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Boredom and fear in the undergraduate classroom: the medium of instruction controversy in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT *Although the mother-tongue of some 90% of the population in Hong Kong is Cantonese, schools and universities in Hong Kong have witnessed the downgrading and even abandoning of Cantonese as a medium of instruction (MOI) in classrooms. For universities, this process is accelerated by the discourses of “internationalization.” For primary and secondary schools, the main compelling force is parents’ anxiety over their children’s future. This paper discusses the social context in which the forsaking of Cantonese as a medium of instruction has occurred, and also the unintended consequences of silencing the mother-tongue of most of the Hong Kong students (and teachers) in secondary schools and universities.*

Introduction

In the Fall semester of 2012, I began to teach a new course entitled “Boredom and fear in culture” at Lingnan University.¹ One of the reasons for developing and teaching this course has to do with my observations of students in Hong Kong in the past few years. The most frequent words that I have heard from secondary school students during our school visits and interviews are “bored” and “fearful” (*men, fan, jing, pa* in Chinese).² At the same time, my teaching experience in university over the years has also witnessed that boredom and fear are two very common emotions among students.

The course was taught in English, as required by the University’s language policy, despite the fact that all students are locals with Cantonese as their mother-tongue. In addition to introducing academic discourses on boredom and fear, I have also invited students to talk about their emotions emerging from the existing educational settings and schooling processes. Some of the students expressed their anxiety in preparing presentations and in attending lectures. In particular, students were afraid of using English to present, or worried about and felt embarrassed that they could not understand the teacher’s questions or instructions,

or feeling bored by not being able to understand but forced to pay attention to lectures and tutorial discussions.

Right after the semester ended, I invited students for an informal interview, hoping to find their views on the issues of medium of instruction. Three students showed up for the interview. Student A suggested that if the course were taught in Cantonese, she could bear with it even if the lecture was boring. However, if the course was conducted in English, she would easily get tired. Student B expressed that she felt “happier,” “warmer” and more “comfortable” if the course were conducted in Cantonese, whereas teaching in English was like placing her in an alien planet, in which she felt “painful” (*tong ku*), losing her mind (*fa dai, ng chi dim*), and felt embarrassed for not being able to understand English jokes. Student C recalled that in her secondary school years, more than 60% of the students in her schools were “new immigrants” from mainland China, yet the school still adopted English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy. As one of this 60%, she felt insulted. When teachers occasionally switched back to Cantonese in teaching, she felt “reborn.” However, despite feeling more comfortable learning in Cantonese,

Table 1. Population* aged 5 and over by usual language, 2001, 2006 and 2011 (A107)

Usual Language	2001		2006		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cantonese	5,726,972	89.2	6,030,960	90.8	6,095,213	89.5
Putonghua	55,410	0.9	60,859	0.9	94,399	1.4
Other Chinese Dialects	352,562	5.5	289,027	4.4	273,745	4.0
English	203,598	3.2	187,281	2.8	238,288	3.5
Others	79,197	1.2	72,217	1.1	106,788	1.6
Total	6,417,739	100.0	6,640,344	100.0	6,808,433	100.0

Note: *The figures exclude mute persons.

Source: 2011 Population Census Office, Census and Statistics Department, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

she believed that it was necessary to accept EMI in her secondary school in order to prepare herself for studying at university.

As a university teacher, I also do not find teaching in English enjoyable, especially when most (or all) students in the classroom are local Cantonese. In addition to the fact that I am not an English native speaker, I also find it strange, to say the least, that my students and I are forced to communicate with each other on intellectual and local concern issues in a second language that we are emotionally detached from and barely able to master. This problem is particularly critical when the subject contents being discussed are closely related to our complex feelings and local culture that cannot be easily translated into a secondary language.

In Hong Kong, the mother-tongue of 90% of the population is Cantonese (Table 1), and among the 736,000 primary and secondary students (2012–2013 figures), only 15,600 are non-Chinese (2.1%). This monolingual environment is not particularly favourable for local students to learn English. Without the need of using English for daily communication, adopting EMI in classrooms does not necessarily improve students' English proficiency. In contrast, as revealed in the above interviews, the compulsory EMI policy may very likely bring about some unintended consequences, including the nurturing of fear and boredom among students. This is partially related to the

remoteness of English to students' everyday life, and partially connected to the mode of assessment that has exerted tremendous pressure on students. Yet despite feeling fearful or bored in EMI classes, some local students still request teachers to teach in English, for they also believe that adopting EMI would help improve their English competence, which is regarded as one of the most valuable assets in personal advancement in the Hong Kong social context.

