The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology: Division of Humanities/ Center for Language Education

HUMA 1000: Cultures and Values:

Cover sheet for final essay

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| Writing workshop section number | T03 |
| Writing workshop instructor | LEE, Pui  PUN, Wing Man Winnie |
| Essay prompt (please copy and paste from  the document on Canvas) | Joyce, a lady from Beijing, met her husband Hans, a German, in Hong Kong and started a family here. As their child, Peter, is now three years old, they are rather undecided which kindergarten they should send him to. Hans prefers that Peter attend a local private kindergarten where their son will learn English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. However, Joyce prefers a German international school where German and English are the primary languages of communication and instruction. The downside of it is their son will have very limited input of Cantonese or Mandarin. As a friend of the family and an expert on languages, they seek your advice. Tuition or location would not be  a concern. What would you advise them to do? |

Declaration:

The attached essay represents my own work. I have read and understood the

University’s policies on academic honesty and I confirm that the attached work conforms to these policies.

Please type your name: CHEN, Yifei

Response to feedback (25%): List all the revisions you made. If you decided not to act upon any of the feedback, please give your reasons below. This is to show how you responded to your instructor’s feedback.

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| 1. To adjust my point from a language expert, I fixed the paragraph 2 with more detail about the link between local language and formation of identity. 2. I deleted my original paragraph 3, which discussed the career future and deviated from the course materials. Then I came out with a new argument, which focus on that learning local language fits local language policy better and will bring someone convenience and benefit. 3. I fixed my rebuttal part of the counterargument with a stronger argument, which strongly deny the concern that choosing the local kindergarten will make Peter lose his origin. |

**HUMA 1000A Essay**

CHEN, Yifei 20328874 T03

Selecting an appropriate kind of education for children is always a head-scratching issue faced by many mixed-background families. A local private kindergarten or international schools? The decision made by parents at the kindergarten stage is powerful enough to influence the whole life of their kids. In the case of Joyce and Hans’s son, Peter, I would recommend the option of selecting a local private kindergarten. From my point of view, this method of educating can help peter integrate into the local society smoothly and enable him to develop smoothly in Hong Kong, which are beneficial to his future life and career. In the next parts of this essay, I will analyze my stance from two aspects: identity acquisition and adaption under specific language policies. Then I will refute a counterargument, which is concerned by lots of people, to strengthen my stance.

Learning in a local private school can help children acquire self-identity, especially for those who may own foreign cultural backgrounds. Being not totally accepted or self-identified is a painful issue. The story of Persepolis from course material is a typical instance. Language barrier counts as an important factor in the above problem. For example, some second-generation immigrants, who live in Shekou, Shenzhen and do not speak Chinese, always live in such a specific region and cannot find a sense of belonging, which makes them worried and confused during their whole lives. Beyond that, growing up in a totally different environment from their native culture makes lots of them unaccommodated to lives in their motherland if they get back there someday (Reiche, 2013). Out of the concern from such aspect, I vote for learning local kindergartens. From the view of poststructuralism, language is intricately related to our identity and shows our belongings. For people like Peter, who own different styles of appearance from local’s, their mastering in a language is a passport to the corresponding local community (Block, 2014). Hong Kong uses Cantonese and English as markers of its identity due to historical reasons. Learning these local languages and communicating adequately with local peers will enable Peter experience the local culture, thoughts, and value at an early stage to construct his identity. While Germany is not a dominant language there. Therefore, choosing local schools, which provide Cantonese and English education, has a significant advantage of acquiring identity over international schools. I have a classmate whose parents are foreigners. He was born in Hong Kong and took local schools all the way. Under such an education background, he can speak Cantonese smoothly and has a localized way of thinking. Accepted by local groups, he has lots of local friends in our university. This situation also fits peter. If the decision of a family is living in Hong Kong for a relatively long time, it will be definitely important to help Peter acquire identities. With the help of local kindergartens, I believe Peter can do this pretty well.

Another reason for me to recommend local kindergarten is the better adaptation for local language policy, which lead to convenience in lots of aspects including healthcare, education, and future work. Hong Kong is under the policy of ‘biliteracy’ and ‘trilingualism’ (Lim, 2009). As the native language spoken by the majority of people here, Cantonese is applied widely in official situations and daily issues. And due to the influence of the colonial era, globalization, and English’s worldwide supremacy, English is also an important mediating tool, especially in the elite class and internationalized universities. In such an environment, mastering the two languages perfectly can bring Peter huge convenience and benefits. On the one hand, in many real situations like seeing a doctor, grocery shopping, and eating in a restaurant, using Cantonese will be more communication-efficient. It will bother the grown Peter all the time if he insists to use only English and Germany. On the other hand, considering that Peter might accept university education in Hong Kong in the future, both English and Cantonese will be useful in his undergraduate life. For example, he can choose to take courses no matter taught in English or Cantonese, which are the majority of the teaching methods in Hong Kong’s universities. And he can join native students’ society without language barriers. By contrast, Germany seems not to be at the same priority compared with the other two in Hong Kong. Therefore, when comparing between Cantonese-English education model and English-Germany one, I would choose the former one as the better environment-adapted option for Peter.

Some people may argue that Peter’s parent must do not want their child to become a man who loses his origin. Therefore, it is necessary for them to send Peter to a German international school where he can learn a lot from his father’s country. I do admit that this concern is a serious issue. However, getting into a local kindergarten is not equal to abandon someone’s origin. Besides receiving education in schools, family education is also an important part of our growth. In fact, on one could be a better teacher than Peter’s father in the area of origin. Hans is a native speaker who knows well about his country and clan. As Peter’s intimate partner, he also has plenty of opportunities to stay close with and teach Peter. I think the task of relevant language and culture education can be carried by Hans. This education is suitable for Peter because he can learn German quite well at this age, when the language acquisition proceeds quickly, easily, and smoothly (Fromkin, 2017). And the school tasks at this time is not heavy. Additionally, Hans can bring his son back to German on vacations and experience the German culture deeply. In this way, the language flaws brought by local kindergarten can be remedied to some degree. By contrast, Loyce and Hans are not a native speaker of Cantonese or even they cannot speak it. In this way, sending Peter to an international school may impede his education on Cantonese seriously. Comparing the two option, the local schools should be a better one.

To sum up, I will recommend sending Peter to a local school. It will help him find a sense of belonging from both himself and surroundings as well as providing convenience and benefits under Hong Kong’s language environment. In this kind of education, I believe that Peter will finally become an outstanding man who can live well and find his own value.

**Reference:**

[1]: Reiche, S. (2013, April 5). Returning Home after Living Abroad? Not as Easy as Expected! Retrieved from https://blog.iese.edu/expatriatus/2013/04/05/returning-home-after-living-abroad-not-as-easy-as-expected/

[2]: Block, D. (2014). Second language identities. London; New York: Bloomsbury

[3]: Lim, L. (2009). Multilingual, globalizing Asia: Implications for policy and education. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

[4]: Fromkin V., Rodman, R. & Hyams, N. (2017). *An introduction to language* *(11th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing.