Medium of Instruction Practices for Teaching Chinese in Hong Kong Schools: Impacts on Students' Language Proficiency and the Cultural Conservation in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) began promoting the replacement of Cantonese with Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction for Chinese teaching (MOIC) 25 years ago. Currently, EDB policy allows schools to decide on the implementation of Putonghua as MOIC (PMIC) based on their circumstances, adopting class-based, grade-based, or school-based approaches. This study examines MOIC practices in primary and secondary schools, focusing on implementation trends, underlying reasons, and impacts on students' language proficiency and cultural preservation over the past two decades. The research employs epistemological, doxological, and pragmatic philosophies, combining exploratory and action research methods, including literature reviews, quantitative and qualitative analyses, and case studies. Theoretical frameworks include curriculum theory, teacher knowledge models, language transfer, and the relationship between language and culture. Findings reveal that the use of PMIC has declined, while Cantonese as MOIC (CMIC) is considered more effective in improving Chinese proficiency and fostering trilingual abilities. CMIC students outperform PMIC students in public exams, and PMIC does not show advantages in preventing non-standard written Chinese. Cantonese supports the study of the nine domains outlined in Chinese education by The Curriculum Development Council (CDC), while PMIC raises concerns about the preservation of Cantonese culture and may hinder the integration of new immigrants into local life. Both Putonghua and Cantonese are beautiful and valuable. The researcher recommends a win-win solution through CMIC to enhance Chinese proficiency and literary appreciation, supplemented by Putonghua lessons and activities to improve Putonghua proficiency. The collaborative teaching approach integrates Chinese, literature, and Putonghua subjects with school-based materials, and a "blended teaching method" is proposed to connect nine domains in Chinese education. Furthermore, the approach promotes reading and cultural activities for all students, as well as offering Cantonese classes for new immigrants.These recommendations align with Hong Kong's 'Biliteracy (written Chinese and English) and Trilingualism (Putonghua,Cantonese,and spoken English)' and 'Mother Tongue Education' policies and are supported by survey respondents and action research findings.

Keywords *: MOIC, Biliteracy and Trilingualism Policy, Language Proficiency and Cultural Preservation*

1. Introduction

The promotion of PMIC began in 2000, with schools later granted autonomy to choose their MOIC approach. Debates have persisted regarding PMIC, with supporters citing potential benefits for Putonghua and Chinese writing skills, while critics raise concerns about its impact on Chinese learning and cultural preservation. This study aims to examine the actual implementation and underlying reasons for PMIC and CMIC, as well as evaluate their impact on students' language proficiency and the preservation of Cantonese culture. Drawing on Tyler's curriculum framework and other theoretical models, the research reevaluates past studies, incorporates two decades of practical experience, and explores new perspectives through a mixed-methods that combines literature review, stakeholder surveys (quantitative), interviews (qualitative), and action research. As both a former secondary school teacher and current university lecturer, the researcher aims to propose solutions that balance the promotion of Putonghua, the preservation of Cantonese culture, and the principles of "Mother Tongue Education", "Biliteracy and Trilingualism", and the national policy of promoting multiculturalism, addressing the following key questions:

(1) What is the current state of PMIC and CMIC implementation in Hong Kong schools?
(2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of PMIC in primary and secondary education?
(3) How do stakeholders perceive PMIC and CMIC?
(4) What are the learning outcomes for students under different MOIC models?
(5) Can a new MOIC model reconcile the tensions between PMIC and CMIC while achieving educational and cultural goals?
The thesis has seven parts: (1) introduction, (2) literature review, (3) methodology, (4) analysis of current practices, (5) assessment of MOIC's impact on language proficiency, (6) evaluation of its role in Cantonese cultural preservation, and (7) culminating in actionable recommendations.

2. Literature Review

The literature on MOIC in Hong Kong schools has been extensively reviewed, drawing from government reports, academic journals, school websites, media sources, and conference proceedings. This chapter categorizes and analyzes the literature to provide a foundation for understanding MOIC policies, implementation, and their implications for language proficiency and cultural conservation.