To teach and learn in English in Hong Kong classrooms is of course possible, if one does not care too much about the cost of lively and engaged intellectual exchanges between students and teachers, especially on issues that involve complex feelings and are culturally specific. Michel Foucault once ironically remarked that "[i]t's quite an achievement the way teachers manage to make learning unpleasant, depressing gray, unerotic!" (cited in Probyn 2004, 35). With a student body whose English proficiency is just minimally adequate (as revealed in the admission scores, see Table 2), I think adopting a mandatory EMI policy is perhaps a major building block for such an "achievement."

The failure of mother-tongue education: a brief history

Despite being under British colonial rule for more than a century, voices that advocate

Table 2. Average English language scores of JUPAS admittees, Lingnan University, 2012–2013

Programme	2012	2013
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	3.77	4.19
Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours)	3.96	3.95
Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours)	3.72	3.86
All Programmes	3.82	4.04

Note: The highest mark is 7, whereas the lowest mark is 0.

Source: Registry, Lingnan University.

the adoption of Chinese (read Cantonese) as the medium of instruction in schools have not been rare. As early as 1935, the Burney report on Hong Kong education suggested to the colonial government that in primary schools Chinese should be adopted as the medium of instruction (CMI). However, while accepting that Chinese is a better medium of instruction in both educational (to facilitate students' learning more smoothly) and political (to control and contain popular unrest more effectively by introducing Chinese conservative doctrines) terms, the colonial government was reluctant to wholeheartedly promote "mother-tongue" education until the early 1970s. The following paragraph from the appendix of the *White Paper on Education Policy* (The Working Party 1965, 83–84) explicates the underlining reason:

We note that ... the "very great burden on some of the pupils" in Anglo-Chinese schools resulting from the fact that the language of instruction in these schools is English. We appreciate the importance to Chinese youth of making a thorough study of their own language and cultural heritage, and the educational advantage of learning through the mother-tongue. Indeed, we consider that many of the pupils in Anglo-Chinese secondary schools are unable to benefit fully from the education provided because of the difficulty of studying through the medium of a second language. Nevertheless, we are reluctant to endorse this recommendation [CMI]

in face of the marked parental preference for Anglo-Chinese secondary education, the fact that the English language is an important medium of international communication and that a knowledge of it has undoubted commercial value in Hong Kong.

A turning point surfaced in the late 1960s. The social unrests in 1967–1968 compelled the Hong Kong colonial government to adjust its social policies in response to popular dissatisfaction, particularly discontent among the youth. As a result, several measures were introduced in the area of education. In 1971, compulsory primary schooling with Chinese as the medium of instruction was in place, partly also as a response to the international critique of child labour in Hong Kong. In 1973, the government issued the Green Paper on Education Policy, recommending CMI for all junior secondary school students.³ The introduction of this new language policy could be understood as a measure to reduce students' pressure, and level of dissatisfaction, in the schooling process, one of the perceived root causes of social unrest among youngsters. It could also be regarded as a means for more effective ideological control. Yet the advocacy of mother-tongue education was not particularly welcomed by Hong Kong parents, who believe that their children's future is associated with English competency. As a result, this round of mother-tongue education reform ended within one year, amidst the wave of parents' (and schools') resistance. After then, schools

were allowed to use whatever medium of instruction in classroom they deemed appropriate, and most schools opted for English, at least nominally, to send the right signal to parents who had a strong demand for EMI education so that their children will survive in the race resulting from global competition (Bolton 2000, 271–272).

