THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Senate Committee on Language Enhancement

Task Force to Review the Recommendations of the Committee on Bilingualism

Review Report

1. Background

1.1 The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) has since its inception adopted a bilingual policy and practice in teaching and learning activities. In light of the mission of CUHK and the challenges of globalization, a Committee on Bilingualism (COB) was established in February 2005 to review CUHK's language policies. The Report of the COB (July 2007) at Attachment A reaffirmed the importance of bilingual education of CUHK and recommended a set of forward-looking and strategic principles that align with the unique linguistic environment of Hong Kong, with an aim to promote and enhance bilingual education at CUHK. The COB is of the view that the relevant part of the *Preamble of the University Ordinance* concerning the language of instruction should be interpreted in its historical context. One of the recommendations of the COB is to establish a Senate Committee on Language Enhancement (SCLE) to implement the various language policies and enhancement initiatives (paragraph 7.25 of the COB Report) and conduct a thorough review of the language standards of CUHK students and the effectiveness of bilingual education at CUHK five years after its establishment (paragraph 7.27 of the COB Report).

1.2 A Task Force to Review the Recommendations of the COB was established in July 2014 under the SCLE to review the language standards of CUHK students, the effectiveness of bilingual education at CUHK and the implementation of the recommendations of the COB. The membership and the terms of reference of the Task Force are set out in Attachment B.

1.3 The Task Force has conducted an overall review of the language standards of CUHK students, and the effectiveness of bilingual education at CUHK, in light of the recommendations of the COB, including the language of instruction, caring for the Chinese language and promotion of Chinese culture, and the work and effectiveness of the SCLE.

2. Language Standards of CUHK Students

2.1 An analysis of the language standards of CUHK students was carried out based on the public examination results of students admitted to CUHK, students' self-assessment of language competence, and the results of CUHK students in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Language standards of students admitted to CUHK

2.2 The University's policy stipulates that applicants to its undergraduate programmes must attain prescribed levels of competence in Chinese and English. The regulations governing admission to undergraduate studies set out the minimum language requirements for admission, and specific programmes may set higher standards according to their needs (Attachment C).

2.3 CUHK's new entrants have done well in the Chinese and English subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and at the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) before 2012, and in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) on or after 2012, certainly ahead of the average of all new entrants admitted to local higher education institutions. The overall performance of CUHK's new entrants is in line with the overall trend for all new entrants admitted to local higher education institutions (Attachment D).

Students' self-assessment of language competence

2.4 The 334 curriculum has brought new challenges to CUHK. To understand how students perform in the new curriculum, and to design and provide timely initiatives to support their development, the Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research (CLEAR), in collaboration with the Colleges, the Office of University General Education (OGE) and the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), has administered a comprehensive "Entry Class Questionnaire (ECQ)" to Year 1 students regardless of admissions schemes since August 2012. The ECQ consisting of 250 items collects information on different aspects of the students' background, including personal and family particulars, expectations on university life, expectations on university education, self-assessment of their capabilities and learning habits. Among the items under the section on self-assessment of their capabilities, 11 items elicit respondents' assessment of their language competence in terms of the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in English and Chinese, Putonghua and Cantonese.

2.5 An overview of the self-assessment of language capabilities of the 2012-14 entrants is provided in Attachment E, with an average response rate of about 70% for the three cohorts of newly admitted students. Overall speaking, the scores of students' self-assessment of English and Chinese capabilities are higher in terms of reading and listening than writing and speaking. The scores for Chinese and Putonghua competence are generally higher than those of English competence.

Results of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

2.6 The University does not have an exit language requirement for either Chinese or English, and does not require students to take exit language tests. The University Grants Committee (UGC) arranged for final year students of UGC-funded undergraduate programmes to take the IELTS under the Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme (CEPAS) from 2002-03 to 2013-14, with the CEPAS to be replaced by the provision of funding for collaborative projects on English and/or Chinese language enhancement/language learning in the 2012-15 triennium.

