

【School Education Reform Series】

Collaboration and Mutual Learning
Between School Teachers and
School Development Officers
in an Attachment Experience

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School Education Reform Series

School education has become one of the most essential institutions in modern society. Tremendous resources have been invested in schools. Most modern societies have made it compulsory for their young people to spend a lengthy period of time in education. The effectiveness and efficiency of school education have been viewed as the necessary conditions for the development and prosperity of all modern societies. With the development of global economy and the emergence of the information age, all societies are under pressure to improve or even reform their school education system, if they are to enhance, or at least to maintain, their competitiveness in the ever-changing world economy.

How should Hong Kong equip its new generation to meet the challenges of the 21st century? School education reform is certainly one of the key issues in this matter. Which direction should our school reform take? What school reform programs should we adopt? How should we summarize and evaluate the existing school reform programs? How should we share, disseminate and promote those school reform programs that have been proven effective?

To address these issues, the Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research publishes the School Education Reform Series. It aims to provide local educators with a forum to exchange their ideas and experiences on the matter. To these ends, this series will publish research results, program designs, summaries of practices and experiences, and evaluative reports pertaining to school reforms in Hong Kong.

Collaboration and Mutual Learning Between School Teachers and School Development Officers in an Attachment Experience

Abstract

In an attempt to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English as a second language in a secondary school in Hong Kong, two school teachers and three School Development Officers of the Quality School Improvement Project worked collaboratively to design the teaching activities on a specific theme for two Secondary 4 (Grade 10) classes. Both the school teachers and school development officers targeted at: (a) enhancing students' interest and motivation in learning English; (b) improving students' ability in essay-writing; and (c) preparing students' readiness for school-based assessment. Basically, a communicative approach emphasizing the integration of four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) was adopted and a number of alternative teaching strategies were experimented in the classroom. Data collected from classroom observations, post-lesson evaluation, and students' works and feedback provided very positive results and strong support for the appropriateness of the approach and design for the two classes. Implications for teaching English as a second language in Hong Kong are discussed.

Introduction

The Collaboration

This paper reported an empirical study of how two English

teachers in a secondary school strive to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their Secondary 4 classrooms by working with the School Development Officers (SDOs) of the Quality School Improvement Project (QSIP, a school improvement project in Hong Kong). The two English teachers, Ms. Anna Fung and Betty Hui (not their real names), are both skillful and experienced. Ms. Anna Fung has been teaching English for more than 10 years whereas Ms. Betty Hui has an experience of about 5 years. They are serving in Flair Secondary School (also not the real name).

Flair Secondary School is a well-established Catholic secondary school — with a history of more than 40 years — in the South District of Hong Kong. It aims to provide students with the most pleasant and conducive environment possible for an all-round education. It endeavors to provide experiences that will enable students to grow holistically as individuals who would develop to become informed, cultured, sensitive, and responsible members of society. The school has 24 classes, about 900 students, and a team of 56 professional staff and 20 supporting staff. The school principal is a dedicated Catholic. He is very kind and cares about the well-being and welfare of both his students and teachers. The teachers in Flair Secondary School are very hard-working. They have gained high respect from students and their parents. The students are cooperative and willing to learn. They have reported that they have good relationships with their teachers and classmates in the stock-taking questionnaire. The school takes in secondary one students of average or above-average standard in the Secondary School Places Allocation System in Hong Kong.

“Improving the quality of classroom teaching and learning” is one of the major concern on the school improvement agenda in Flair Secondary School. Hence, the school has joined the QSIP to look for professional support for school improvement in the academic year of 2006–2008. The QSIP, funded by the Education Development Fund of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), aims to provide school-based professional support services to 115 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong from 2004 to 2009. Within this period, a number of primary and secondary schools are recruited every year, and each school would join the project for a period of two years. The QSIP adopts a comprehensive school improvement model. The SDOs of the QSIP work collaboratively with school teachers on school improvement agenda jointly determined by both the school and the QSIP. The two English teachers (Ms. Anna Fung and Betty Hui) are very enthusiastic and innovative in working with the SDOs to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their own classrooms.

***The English Language Teaching Scene:
Problems and Opportunities***

Hong Kong is renowned as an international city. English is predominately the medium of communication in the business and public sectors. However, English is not widely used as a medium of communication for most people in their daily life. About 98% of the citizens in Hong Kong are Chinese and most of them use a vernacular version of Chinese (e.g., Cantonese) as their “mother tongue” (Pierson, 1992). Therefore, it may be odd to learn that we do not have a truly functional language

environment for our students in Hong Kong. For most students who come from medium- to low-income families, the classroom — or more precisely, the English language classroom — is perhaps the only and sole opportunity for students to learn and practice oral English in most CMI (Chinese as the medium of instruction) schools in Hong Kong (Johnson, 1997). Indeed, it is not easy for Hong Kong students to develop the needs and the intrinsic motivation in learning English in their daily life.