It is only natural to see that the retreat of the introduction of mother-tongue education was accompanied by the continued trend of “student migration” from CMI to EMI schools (see Table 2). The negative impact of EMI education was particularly acute after the implementation of the 9-year compulsory education, as all primary students under CMI education had to use EMI in junior secondary classrooms. As the Llewellyn Report (1982, III.1.6 and II.1.9–II.1.10) notes,

Many Chinese speakers find it almost impossible to master English at the level of proficiency required for intricate thinking; and yet pupils from non-English speaking Chinese families have to express themselves in English at school. Under these conditions, more emphasis tends to be placed upon rote learning. If a pupil is expected to reformulate that which he or she has learned in English but has few words at his or her command to express these thoughts, what can be done except to regurgitate verbatim either notes taken during lessons or slabs from textbooks? ... Despite clever use of “chinglish” in the Anglo-Chinese schools and the popularity with teachers of courses offered by a number of agencies to improve their grasp of English, most teachers are by no means fluent and consequently their teaching efficiency is handicapped no matter how valiant are their attempts to master English. ... Many of the problems associated with schooling in Hong Kong—excessive hours of homework, quiescent pupils—are magnified, even if not caused, by the attempt to use English as a teaching medium for students who, even if they proceed to university, prefer not to use it by choice.

The report hence concludes that “... the mother-tongue is, all other things being equal, the best medium of teaching and learning” (Llewellyn et al. 1982, II.1.14)

Despite the educational advantages of CMI being well received and acknowledged, and despite the fact that only 30% of secondary students could learn effectively in English, the Hong Kong government did not insist on the CMI policy this time and only “encouraged” secondary schools to adopt CMI as much as possible (Education Commission 1990, 6.4.3; 6.4.11).

After the Handover in 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government launched another round of mother-tongue education reform, this time with a much stronger impact. An immediate result of the reform is the significant reduction of the number of EMI secondary schools, from 90% in the early 1990s to 30% in 1998. In contrast, the number of CMI schools increased from 80 to more than 300 (Kan and Adamson 2010). Yet again, similar to the 1973 reform, the promotion of mother-tongue education was resisted by a significant number of parents, students and schools. The underlying emotion for parents and students is again the fear of being placed in CMI schools that have been regarded as inferior. For teachers and school principals, the real threat comes from the reduction of student intake and the subsequent pressure of closing down the school. The figures in Table 3 show that their worry is not unfounded. The dramatic moment when many parents, students and school-teachers burst into tears in front of the TV camera after the announcement of the list of the “lucky schools” that could maintain EMI status (and the implied “unlucky ones”) anticipated the premature death of this new round of mother-tongue education reform. In fact, after Donald Tsang replaced Tung Chee Hwa as the Chief Executive of the HKSAR in 2004, the CMI reform was replaced by a so-called “fine-tuning” adjustment, meaning that schools were allowed to flexibly adopt different mediums of instruction for different classes and subjects. For fear of being

Table 3. Number of exchange students in Lingnan University

Academic year	Number of International Exchange Students (IEP)	Number of Mainland Exchange Students (MEP)	Total number
2011–12	161	32	193
2012–13	212	95	307
2013–14	234	86	320
Total number of students from 2011–2014:			820

Source: The Office of Mainland and International Programmes, Lingnan University.

labelled as inferior, many schools have understandably pushed their teachers to teach in English, at least nominally.

Tertiary education and internationalization

Influenced by the discourse on “internationalization,” universities in Hong Kong, as in many other places, have increasingly adopted EMI in classroom teaching, to the extent that even the Chinese University of Hong Kong whose founding mission is to promote high quality Chinese education, has also been requested to embrace EMI in recent years.⁴

Since the beginning of the “neoliberal era” in the 1980s, educational services have been progressively commodified and “internationalized.” In the 1990s, “internationalization” became the keyword in tertiary educational discourses, referring mainly to the curriculum content and the mobility of students and teachers. After higher educational services were incorporated into the World Trade Organization trade agreement in 2000, the pace of “internationalization” of higher education, both as a discourse and as a materialised policy, has been escalated and extended to the area of cross-regional educational services.

In October 1996, the Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC) released a report entitled *Higher Education in Hong Kong: A Report by the University Grants Committee*, suggesting that Hong Kong should admit more non-local students.⁵ This report could be seen as a declaration of

“internationalization” of the higher education sector in Hong Kong. In 2003 the Tung Chee-hwa government advocated the idea of an “education hub.” Since then, higher education has been regarded by the HKSAR government as one of the “six major industries.” Riding on the tide of “internationalization,” the then HKSAR Chief Executive Donald Tsang suggested in his 2007–2008 Policy Address that the percentage of non-local university students should be increased, and the non-local student quota for publicly-funded programmes at the sub-degree, degree and taught postgraduate level was subsequently doubled, from 10% to 20% (De Wit 2011a; Legislative Council 2007).