2.7 The IELTS overall and sub-score test results for CUHK graduates, as summarized in Attachment F, show a gradual but steady improvement over the years from 2002-03 to 2013-14, rising from 6.65 (lowest) to 6.98 (highest) on a 9-point scale, which are all above the average overall scores attained by students of the eight UGC-funded institutions. In general, the average overall scores for receptive skills (reading and listening) are higher than those for productive skills (writing and speaking). The CUHK graduates' performance in IELTS aligns with that of their counterparts of the eight UGC-funded institutions in IELTS, and also with their self-assessment of English capabilities. These statistics underscore the need for further enhancement of students' writing and speaking skills.

3. Effectiveness of Bilingual Education

3.1 The Task Force reviewed the effectiveness of bilingual education, taking into consideration the earlier language enhancement schemes, and the changes that had taken place in recent years with the advent of the 334 curriculum.

Language enhancement framework for the four-year curriculum

3.2 In response to the 334 education reform and in line with the University's initiatives, the design of the new four-year curriculum is based on the outcomes-based approach (OBA) with the alignment of learning outcomes with the course content, learning activities and assessment. A new three-tier language enhancement framework for the four-year curriculum (Attachment G) has replaced the four-tier framework for the three-year curriculum.

Tier	Three-year curriculum	Tier	Four-year curriculum
One	Compulsory Intensive Programme in Putonghua, Cantonese and English (IPCE)	One	University Language Core Requirements
Two	Faculty Language Enhancement Programme (FLEP)		
Three	Elective Language Proficiency Courses	Two	Elective Language Proficiency Courses
Four	College Language and Culture Enhancement and Independent Learning Centre Activities/ Programmes	Three	College Language and Culture Enhancement and Independent Learning Centre Activities/ Programmes

Language enhancement activities/programmes for the four-year curriculum

3.3 Upon the reversion to a four-year normative curriculum, the Chinese and English language requirements have been strengthened with the number of units increased from between 3 and 6 units to 15 units, with 6 units for Chinese and 9 units for English.

3.4 The 6-unit Chinese Language Core Requirements include two 3-unit courses offered by the Department of Chinese Language and Literature (CLL), *CHLT1100 University Chinese I* and *CHLT1200 University Chinese II*, normally to be taken in Years 1 and 2. These courses are designed to consolidate and reinforce students' command of the language to communicate in an effective and articulated manner, and to nurture students with a sound knowledge of classical and modern Chinese through the appreciation of ancient and contemporary classics. A unique feature of the courses is the Chinese literary walk on campus, which has been well received by the students. A variety of elective Chinese proficiency courses is also offered to meet the needs of students with heterogeneous backgrounds.

3.5 The 9-unit English Language Core Requirements include a 4-unit course in Year 1, a 3-unit course in Year 2 and a 2-unit course in Year 3 offered by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU). The English curriculum is based on a 4-3-2 distribution, with increasing specialization on progression of years of studies and coherent articulation of these courses to form a series of progressive training in four basic language learning modalities: speaking,

writing, reading and listening. The first, *ELTU1001 Foundation English for University Studies*, is a foundation English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course for all University undergraduate students. To cater for learner diversity, an alternative advanced English course, *ELTU1002 English Communication for University Studies*, is also made available for Year 1 students with an IELTS score of 6.5 or above or equivalent qualifications. The Year 2 and Year 3 courses are faculty-based and discipline-specific, being developed closely with each of the faculties to develop students' English language competencies in using English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Professional Purposes (EPP). A selection of elective English language proficiency courses is also offered to suit the needs and interests of students, who have different motivations for learning English.

3.6 Apart from the formal language courses, the Colleges and Independent Learning Centre (ILC) offer a range of non-formal language enhancement activities/programmes for students. These informal activities/programmes, in which students can participate on a voluntary basis, offer opportunities for students to enhance their language proficiency, and pave the way for life-long learning.

3.7 A number of Putonghua and Cantonese courses are also offered to cater for the needs and levels of the increasing number of international and Mainland students, including exchange students. Co-curricular activities are also organized to enhance the language learning of international students.

Evaluation of effectiveness of language enhancement activities/programmes

3.8 All language activities, programmes and courses, formal and non-formal, have a quality assurance mechanism making use of a variety of measures to assess the effectiveness of activities/programmes, including course and teaching evaluation, pre- and post-course tests, peer reviews, informal feedback gathered by means of small-group discussion, teacher-student consultation sessions, and other means of communication. Quantitative data is analyzed by faculty, and by department within a faculty, to identify specific areas of concern. Qualitative feedback is also solicited through focus group interviews, and the Staff-student Consultative Committee meetings.

3.9 The evaluation results generally indicate an improvement in language competence following the successful completion of one or more courses. The positive ratings of these courses reflect students' general satisfaction with the courses. A report on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Chinese and English language curriculum is in <u>Attachment H</u> and <u>Attachment I</u> respectively. Based on the evaluation results, a series of actions were proposed to further improve students' Chinese and English communication skills.

3.10 The Student Development Portfolio (SDP), the electronic student learning portfolio, was created to help monitor students' academic development. SDP could be used to collect information about students' progress in language learning throughout their university studies, and to record and provide data for analysis in the long-term.

3.11 The Yale–China Chinese Language Centre (CLC) conducted a Putonghua survey in August 2014 to understand the Putonghua background of the newly admitted students and their motivation for Putonghua study. It was found that most of the new students had received basic Putonghua training in primary or secondary school. Developing advanced level courses would thus be essential to fulfill their needs.

3.12 The University provides substantial resources and support for language activities/programmes for students. The expenditure on language activities/programmes for the period between July 2014 and June 2015 is more than HK$92 million (Attachment J). More than HK$3 million has been allocated from the Teaching Development Grants to support 10 projects on Chinese and English language learning from 2005-08 to 2012-15 (Attachment K).

4. Language of Instruction

4.1 The recommendations on the language of instruction in the COB Report are based on the understanding that the language of instruction should be understood in the context of different teaching and learning activities. It refers not only to the language used at lectures, but also to the language employed in reading and reference materials; discussions at tutorials; projects or class presentations; laboratory, practicum and clinical sessions; assignments and examinations; and individual supervision. The choice of language of instruction should be based upon the factors including the nature of individual academic subjects, the language currently used as the predominant medium for academic expression and publication in the subjects concerned, the requirements for professional qualifications and teaching and learning effectiveness, the language habits, linguistic competence and cultural background of both students and teachers; as well as CUHK's commitment to caring for the Chinese language. To achieve optimal pedagogical results, the language of instruction in individual subjects should be set by the Boards of Departments concerned, with reference to these factors (paragraphs 7.4-7.11 of the COB Report).

4.2 The statistics of the language of instruction for 2013-14 at Attachment L show that both Chinese and English were used as languages of instruction for undergraduate and postgraduate courses at CUHK, with considerable variation across faculties. For the arts, education and social science courses, Chinese was more widely used while for the business administration, law, engineering, medicine and science courses, English was generally used for all forms of teaching and learning. The results on the whole are in line with the COB's recommendations and reaffirm the general principle as recommended by the COB that the language of instruction should reflect the nature of the disciplines and the needs of the professions. In practice, the choice of the language of instruction also took into account the linguistic competence of the teachers and students.

5. Caring for the Chinese Language and Promotion of Chinese Culture

5.1 In the face of the diversification and internationalization of higher education, and confronted with the increasing dominance of the English language, which may affect the roles and functions of the Chinese language in academia, the COB recommended that CUHK should take up the responsibility of caring for the Chinese language (Section 7.12 of the COB Report). To this end, the University has undertaken various initiatives to provide support for caring for the Chinese language and promotion of Chinse cultures.

5.2 As recommended by the COB, departments that use Chinese as the language for lectures according to the nature of their subjects or professional requirements may also consider offering some of their courses in English, especially those related to Chinese culture, society and history. In the 2014-15 academic year, 32 courses on Chinese and/or local cultures were offered in English (Attachment M).

5.3   Regarding research, the University has continued to support scholarly work on Chinese language, Chinese culture and local culture.   The Chinese language publications and journals published by units or academic staff of CUHK in 2011-13 and the research output items of CUHK in Chinese submitted to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2014 constitute 12% and 5% of the respective total outputs (Attachment N).   The extent to which Chinese was used in research publications varied according to the faculty; in the RAE 2014, for example, while the percentage of publications in Chinese reached one third of the total output in the Faculty of Arts, the percentage of Chinese publications in other faculties that used English predominantly as their medium of publication was virtually nil.   A number of research institutes and centres in relation to promoting Chinese language culture has also been recently established (Attachment O).

