Comparatively, the English education in Guangzhou is restricted in the connections between English and other subjects at the content level (MoE, 2017). Cross-curricular planning extends the learning of English to a wider range. The aims of the English language can be further demonstrated through the adoption of the strategy. The practicality of English is stressed more in the Hong Kong context, since the English Education in Guangzhou has not developed to a high level of interdisciplinary connection. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of interdisciplinary highly relies on the students' English proficiency.

Use of resources

Different teaching resources are widely used in the classrooms in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou, including Textbooks, Language Art materials, Non-fiction materials and Community resources (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011). Yet, the ranges of teaching and learning materials are similar in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, and the significant difference is shown in the use of textbooks in these two cities respectively.

In school contexts, textbooks are more extensively and frequently used than other curriculum materials (Morris, 1995). Textbooks are artefacts that are designed to translate the abstractions of curriculum policy into operations that teachers and students can carry out. They are intended as mediators between the intentions of the designers of curriculum policy and the teachers that provide instruction in classrooms (Valverde et al., 2002). As the carriers for language learning and teaching, the uses of resources are connected to the effectiveness of English education. The choices of teaching materials represent the expectation of English education.

In Hong Kong, it is more flexible for related stakeholders to choose textbooks by filtering and selecting the textbooks from the *Recommended Textbook List* offered by EDB, among which are resources that are written in line with the curriculum documents issued by the CDC (CDC, 2017).

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Schools can make reference to the Recommended Textbook List (RTL) and the Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) at: <https://cd.edb.gov.hk/rtl/search.asp> when selecting textbooks for their students (p. 100).

Conversely, Guangzhou adopted the textbooks which are published by the Shanghai Education Publishing House. It is noticeable that the use of textbooks in Guangzhou is determined by the education department from the government, leading to the consequence that schools are not able to choose the textbooks. There is only one set of textbooks that can be adopted among junior secondary schools in Guangzhou, which is used as the backbone for the design of assessment (Guangzhou Academy of Education, 2019).

The contrasting adoption illustrates the difference in pedagogy, diversity and flexibility in Hong Kong, and homogeneity in Guangzhou. There is no doubt that practice in Hong Kong is more beneficial to cater to student's individual development. Nonetheless, the drawbacks of competitiveness can be revealed owing to the commercialization of the teaching resources. Concerning the respective English Education objective, the homogeneous textbook is suitable for the social context because it is designed according to the average students' level, which is in line with the ideological characteristic.

Assessments

As the key element in the English curriculum, the role of assessment is to gather information about students in the areas of knowledge, skills and attitude (Morris, 1995). Generally speaking, the design of assessments in Hong Kong and Guangzhou are similar, involving both formative assessments and summative assessments.

Formative assessment focuses on using the results for reflecting and improving instructions (Brindley, 2001), which are usually conducted on a daily basis integrating into everyday teaching and learning. The methods like classroom observations, class activities, homework, quizzes are expected to be used for formative assessments (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011). Alongside formative assessments, summative assessments in both cities are used as end-of-period assessments, such as end-of-term examinations (CDC, 2017; MoE, 2011).

The distinct difference is shown in the adoption of public examination at the end of Junior Secondary School, which both are formal and official public examination. In Hong Kong, Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) is used for Secondary three students, which is to provide a holistic view of students' proficiency at the school level all around Hong Kong, helping schools and teachers to enhance their plans on learning and teaching (CDC, 2017). For Guangzhou, High School Entrance Exam is the official assessment set by the government, which is used for assessing students' individuals English learning in the junior secondary stage as well as in the whole compulsory education stage. The aims of the High School Entrance Exam are to assess if students'

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English proficiency in line with the requirement of the English proficiency level mentioned in the curriculum (MoE, 2011). The nature of the test is the combination of proficiency test and achievement test, which is functioning as the evaluation of English language proficiency in the compulsory education level and also the foundation for further secondary education.

Even though the trend of using formative assessment is revealed in both cities, the frequent use of summative assessment still plays a significant role in English Language learning and teaching, since many learning tasks are still restricted in providing an overview of what students have learnt. Furthermore, the Junior Secondary English curriculum documents in both cities have suggested the use of formative assessments and summative assessments. However, the weighing of these assessments is not clarified in the curricula, resulting in the greater proportion of summative assessments and the requirements and purposes of formative assessments can be achieved owing to lacking sufficient guidance.