2.1 Literature Classification and Analysis

(1) Policies on MOIC: CDC introduced a Putonghua syllabus for Grades 1–9 in 1998 and declared PMIC a long-term goal starting in 2000. The Legislative Council passed a non-binding motion to remove PMIC as a long-term goal in 2016. Government officials have emphasized that both PMIC and CMIC aim to develop students' biliteracy and trilingual abilities, encouraging schools to choose based on their context (HKSAR Govt Press Release, 2018, 2022). Two Secretaries for Education have shared their views: Yeung (2018) stated that Putonghua will dominate learning Chinese but supports using Cantonese for classical literature. Choi (2022) noted that promoting comprehensive PMIC in schools was under consideration, with the EDB emphasizing that implementation should depend on individual school conditions and needs.
(2) Actual implementation of PMIC: Surveys of PMIC implementation by Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) and Gongjyuhok, along with reports from media outlets, reveal diverse practices and challenges, which are further analyzed in Chapter 4.
(3) Scholarly perspectives on PMIC: PMIC proponents cite improved Chinese reading, writing, and Putonghua proficiency, facilitating communication with mainland China (Tian, 2008, 2021; He & Lin, 2000). Critics argue PMIC limits classroom interaction, weakens cultural connections, and does not guarantee improved Chinese writing or cultural literacy (Tang et al,2001;Deng 2010). Skeptics question PMIC's impact on creativity and critical thinking, noting teacher confidence and individual learning challenges (Deng, 2008; Kou & Zhang, 2014).
(4) Theoretical frameworks: Tyler’s curriculum elements (1949), Ornstein and Hunkins’ curriculum elements and Talmage’s evaluation criteria (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2016), the model of teacher knowledge (Grossman, 1990), backward transfer (Chen, 2020), and the relationship between language and culture (Sapir, 1921; Lut and Starenkova, 2022) comprise the theoretical frameworks.
(5) Cantonese, literature, and cultural Conservation: Cantonese is central to Hong Kong's cultural identity and literary traditions (Luo, 2009). Government recognition of Cantonese opera as intangible heritage (HKSAR Govt Press Release, 2009; CPC & State Council, 2017) underscores its cultural value.
(6) Dialect preservation and language usage population data: The promotion of Putonghua has reduced the use of dialects in mainland China (Wang, 2003). Balancing Putonghua promotion with dialect preservation is crucial, and language usage trends in Hong Kong inform MOIC considerations.
(7) HKDSE Chinese language statistics: Analysis of public exam results from schools, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), and the Schooland website provides quantitative insights into the teaching effectiveness of schools using various MOIC approaches.

2.2 Gaps in the Literature

Existing research on MOIC in Hong Kong has limitations that this study addresses: (1) Outdated data: prior studies do not fully account for recent demographic shifts, increased Putonghua usage, and the impact of internet culture on Cantonese (relevant to Key Questions 1 & 3). (2) Unsubstantiated claims: claims regarding PMIC's benefits lack sufficient empirical evidence, particularly concerning its impact on overall Chinese language proficiency (Question 4). (3) Under-explored issues: the reasons for schools reverting to CMIC, the alignment of MOIC policies with national cultural goals, and the adequacy of

teaching resources for effective PMIC implementation remain under-researched areas (Questions 2 & 5).

2.3 Research Directions and Significance

This study addresses gaps in MOIC implementation by synthesizing stakeholder perspectives with empirical data from surveys, classroom observations, and census analysis. It explores the correlation between Putonghua promotion and dialect use, the relationship between dialects, literature, culture, and art, while also tracking changes in language usage in Hong Kong and examining trends in other regions for reference. By applying curriculum and language theories, this research offers a comprehensive evaluation of PMIC's effectiveness in achieving biliteracy and trilingualism while preserving Hong Kong's linguistic and cultural identity.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs mixed methods, drawing on curriculum, language learning, teacher knowledge, model and language-culture theories.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Methods