Increasing the numbers of non-local students was the major concern in the area of tertiary education in Donald Tsang’s 2007–2008 Policy Address. Yet the UGC 2010 report—*Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong* (hereafter *the 2010 Report*)—concludes, perhaps as a response to the earlier phase of “internationalization” in which over 90% of non-local university students were from mainland China, that “internationalization” should not merely mean increasing the intake of non-local (especially mainland Chinese) students.⁶ Internationalization, according to the *2010 Report*, also involves the permeation of “the whole gamut of institutional activity.” It is because

universities are the breeding ground for future leaders. These leaders need to be internationally minded and thus universities need to attend to their students’

mindsets, the internationalization of the faculty and the curriculum, the integration between local and non-local students and other means. At the same time, universities contribute to the enhancement of Hong Kong's regional/global influence. They can only properly do so by an enterprising engagement with the exterior and the continuing development of their reputations and visibility. (UGC 2010, 4.12)

According to the *2010 Report*, the need for "internationalization" has to do with the UGC's assertion that "[h]igher education sectors around the world now require world-wide competition for academic staff with a view to producing globally competitive students" (UGC 2010, 4.3), as well as keeping foreign tenants staying and working in Hong Kong. To keep "incoming tenants," Hong Kong universities should be able to nurture their "affection for and understanding of Hong Kong" (UGC 2010, 4.18). At the same time, to enhance local students' competitiveness, it was said that Hong Kong needed to create a multi-cultural learning and social communication environment. For this, the *2010 Report* suggests that local universities should strengthen their students' bi-literate (Chinese and English) and tri-lingual (Cantonese, Putonghua and English) competence, and to encourage the interaction between local and non-local students (UGC 2010, 4.24). The way to do so is to "ensure that they run no courses or classes predominantly for non-local students" (UGC 2010, 4.26).

Under the shadow of "internationalization" and the expansion of mainland China's economic, political and socio-cultural influences, the status of Cantonese as a medium of classroom instruction in local universities has been increasingly placed at the bottom of the trilingual hierarchy, and regarded as inferior to English and Putonghua.⁷

Medium of instruction policy: the case of Lingnan

The recommendation for "no courses or classes predominantly run for non-local

students" is simply translated by local universities into a compulsory EMI policy—all courses (except perhaps Chinese and other language subjects) should be taught in English. However, the intellectual reason and educational consideration behind this assertion is not clearly spelt out in the *2010 Report*, and it seems that the recommendation simply relies on a naive belief that putting local and non-local students in the same classroom, with English as the medium of communication, will magically engender constructive dialogue and meaningful exchange. An additional reason perhaps is to allow non-local students to have more choices on course registration, hoping this could attract more of them to come to Hong Kong. Yet, ensuring that no courses or classes are designated predominantly for non-local students does not necessarily encourage mutually beneficial interaction between local and non-local students, at least in the case of Lingnan University where local students' English proficiency is nowhere near the level of a good command over the language, and many exchange students are not particularly keen on understanding and engaging with local communities and cultures.

The total number of UGC-subsidized undergraduate students is 76,354 (2012–2013 figures), among them 8399 (11%) are non-local. Among the non-local undergraduates, 6315 (75%) come from mainland China. In addition to these degree-seeking students, there are also a significant (and increasing) number of short-term exchange students. In Lingnan University for instance, out of the 2600 students, there are 490 non-locals (almost 20%, 2013–2014 figures). And a significant percentage (65%) of these non-local students are short-term exchange students (see Tables 3 and 4). Some non-local students, particularly the short-term exchange students, are not necessarily interested in building an "affection for and understanding of Hong Kong," but instead regard Hong Kong as a convenient place for travelling in Asia (particularly to mainland China).

On its "fast fact sheet" for prospective non-local students, Lingnan University

Table 4. Number of non-local degree-seeking undergraduate students in Lingnan University

	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	Grand total
Mainland China	177	158	146	481
Others	21	28	24	73
Grand total	198	186	170	554

Source: The Office of Mainland and International Programmes, Lingnan University.

emphasizes that “prior knowledge of Chinese is not required” as most courses are available in English.⁸ In practice, the Lingnan University’s language policy has a switchable option, namely if there is no non-Cantonese speaking student in class, with the majority of students and the teacher’s consent, the medium of instruction could be changed from English to Cantonese. Yet as revealed in Table 4, almost 20% of students in LU are exchange students or degree-seeking non-local students, hence it is very likely that there will be at least one non-Cantonese speaking student in most of the classes. The fact that the presence of one or a few non-Cantonese speaking students pre-empts the switchable option has sometimes provoked local students’ resentment, especially when some of these short-term exchange students do not attend class regularly. On the other hand, for those non-local students who are interested in participating in class discussions, being surrounded by a majority of local students who prefer to communicate with each other in Cantonese does not render their classroom experiences particularly enjoyable.