In reality, all secondary students are facing the same highly challenging English Syllabus for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). It goes without saying that passing the public examination is and will become the immediate and perhaps the only target for many senior secondary students. Hence, helping their students to pass the examination becomes the core business of all English teachers in many senior secondary classrooms. It is inevitable that senior secondary English classes are highly examination-oriented. A number of shortcomings arise as lessons are not properly designed to meet the needs of the students:

1. Language skills are practiced in fragments (reading comprehension, writing, listening, school-based assessment [SBA] according to division of examination papers) in contrast to an integrated approach.
2. Lessons are heavily dependent on textbooks or publisher's materials, even at the expense of students' interest and motivation.
3. Each learning task, though written under the same theme in the format of task-based learning, may not be related to

the next task; practices lack personal meaning and process linkage.

4. The primary focus of work is on drills and checking answers to exercises, especially on examination papers commercially sold. The learners can hardly tell what they are learning or how they may live up to the standard required.
5. There is preset coverage on scheme of work in school, and the progress is strictly timed. There is little or no time or space to cater for individual attainment.

All in all, the above are only some of the factors that yield a very mechanical, boring, drill-oriented, and extrinsically motivated approach to English learning. In addition, since English is not widely practiced and used orally in students' daily communication, writing in English must be a highly demanding task for most of the secondary students. Teaching students to write in English is thus a big challenge for most English teachers in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is undergoing big changes in recent years in its senior secondary curriculum and the public assessment mechanism (e.g., Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority [CDC & HKEAA], 2007). Such changes would likely result in additional challenge which may, in time, awaken reflections on existing practices in all secondary schools. For example:

1. The New Secondary School English (NSSE) curriculum demands expanded contact with a variety of text types, whether literary or non-literary, through multi-media and with a holistic development through more flexible curriculum designs.

2. Both formative and summative assessments are required in both internal and external examinations.
3. The new approach is functional and performance-based. The original formatted drill and practices may not work effectively.
4. The learners must be motivated to learn to work on their own to meet with the level in demand.

All of the above changes represent a substantially different approach to English learning and teaching.

In addition to the changes in the educational context, there are also contextual changes specific to Flair Secondary School. In response to the call for the shift to flexible timetabling for the benefit of life-wide learning activities, the school has just changed its timetable at the beginning of the academic year 2006–2007. The length of a lesson has been changed from an originally 40 minutes to 50 or 55 minutes (depending on the specific lesson in a school-day) to become a maximum of 105-minute in a double lesson (50 + 55 minutes). At the beginning, most of the school teachers cannot adjust to the new arrangement. Specifically for the English teacher, they find that they must chunk their lessons and incorporate a much wider scope of learning activities in order not to bore their students in class time. They call this the “105-minute challenge.”

Common Targets and Shared Beliefs

There are too many pragmatic issues to address. For this collaboration, at Secondary 4 English in Flair Secondary School, teachers and SDOs have specifically pinpointed only three

critical issues to work on: (a) the challenge of motivating students to learn; (b) the challenge of effective teaching of writing; and (c) the challenge of the preparation for SBA.

Both parties agree on some beliefs as guiding principles for their teaching design. First, we believe that a communicative approach with four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) integrated cohesively would be beneficial and effective in facilitating students' learning of English. Therefore, we target at preparing classroom activities that could provide learning opportunities for the students to apply and stretch their limits. In other words, students are expected to listen actively, read carefully, speak to express meaning, and write down any meaningful ideas, words or expressions from the many classroom activities.

Secondly, we believe that students learn best in authentic situations, in learning activities that has personal meaning and significance to them, and in learning scenario that has close relevance to their life experience (Finnan, St. John, McCarthy, & Slovacek, 1996; Finnan & Swanson, 2000; Hopfenberg, Levin, & Associates, 1993; Maehr, 1984). For instance, when classroom activities are chosen around the module on "Traveling," we have decided to discard many of the textbook materials and suggested activities. It is because the travel experiences depicted (e.g., travel blog from all over the world about luxurious trips) may not be in line with the life experience of their students from families of somewhat low to middle socio-economic standing. Instead, students learn to describe their own travel experiences whether in different places of the

world or in familiar districts in Hong Kong. The class teacher sets the model as initiation activity.

Thirdly, we believe that students need to develop good learning habits and attitudes, such as do revision after each class; build confidence through cooperative learning procedures; and see the need to work hard and participate in order to contribute toward the fun in the learning process. Therefore, we include a number of interactive activities for review (e.g., the “Dictation Master” after the “Matrix Game,” “Open-book Dictation” after the teacher’s travel logs). Besides, HKCEE formats (e.g., proofreading and matching columns) are practiced through “known” contexts (e.g., teacher’s travel log, group presentations, or individual “Show & Tell”) to spiral work done.