This study combines quantitative analysis of objective data—including government reports, school data, and surveys—with qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews. Exploratory research investigates MOIC trends and effectiveness through literature reviews and case studies. Action research implements collaborative teaching methods, ultimately informing a new MOIC approach. This study integrates epistemological and doxological research philosophies to achieve a comprehensive understanding of MOIC implementation, ultimately embodying a pragmatic research philosophy that emphasizes the practical application of findings.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks are integrated with four key theories to guide the analysis:
1. Curriculum theories: Based on Tyler’s curriculum components (1949), Ornstein and Hunkins' curriculum elements (2016) provide a more comprehensive framework for evaluating PMIC implementation over 20 years. Talmage’s evaluation criteria (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2016) assess PMIC's values.
2. Teacher Knowledge Model (Grossman, 1990): This model assesses teachers’ subject matter knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and sociocultural awareness, indicating their readiness for PMIC.
3. Backward Language Transfer (Chen, 2020): The influence of second language learning on first language proficiency is a key concept in evaluating PMIC's impact on students’ Cantonese abilities.
4. Language-culture relationship: Sapir (1921) and Lut & Starenkova (2022) highlight the connection between language and culture, which is used to explore MOIC's potential impact on cultural preservation.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected via surveys and interviews from a range of stakeholders: 247 students with HKDSE Chinese Language exam results (including a subset of 123 who scored an excellent grade of 5+),their data included Chinese language scores, MOIC exposure, and improvement factors. 107 Band 1A students (40% cross-border) were involved; the focus was on communication language, Putonghua materials, and MOIC opinions. 11 students who experienced PMIC in mixed-mode schools explored their PMIC learning experiences. 83 preservice teachers, 69 teachers, and 35 students completed school attachments, with data covering PMIC implementation, classroom language, and MOIC views. The data from 201 parents centered on MOIC use in schools and streaming criteria. Interviews provided in-depth perspectives from a total of 29 students, teachers, and parents. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools, while qualitative data were coded thematically to evaluate the effectiveness of PMIC and CMIC approaches.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines ensured voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. Personal data was anonymized, and pseudonyms were used to protect identities. Ethical compliance was maintained throughout the research process.

4. Findings: Moic Practices in Hong Kong Schools

This chapter examines MOIC implementation in Hong Kong schools (2008-2024) and its influencing factors.

4.1 Moic Mplementation Trends (2008-2024)

The literature review shows that SCOLAR allocated funding of 225 million HKD to support 160 schools in implementing PMIC since 2008, which has led to a gradual increase in Partial and Full PMIC schools from 2008 (primary: 55.5%; secondary: 31.8%) to a peak in 2015/16 (primary: 71.7%; secondary: 36.9%). (SCOLAR, 2008, 2016). Subsequent research indicated PMIC's limited impact on Chinese reading and writing, as well as the challenges it posed to the school experience (SCOLAR, 2016). By 2020/21, PMIC adoption had decreased (primary: 67%; secondary: 28.1%) (Gongjyuhok, 2021). i-Cable News (2022) reported further declines by 2022/23 (primary: 44%; secondary: 17%). Schooland (2023/24) showed that only 32% of primary schools were using PMIC, while CMIC increased concurrently. Some schools reverted to CMIC or reduced PMIC classes; as a result, CMIC became more prevalent.

Few schools implemented full PMIC; most PMIC schools are either grade-based or class-based, typically involving only some grades or one class in lower years. Surveys of preservice teachers and current teachers indicated that while some schools use PMIC in junior levels to build a Putonghua foundation, they switch to CMIC in senior levels to improve Chinese proficiency. PMIC classes did not consistently outperform CMIC classes.

4.2 Factors Influencing Moic Choices

Questionnaire and interview data reveal various reasons for schools' MOIC preferences. Key factors influencing MOIC decisions are as follows:

(1) Language Proficiency and Learning Outcomes: CMIC was perceived to better support reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, particularly for public examinations. Pre-service and in-service teacher surveys indicated PMIC classes did not consistently outperform CMIC classes.

(2) Cultural and Linguistic Considerations: Stakeholders emphasized preserving Cantonese and its role in identity.

(3) Parental Preferences: Schools cited allocating students to PMIC classes based on their Putonghua proficiency; however, PMIC class placement often depended on academic performance. As a result, parents associated it with academic elitism when choosing PMIC.

(4) Teacher Readiness: Limited availability of proficient Putonghua teachers affected PMIC instruction quality. Teacher surveys revealed limited full PMIC implementation (1.4% of schools) and widespread full CMIC implementation (72.5%).