The Lingnan case is not unique. Nurtured by an ill-designed primary and secondary schooling process, many local university students do not have sufficient English proficiency to pursue quality learning under the EMI environment. The problem is particularly acute in the case of the humanities and social subjects. It is not uncommon to witness that the linguistically disadvantaged students are unable to comprehend lectures or reading materials, or to fluently express their views in English. In such a context,

simply requesting all university courses to be taught in English does not necessarily produce the desirable learning outcomes of enhancing students’ English competence and encouraging meaningful interaction between local and non-local students. As Knight (2011) observes, without some basic knowledge of the local language, many non-local students who study in places where English is not the *lingua franca* find it difficult to interact with local students and community. These non-local students may feel they are being marginalized or even rejected by local students. As a result, they also tend to interact only with other non-local students, and this pulls them further away from the local community. On the other hand, local students whose English proficiency is nowhere near a level of mastering the language, also tend to avoid interacting with non-local students (de Wit 2011b). When encountering the case that the only one non-local exchange student who registers in the course rarely shows up in class, yet the class is forced to be conducted in English, local students’ bad feeling and resentment is absolutely understandable. As a result, it is not surprising to hear complaints from both sides.⁹

The 2010 Report acknowledges that “[l]ocal students will find internationalisation irrelevant unless they interact—and enjoy doing so—with the non-local students in formal learning, informal learning and social environments” (UGC 2010, 4.26). However, if both local and non-local students are not particularly happy within the compulsory EMI framework, which does not take into account the historical and social

context in which the local and non-local students are situated, one may query whether we should still insist on the policy that no courses should be predominately designed for non-local students.

These negative but perhaps unintended consequences of the EMI policy is closely connected to the monolingual environment in Hong Kong, in which 90% of the population use Cantonese in their everyday communication. Regular users of English and Putonghua account for only 3.5% and 1.4% respectively (see the 2011 figures in Table 1).¹⁰ In such a relatively monolingual context, even if the EMI policy can indeed improve students' English proficiency,¹¹ it does not enhance students' practical ability in handling everyday life problems. Whether EMI is good for the majority of students is yet to be demonstrated.¹² Likewise, the 2010 Report's claim that "[t]he use of English in instruction and research in much of these universities' work is also a strong advantage" (UGC 2010, 4.56) demands careful qualification. As many university teachers in Hong Kong are not native English speakers, including those coming from mainland China, the quality of EMI teaching is not guaranteed. Many local and mainland Chinese teachers and most local students may find it difficult, and become emotionally disengaged from the EMI teaching and learning processes.

Concluding remarks

This paper argues that the current trend in promoting EMI in universities does not necessarily produce its intended learning outcomes, such as facilitating constructive exchanges between local and non-local students, as well as enhancing the quality of learning English for local students. What is missing in the discourses on "internationalization" in Hong Kong is a systematic evaluation of the EMI policy that has been in place for many years. Some simplistic measures, such as not offering courses specifically designed for non-local students, should be carefully and critically reconsidered, and alternative

curriculum designs and more flexible MOI practices and policy frameworks should be explored.

While arguing for the right to mother-tongue education, I am by no means advocating that Hong Kong should abandon EMI in university classrooms, nor to suggest that Hong Kong students should access all knowledge worlds only through, and produce knowledge only in, Cantonese. Instead, I think universities in Hong Kong should take bilingualism (Chinese and English) or trilingualism (Cantonese, Putonghua and English) seriously. What this paper really argues against is the current language policy that tends to eliminate Cantonese as a medium of instruction in university classrooms. All in all, adopting a more flexible bi- (or tri-) lingual MI policy that encourages the development of multiple linguistic resources, as well as allows the use of Cantonese (alongside with English and Putonghua) as a MI in classrooms, is of crucial important in terms of pedagogical consideration, at least for the majority of Hong Kong students who are unable to comprehend lectures or reading materials or to fluently express their views in English (or Putonghua).