5.4   Besides teaching and research, the University has also promoted the use of Chinese as the language for disseminating knowledge, including initiatives such as publication of Chinese-language journals and books, production of Chinese-language teaching materials for higher education and for professional disciplines, and translation of academic publications. A total of 23 Chinese language and Chinese-English bilingual journals are currently published by CUHK (Attachment P).   Chinese-English glossaries have also been compiled for publications within certain specific disciplines and a list of the glossaries published by CUHK is at Attachment Q.

5.5   In support of the recognition of Chinese as an international academic language with the aim of enhancing the status of Chinese journals in the global research arena, CUHK organized a Summit on Assessment and Development of Academic Chinese in November 2015.   A collaboration agreement was signed among 32 universities from the Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau to promote Chinese as an internationally recognized research language.   One of the key missions of the collaboration is to compile a list of recommended quality Chinese journals as an important reference index in the evaluation of research quality for academia in Chinese-speaking communities the world over, in particular those in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland China, so as to raise the impact of Chinese in various research fields and to bring Chinese research outputs to the world.

5.6   The University joined Coursera in 2013 and has produced a series of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) across a wide range of disciplines including humanities, social sciences, economics and finance, as well as information technology.   Of the seven courses since 2013, four of them are related to Chinese language and culture, including *Classics of Chinese Humanities: Guided Readings* (Chinese and English versions), and *The Beauty of Kunqu Opera* (Chinese and English versions).

6.   Senate Committee on Language Enhancement

6.1   The SCLE was established in October 2007 to coordinate, review, improve and promote the policy on bilingual education at CUHK, to formulate and implement various language policies, and to promote and oversee language enhancement programmes at the University.   The terms of reference and composition of the SCLE are in Attachment R.

6.2   Since its inception, the SCLE has made substantive efforts with respect to the preparation and implementation of the Chinese and English language requirements for the four-year curriculum.   As a university-wide language enhancement committee, it keeps under review all aspects of bilingual education at the University and language enhancement programmes in

Chinese (Putonghua and Cantonese) and English, including the reviews and approval of courses related to the teaching of Chinese (Putonghua and Cantonese) and English at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It also keeps under review the language enhancement framework, the language policy at the postgraduate level, language of instruction, caring for the Chinese language and promotion of Chinese culture, College Language and Culture Enhancement (CLCE) Programmes, CEPAS results, and the monitoring of Chinese and English language proficiency. Sub-Committees, working groups and task forces were set up under the SCLE to address specific issues as and when needed. A summary report of the role and major tasks undertaken by the SCLE for 2007-15 is at Attachment S.

6.3 A report of the SCLE is submitted to the Senate annually for monitoring of the work undertaken during the year and its effectiveness. A Report on Language Enhancement Activities is also submitted to the UGC each year for reporting on the language enhancement activities/programmes and initiatives and the evaluation of their effectiveness.

6.4 The SCLE has performed an important role in keeping under review all aspects of bilingual education at the University and has undertaken efforts according to its terms of reference to coordinate, review, improve and promote the policy on bilingual education at CUHK, to formulate and implement various language policies, and to promote and oversee language enhancement programmes at the University.

7. Way Forward

7.1 It has been the University's tradition to practise bilingualism and provide vast opportunities for students to enhance their language proficiency in both Chinese and English. In response to the changing needs of education as well as the practical demands of society, forward planning on the direction and the format of language activities/programmes, formal and non-formal, will continue to be undertaken.

Language enhancement activities/programmes

7.2 The language teaching units will continue to monitor and review the implementation of the four-year curriculum and work closely with different stakeholders to enhance course effectiveness. More tailored courses will be designed to provide students with options which can better cater for their diverse needs.

7.3 The ELTU will endeavor to collaborate with various programmes to implement the concept of *English across the curriculum* (EAC) as a pedagogical initiative, to further enhance the level of language awareness and language use in the discipline by bringing content and language together through the collaboration of content teachers and English teachers.

7.4 The ELTU recognizes the need to further help enhance students' English speaking and writing skills and will conduct systematic analyses of student's writing and speaking outputs to further identify their language needs. Help will be provided to students through formal English courses, non-credit-bearing workshops, and peer-tutoring, to meet these needs.

Internationalization

7.5 In the light of the mission of CUHK and the challenges of globalization in the twenty-first

century, CUHK must enhance its bilingual education with a view to promoting cross-cultural exchange and enabling students to broaden their view of the world.

7.6   Starting from 2014-15, the CLE Fund was renamed CLCE Fund to incorporate cultural elements to enhance experiential learning as part of the internationalization strategy of the University.   The Colleges of the University have been organizing summer language study tours in collaboration with renowned universities in Australia, the UK, North America and the Mainland.   By taking part in these activities/programmes, students not only improve their language skills, but also experience the culture of the country in an authentic, native context.

7.7   Putonghua and Cantonese courses will continue to be offered to cater for the needs and levels of the increasing number of international and Mainland students, including exchange students.

7.8   The University together with its Colleges and Faculties will continue in their efforts to reduce the language barriers in cross-cultural communication on campus and to increase the opportunities for non-local students to learn Cantonese/Putonghua during their studies at CUHK.

Language of instruction

7.9   The University will continue to follow the recommendations of the COB on language of instruction and the principles for the choice of language for the courses.   Data on the language of instruction for individual courses will be collected to continue to monitor the use of the languages.

7.10   For classes with a mix of local, Mainland and international students, due consideration should be given to the multicultural background and the language abilities of the students admitted. The Department or Programme may consider conducting the tutorials in different language-medium groups to facilitate discussion and interaction.

7.11   The needs for language enhancement of particular student groups can be identified in detail in the peer review of programme reviews, which provide useful information on students' communication skills.   The Task Force recommended the active use of programme reviews as a means of identifying the language needs of students and ensuring the best learning outcome for them.

Quality assurance

7.12   The existing monitoring measures for language activities, programmes and courses, should continue to be adopted, including course and teaching evaluation, pre- and post-course tests, peer reviews, informal feedback gathered by means of small-group discussion and teacher-student consultation sessions.

7.13   The existing university-level surveys conducted by various units should be consolidated to collect longitudinal data on students' perception of their language competence, as well as evidence for the language enhancement they have achieved during the course of their study at CUHK.

7.14   The SDP should be used to collect information about students' progress in language learning throughout their university studies, and to record and provide data for analysis in the

long-term.

7.15 As the UGC is no longer providing for final year students of UGC-funded undergraduate programmes to take the IELTS under the CEPAS, the University should explore ways to continue to encourage students to participate in IELTS so that it may serve as an indicator of the students' linguistic proficiency in English.

7.16 Similarly, the University should also encourage students to participate in the Putonghua proficiency tests organized by the China State Language Commission and the Computerized Oral Proficiency Assessment (COPA) developed by the CLC.

Use of technology and eLearning

7.17 More efforts should be undertaken to promote the use of technology, eLearning, blended learning and flipped classrooms through the launching of micro-modules, mobile applications, web-based platforms and facebook pages to support language teaching and learning in the four-year curriculum.

Promotion of Chinese culture

7.18 To be globally competitive, CUHK must acknowledge the importance of English as an international language. At the same time, the University must also honour its mission and re-affirm its commitment to the promotion of Chinese culture and language, as well as its dedication to the preservation and development of indigenous culture and language in Hong Kong. The University should undertake continued efforts in caring for the Chinese language and promotion of Chinese culture, including the initiatives such as publication of research work, journals, books and glossaries in Chinese. In particular, the University will take forward the mission of promoting Chinese as an international research language in actively collaborating with universities from the Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau to develop a reference index that will give due recognition to research published in Chinese.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The Task Force has reviewed the language standards of CUHK students and the effectiveness of bilingual education at CUHK with reference to the recommendations of the COB Report, and reaffirms the importance of bilingual education as a distinctive characteristic and strength of the University. This policy as well as its objectives should remain unchanged. The University will endeavor to invest continued efforts and initiatives to provide support and opportunities for students to enhance their language proficiency in both Chinese and English, and to improve students' readiness to engage themselves in *self-directed, life-long learning of languages*.

30 December 2015
Attachments