(5) Government Policies: Schools have flexibility in choosing MOIC based on context and student needs, leading to diverse MOIC models.

4.3 Conclusion

Data indicates a declining trend in PMIC implementation from 2015/16 to 2023/24. Schools increasingly favor CMIC based on perceived academic and practical implications, aligning with students' linguistic needs, cultural preservation, and overall academic outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of balancing language policy goals with the realities of teaching and learning in Hong Kong's multilingual context.

5. Findings: Impact of Moic Models on Teaching and Learning Effectiveness

This chapter examines the impact of MOIC models on teaching and learning effectiveness, focusing on findings related to curricular elements and value assessments.

5.1 Pmic Evaluation: Curricular Elements (Ornstern & Hunkins)

(1) Goals and Objectives: PMIC aimed to improve reading/writing and Putonghua proficiency, foster fluency in both languages, and support Cantonese acquisition for non-Cantonese speakers, aligning with Hong Kong's biliteracy and trilingualism policy. However, findings indicate:

(I) Reading and Writing Abilities: Student academic performance, measured by HKDSE Chinese Language results, serves as compelling evidence for evaluating PMIC's effectiveness. In Hong Kong,

33.0% of students achieve grade 4 or above (good), and 11.0% achieve grade 5 or above (excellent) (HKEAA, 2023). Statistical results show that 66 CMIC schools, 14 mixed MOI schools, and 3 PMIC schools have higher percentages of students reaching these levels. Most mixed-MOIC schools only implement PMIC in one or two classes, primarily in junior forms. This data suggests that high-performing Chinese language education in Hong Kong secondary schools is primarily concentrated in CMIC schools, indicating that PMIC has not achieved its goal of improving students' Chinese language proficiency.

The Now Report (2017) and the researcher's surveys revealed that students experiencing PMIC reported challenges, including listening comprehension issues due to teachers' non-standard Putonghua, limited explanations, students' reluctance to participate, and confusion with Putonghua homonyms.

The researcher's surveys show 96% of teachers and parents find translating Cantonese colloquial speech into written Chinese easy, contrasting with Putonghua. Teachers, parents, and students identify thorough text comprehension (84.1% of teachers, 47.3% of parents, 67.6% of students), reading/speaking exercises (82.6% of teachers, 61.2% of parents, 40.5% of students), and essay analysis (91.3% of teachers, 55.7% of parents, 73.3% of students) as key factors for enhancing Chinese proficiency. Case studies of two extremely high-achieving students further revealed that a positive learning environment, abundant resources, quality teaching, and appropriate methods were crucial to their success, rather than PMIC.

Scholars support that PMIC has limitations in developing comprehensive language skills (Deng, 2008). Effective language learning emphasizes "writing what I think," not just "writing what I speak" (Now Report, 2017; Lin, 2008). Tse points out that in 2011, Hong Kong's CMIC-educated primary 4 students outperformed all others globally in reading (PIRLS), including Taiwan, which uses PMIC, highlighting the importance of early character recognition. (HK Connection, 2016) Furthermore, opponents argue that PMIC restricts teachers' expressiveness and reduces student comprehension (Deng, 2010). PMIC can negatively impact classroom dynamics, leading to passive students and simplified language (Tang, et al., 2001). Learning through an unfamiliar language hinders comprehension, potentially limiting students to surface-level understanding rather than higher-level analysis and creativity (Now Report, 2017). In summary, evidence from academic results, student experiences, stakeholder perspectives, and scholarly research suggests that PMIC is less effective than CMIC in Chinese language education.

(II) To enhance students' Putonghua proficiency: PMIC aims to enhance Putonghua proficiency (Tian, 2008, 2021), but the absence of a unified exam makes objective comparisons of Putonghua abilities between PMIC and CMIC schools. The curriculum and assessment guide (CDC, 2017) distinguishes between the objectives of Chinese Language and Putonghua instruction. Furthermore, some PMIC teachers possess lower Putonghua proficiency than dedicated Putonghua instructors, potentially hindering learning. Surveys reveal PMIC student experiences, with some students reporting no improvement or even negative impacts due to an overemphasis on pronunciation and non-standard teacher Putonghua. The researcher's survey suggests that CMIC, combined with independent Putonghua subjects and extracurricular activities, can effectively enhance Putonghua abilities. Given Hong Kong's increasing Putonghua proficiency (Census and Statistics Department, 2002, 2011, 2022), strengthening Putonghua teaching and promotional activities may be sufficient, raising questions about the necessity of PMIC.