From a student-centred learning perspective, educators may have to carefully study and understand the diverse educational needs of different students, particularly, in our case, in terms of their level of English proficiency among other factors. For this we may need to supplement the ongoing discourses on "internationalization" with a rigorous debate on the approaches of education that are appropriate for the Hong Kong monolingual context.

As Probyn (2004, 33) suggests, education is not separable from the body and affect of the learner. In order to comprehensively assess the impacts of EMI and the marginalization of mother-tongue education in Hong Kong, we may also want to consider students' and teachers' emotional needs in the teaching and learning processes. And if language is a medium that closely connects the learner's emotion and cognition, then her/his mother-tongue perhaps is the best

choice of MOI to facilitate learning. When the MOI and curriculum content are remote from the learners' everyday concerns, an unintended consequence could be the nurturing of students' cynicism and indifference in learning, the last thing that an educator may want to support.

Notes

1. Lingnan University is the smallest government funded university in Hong Kong with a total of 2600 students.
2. Our research (KFCRD 2012) on the Hong Kong New Secondary School Liberal Studies subject (a core subject under the new secondary school curriculum) invited more than 2000 secondary school students to use 1–20 words to describe their experiences and feelings about Liberal Studies study. The most frequent words or terms are “can’t understand,” “don’t know what we are doing,” “difficult,” “boring” and “waste of time” (KFCRD 2012, 14–15).
3. Bolton (2000) argues that this has revealed the fact that mother-tongue education is not contradictory with colonial policy. Another scholar, Pennycook (1998), suggests that the colonial government in the early 20th century also advocated Chinese education with conservative ideology, hoping to domesticate the Chinese more effectively. Therefore, the reintroduction of the mother-tongue education should not be simply recognized as a decolonization policy.
4. Except for the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a few language disciplines, all other universities in Hong Kong have already been using EMI in classroom teaching. Of course, there are still cases where the classes are nominally taught in English, but in practice they are instructed in Cantonese.
5. “In particular, the limit on non-Hong Kong undergraduate students should be relaxed. Recruiting very good students from China and other nearby countries would undoubtedly imply additional costs for the Hong Kong taxpayer. But there would be substantial benefits” (UGC 1996).
6. “Internationalisation is not the same thing as developing relationships with Mainland China and encouraging Mainland students to study in Hong Kong” (UGC 2010, 4.8).
7. The case of Putonghua as a medium of instruction will need to be explored elsewhere. Suffice here to say that after 1997, Putonghua has been increasingly introduced into the Hong Kong school curriculum, and adopted as a medium of instruction

for the Chinese subject in primary and secondary schools.

8. “Fast Fact Sheet” (<http://www.ln.edu.hk/omip/download/documents/incoming-students/fast-factsheet-fall2014.pdf>).
9. One piece of qualitative research suggests that some mainland Chinese students also find it difficult to cope with the reading of English materials and to present in English, other non-local students complain that it is difficult to communicate with local students because they normally speak in Cantonese, as they are not confident enough nor willing to communicate in English (Ng 2010, 97).
10. There are different views on this issue. Some suggest that after the 1990s, the population capable of handling English and Putonghua has significantly increased, and the mixed-codes that many Hong Kong locals have adopted also revealed the fact that the mono-lingual environment is a myth (Bolton 2000, 274–277). Yet although the number of Hong Kong people capable of using English and Putonghua has indeed increased, Cantonese is still the predominant language that most of the population adopt in their everyday communication. For those unable to understand Cantonese, it would be rather difficult for them to interact with local communities. It is strange that the local universities, while highlighting the importance of local and non-local dialogues, normally do not require incoming students to acquire basic Cantonese for daily communication.
11. This is very much doubtful as teaching in English may very likely reduce students' motivation and confidence in learning.
12. A number of studies report that there are indeed negative consequences induced by the introduction of EMI policy. These include the impairment on the quality of teaching and learning due to the barely mastered level of spoken English by students and teachers whose mother-tongue is not English, the threatening of the displacement of local cultures and native languages, the fostering of social inequality between the relatively well-off minority of students with access to English and students with a lower level of English proficiency, and insensitivity to students' emotional needs that in turn reduce their incentive to learn (Le 2012).

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Special terms

men, fan, jing, pa 悶, 煩, 驚, 怕
tong ku, fa dai, ng chi dim 痛苦, 發呆, 唔知點

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