Contextualization

The Outline of the Greater Bay Area (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong Kong SAR Government, 2019) is the latest national-level policy related to the region. Education has been focused under the area of developing a quality living circle for living, working and travelling (Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau & Hong

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Kong SAR Government, 2019), among which includes promotion of cooperation and development in education. The collaboration on the education has been promoted on the tertiary level and moving on to enhance exchanges and cooperation in basic education, encourage primary and secondary schools of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao by promoting linking up as “sister schools”.

It is expected that the design of the curriculum may show social relatedness, since the curriculum should reflect the societal and educational changes and needs, but the significant connection between the current curricula cannot be found in both cities. Lack of connection between curricula and the policy may result from the non-alignment timeline. The Greater Bay Area outline was published after the curriculum development that leading to the consequence of delayed response in curriculum modification. Nonetheless, the convergences are shown in the Hong Kong and Guangzhou curricula. The English Education in Hong Kong is “to prepare our students well for the challenges and opportunities arising from the changes in society (e.g., the Belt and Road initiative)” (CDC, 2017, p.6), while the one in Guangzhou is to “prepare the students for the multi-polarization of the globalization” (MoE, 2011, p.1). The presentation of linking English Language Education with the national policy like the Belt and Road initiative as well as the globalization trends illustrates the expectation on curriculum design, which is to let students learn and adapt to social development. Therefore, it may be possible that the features regarding the Greater Bay Area will be presented in the curricula in the next curriculum development phase.

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Concerning the social values of English Education as well as the understanding of the curricula in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, it is a necessity to develop a more balanced and connected curriculum framework to ensure the establishment of an education community. Curriculum modification can be made on the unity and balance between skills and contents.

The study reveals the English Language Education curriculum frameworks in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. It can be concluded that the English curricula in both cities are constructed based on similar structures and presents guidance to English Language Education as a core subject. With the emphasis on the application of English in a wider range, the curriculum in Hong Kong is a skill-based curriculum aiming at communicative purposes building through diversity and flexibility in pedagogy. The curriculum in Guangzhou is more content-based, with a systematic building in language structure through comparatively homogenous pedagogy.

5. Conclusions

Implications

The comparative education between Hong Kong and Guangzhou is gaining popularity among the comparative studies between Hong Kong and mainland China cities. The Greater Bay Area context, in particular, urges the studies within the region for fostering regional development. However, from the literature review focusing on

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comparative education between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, the core-subject level of comparison cannot be found, which is not sufficient for building an education community. Therefore, the current study helps to fill the gap on the lacking core-subject level curriculum comparison and reveal the similarities and differences between English Language Education between Guangzhou and Hong Kong, shedding light on the curriculum development in the context of the Greater Bay Area.

Though the connection between English Language Education curricula in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the convergences can be primarily found at the objective level in the curriculum, which provides a foundation for developing a more balanced, connected curriculum framework in both cities for fostering the promotion on an education community in this region. For the future curriculum development in Hong Kong and Guangzhou, it may be necessary for making a better balance between subject contents and applications of language skills. For instance, Hong Kong can work on content supplementation by providing sufficient language content support for communicative use, concerning giving appropriate quantified language content knowledge in the curriculum. On the other hand, Guangzhou may foster interdisciplinary development for expanding the use of English to foster the enhancement of skills.

Limitations and Further Research

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The comparative study is only a preliminary study that there are restrictions on the depth and breadth of findings. Owing to the complexity of the curricula, the actual practice in classrooms may be various and also linked to other factors, such as the school policies, teachers' professionalism. Therefore, it may not be able to disclose the features of the curricula but show partially significant features instead.

Regarding the use of the data analysis method, the process of content analysis requires a high level of information extraction from the written words through coding the texts. The reveal of the inner correlations among words is time-consuming, and subjective understanding is unavoidable. On the other hand, the presentation of the documents affects the interpretation of the content. The illustration of the English curriculum in Guangzhou is in Chinese, which requires a translation before the compare and contrast with the Hong Kong documents. The translation of the curriculum may lead to the inaccurate interpretation of the documents, influencing the effectiveness of comparison.

Besides the analysis of the curriculum documents, other existing education practices also need to be assessed in further research. The success and effectiveness of building a mutual learning environment and establish an education community rely on the in-depth understanding of the curriculum for shedding light on thorough curriculum development. Moreover, the education community requires all-rounded collaboration. Since the study only focused on one particular level of students in one specific subject, future research can be extended to a broader field to the whole education system.

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Nonetheless, the curriculum is only fixed guidance for learning and teaching. The actual practice may be various because of the implementation in the classrooms. For future research, it is also possible to take a step on examining the practice of the English Language Education in the classrooms and critique on the necessity of teacher professional development within the current social context and lead to the reflection on the information exchange for improving the professional development.

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