(III) To meet the targets of Hong Kong's Language Education Policy: The effects of the second language on the first, is called Backward Transfer. (Chen, 2020). Interviews revealed that PMIC students sometimes exhibit backward transfer, incorporating Putonghua into their Cantonese, which affects pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary. Conversely, Putonghua-speaking students in PMIC classes may lack motivation to learn Cantonese. A survey in a CMIC school found that Putonghua speakers actively learn Cantonese, and both groups assist each other's language learning. Teachers (82.6%) believe PMIC hinders new immigrants' Cantonese acquisition and (85.5%) prevents local students from inheriting Cantonese. CMIC seems more effective in fostering bilingualism, while PMIC may hinder Cantonese proficiency. In summary, the study suggests potential drawbacks to PMIC's aim of cultivating biliterate and trilingual talents.

(IV) To provide non-Cantonese-speaking students with opportunities to learn Cantonese and adapt to life in Hong Kong: While PMIC aims to help these students, CMIC promotes better Cantonese acquisition and integration. Surveys show that parents of cross-border students prefer CMIC schools, believing their children can overcome initial challenges and achieve biliteracy and trilingualism, integrate socially, and improve their prospects. They worry that PMIC schools may hinder Cantonese acquisition and social integration.

(2) Learning Experiences: PMIC learning experiences can be challenging. Studies (Kou & Zhang, 2014) note poorer class discussion and reduced learning interest due to language barriers. Interviews revealed PMIC students face difficulties understanding non-standard Putonghua, struggle with classroom communication, and fear mispronunciation. Discussions are often dominated by proficient speakers. While some adapted, many experienced prolonged difficulties and anxiety. Teachers (84.1%) report needing more explanation time, and 85.5% believe PMIC makes learning Chinese uninteresting due to insufficient

Putonghua proficiency. Students with Putonghua backgrounds or exposure reported fewer difficulties.
(3) Methods and Materials: Li (2010) noted that PMIC teachers need Cantonese and Putonghua skills, along with knowledge from Grossman's Model. However, many lack sufficient Putonghua proficiency (Kou & Zhang, 2014), affecting teaching effectiveness and classroom interaction (Tang et al., 2001). Student interviews highlighted issues with non-standard pronunciation, unclear explanations, and limited feedback, indicating deficiencies in subject matter knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. The PMIC student survey also revealed insufficient pedagogical content knowledge and contextual knowledge. The teacher survey showed that only 42% of teachers feel prepared for PMIC. Tian (2021) suggested that lower Putonghua proficiency might address staffing shortages, but this diverges from Grossman's Model. Existing textbooks often lack adequate Putonghua support, and merging Chinese and Putonghua curricula can obscure learning objectives. Teachers also reported difficulties in selecting suitable materials and methods, raising concerns about PMIC's effectiveness in Chinese learning.
(4) Activities Related to Subject Matter: PMIC classes show less engaging in-class activities due to teachers' varying language proficiency. Bilingual instruction slows the pace, hindering true Putonghua learning. Interviews with 11 PMIC students revealed disrupted IRF patterns and limited accommodations for varying Putonghua proficiency. Support for struggling Putonghua learners was lacking, and few PMIC teachers provided tutoring. Putonghua extracurricular activities primarily involved students who were originally proficient. New immigrants lacked opportunities to learn Cantonese. Overall, PMIC classes were not ideal regarding subject-related activities.
(5) Assessing these Processes: This step concludes the evaluations of the above four aspects. PMIC's effectiveness is hindered by factors such as teacher Putonghua proficiency, knowledge gaps from Grossman's model, student abilities, and the language environment. Students find their learning experiences less enjoyable than in CMIC. There are deficiencies in teaching methods (IRF) and curriculum planning, with unclear learning objectives. Teaching and materials often do not meet the needs of students and teachers. Inconsistent school attitudes and strategies, along with a focus on elite students, undermine PMIC's goals of improving Chinese and Putonghua proficiency for all students. These issues indicate a need to re-evaluate PMIC's implementation in Hong Kong.

5.2 Pmic Evaluation: Talmage's Five Questions

Evaluating PMIC with Talmage's questions reveals shortcomings. (1) Intrinsic value: PMIC fails to achieve its goals and provides suboptimal learning experiences. (2) Instrumental value: PMIC does not improve Chinese skills across different language backgrounds and underperforms compared to CMIC in HKDSE results. (3) Comparative value: PMIC is counterproductive compared to CMIC, leading schools to revert to previous methods. (4) Idealization value: Schools reducing or abandoning PMIC after review suggest a failure to achieve improvement. (5) Decision value: The above evaluations guide decisions on retaining, modifying, or discarding PMIC. A clear decision regarding PMIC's future is needed. This comprehensive evaluation provides insights for the EDB and educators to inform future language instruction planning.

5.3 Conclusion

Findings suggest PMIC struggles to achieve its intended goals and faces challenges related to language proficiency, learning experiences, teaching methods, and materials. Given Cantonese as Hong Kong students' "Heart Language" (HKSAR Education and Manpower, 2005) and evidence that CMIC supports better Chinese learning outcomes, the long-term goal of PMIC should be re-evaluated through comprehensive statistics and objective assessment.

6. Findings: Impact of Choice of Moic on the Preservation of Cantonese and Related Culture Arts

Sapir (1921) stated that "language does not exist apart from culture," emphasizing their connection. Language serves as both a vital part of culture and an instrument of it (Lut and Starenkova, 2022). This chapter explores MOIC's impact on Cantonese and related cultural arts, using dialect shifts in Shanghai, Suzhou and Guangzhou as examples.

6.1 Preserbing Local Dialects amidst Putonghua Promotion in Mainland Cities

Putonghua promotion correlates with dialect decline in Suzhou (Wang, 2003) and Shanghai (China News, 2005), prompting government efforts to preserve dialects (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2020; Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2021, 2024). In Guangzhou, Putonghua dominance pressures

Cantonese speakers (HK Connection, 2016), leading some children to refuse to speak Cantonese. In the researcher's university, some young adults from Guangzhou, despite having Cantonese-speaking parents, cannot understand or speak Cantonese.

6.2 Changes in the Putonghua-Speaking Population in Hongkong over the Past 20 Yea

According to figures from the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, from the end of 1997 to the end of 2021, the population that moved to Hong Kong under the one-way permit was approximately 1.121 million, mainly from mainland China. Anecdotal evidence suggests an increasing number of Putonghua speakers, potentially influenced by cross-border students and workers not fully captured in official statistics. Notably, Putonghua proficiency among residents aged 5 and over increased significantly from 34.1% in 2001 to 54.2% in 2021. In fact, the actual number of Putonghua speakers may be higher, as many cross-border Putonghua-speaking workers and students may be excluded from the statistics. Meanwhile, Cantonese usage shows a slight decline from 96.1% in 2001 to 93.7% in 2021.

6.3 Culturual Heritage Challenfes of Language Shift

Increased Putonghua proficiency in Hong Kong, driven by educational initiatives, media promotion, and cross-regional exchange, supports biliteracy and trilingualism. However, this trend, coupled with potential PMIC implementation, raises concerns about Cantonese preservation. Evidence suggests diminished Cantonese proficiency and cultural understanding (Hong Kong Connection, 2016; Now Report, 2017), including instances of "language backwardness." Acquisition of Cantonese idioms and slang, vital cultural elements, relies on daily use. The researcher's survey indicated that most Chinese language teachers (88.4%) believe PMIC will reduce Cantonese usage, and 85.5% perceive it as detrimental to Cantonese cultural heritage. The question remains: will PMIC lead Hong Kong to face similar dialect preservation challenges as Suzhou, Shanghai and Guangzhou?

6.4 The Literary and Cultural Value of Cantonese

Cantonese is closely tied to Lingnan culture. As a major regional dialect deeply rooted in Cantonese-speaking areas, it is key to local culture and identity in Hong Kong (Cheung, 2020). Rooted in ancient Chinese (Luo, 2009), Cantonese, with its nine tones—including the 7th, 8th, and 9th tones characterized by rhyme vowels ending in 'p,' 't,' and 'k'—contrasts with Putonghua's only four tones, making it uniquely suited for reciting Chinese classical literature. Cantonese also encompasses a rich vocabulary, riddles, proverbs, and Cantonese opera, which was recognized by UNESCO in 2009, reflecting Cantonese wisdom, values, and cultural identity. This is a very important part of Chinese culture.

6.5 Protecting and Inheriting Dialect Cultures Aligns with National Policies, Can Be Considered as a Factor in Formulationg Moic

The project for the inheritance and development of Chinese excellent traditional culture (CPC and State Council, 2017) supports both the promotion of Putonghua and the preservation of dialects, enriching Chinese culture. The Outline of the PRC's 14th Five-Year Plan (HK Legislative Council Secretariat, 2021) supports Hong Kong as a cultural exchange center with Chinese culture as the mainstream. Chief of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2022), stated that promoting Cantonese opera supports this plan and highlights the importance of Cantonese proficiency for cultural development, informing the MOIC discussion.

6.6 Conclusion

Cantonese, with its rich literary tradition and performing arts like Cantonese opera, requires preservation for future generations. Protecting Cantonese, symbiotic with its culture, is vital for China's heritage. This can coexist with Putonghua; a balanced approach strengthens national cultural identity. Full PMIC implementation risks Cantonese cultural loss in Hong Kong. CMIC, with enhanced Putonghua teaching, could foster biliteracy and cultural inheritance.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents conclusions and win-win recommendations based on the research findings.

7.1 Conclusion of the Findings

The research indicates a declining trend in PMIC implementation in Hong Kong schools, with many reverting to CMIC. PMIC has not demonstrated effectiveness in improving overall language proficiency or cultivating bilingual talent, as supported by curricular element analysis and value assessments. Research indicates CMIC is superior. Comprehensive PMIC implementation poses a risk to Cantonese cultural preservation, drawing parallels with dialect preservation challenges in mainland cities. Cantonese and cultural preservation in Hong Kong deserves attention and can be considered as a factor in deciding on MOIC.

7.2 Recommendations for Teaching

A dual-track approach for preserving Cantonese culture, promoting Putonghua, and improving students' Chinese education levels is recommended, which includes:
(1) Implement CMIC to enhance learning effectiveness and enjoyable learning experience.
(2) Enhance Putonghua proficiency through separate lessons and activities to avoid the negative impact of the aforementioned PMIC on Putonghua and Cantonese learning.
(3) Use a collaborative teaching approach to create school-based materials that integrate Putonghua, Chinese language, and literature. Employ blended teaching methods to connect the nine domains and enhance abilities in Chinese education, especially in listening, speaking, reading, writing, literature, Chinese culture, moral and emotional development, and higher-order thinking. This includes using Putonghua audio for modern northern works in CMIC classes and adding literary and critical thinking elements to Putonghua classes. Surveys (2017/18: 163 students; 2024: 107 students) showed positive feedback, with students finding the curriculum effective in improving Putonghua proficiency, literary and cultural literacy, and language application.
(4) Strengthen the promotion of reading to enrich the knowledge and language proficiency.
(5) Organize more Chinese cultural activities to cultivate students' sense of national identity with traditional Chinese culture.
(6) Encourage new immigrant students to interact more with Cantonese speakers, watch and listen to more Cantonese programs. Provide Cantonese programs for new immigrants as needed.
Surveys reveal over 90% support from students, teachers, and parents for CMIC. While 34.8% to 49.5% support CMIC and retaining the Putonghua subject separately, 40% to 50.6% support the researcher’s combined approach. This aligns with Hong Kong's language policies and aims to cultivate bilingual and trilingual talent with cultural literacy, while also preserving dialects, promoting diverse cultures, and fostering a sense of belonging to the country.

7.3 Limitation and Recommendation for Future Research

Constraints included limited experimental implementation of the new approach and interview participants. Future research should use larger-scale, longitudinal evaluations across multiple schools. Additionally, further studies could explore more aspects of the connection between language teaching and cultural heritage.

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