Unit Planning and Activity Design

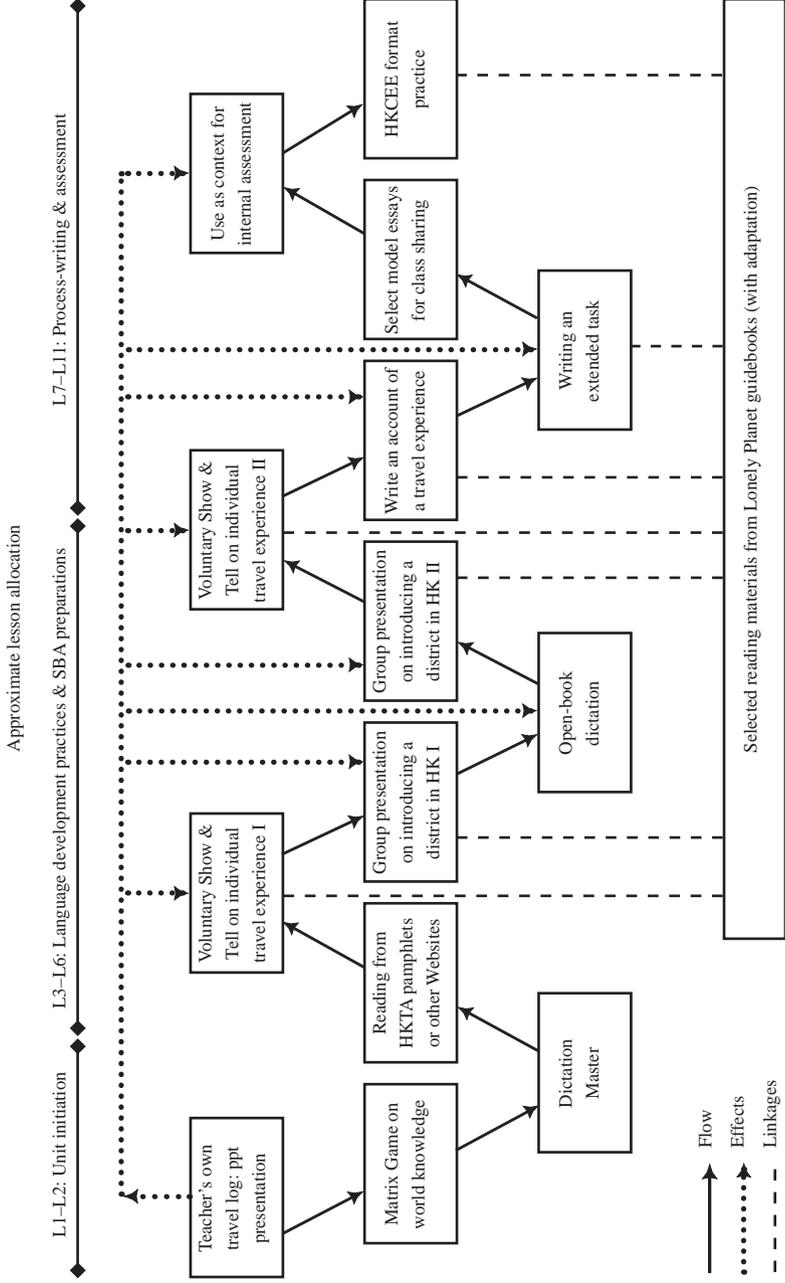
Bearing in mind the above guidelines and the general principles, we developed a unit plan as summarized in Figure 1. In brief, the unit can be broadly classified into three parts. The first part is the initiation and input, which sets the tone and direction of the whole unit. The second part consists of language development practices and SBA preparations. Revision activities and progress attainment checks are set to ensure learning. The third part deals with process-writing and assessment. The following is a brief description of the design and their objectives.

Teacher’s Sharing of Own Travel Experience

(about 30 minutes)

This is a PowerPoint presentation of teacher’s own travel

Figure 1. Unit Plan on “Traveling”: Showing the Flow and Linkages Between Learning Activities



experience. The teacher shows photos taken on the trips in different countries. The teacher also shows the class some of the collections of souvenirs. Students are requested to keep track of the teacher's presentation. They are also told that an unseen dictation based on the teacher's presentation will be conducted in the coming lessons. After the brief introductory presentation, the teacher helps the students to recapitulate the essential information. This activity aims at an attractive start to draw attention. It stimulates students to take notes to a purpose. Their note-taking gains significance in their unseen dictation that demands precision and active revision.

Matrix Game on World Knowledge (about 50 minutes)

Sets of clip art on characteristic features of several countries are prepared in advance. It is designed as a competition group game.

1. Each student receives 1–2 cards from the teacher.
2. Students work with the other members in own group to decide which of the cards received belong to the country they are designated and work out what other cards they need from the other groups.
3. Students move around to the other groups in search of the cards they need and trade with them.
4. At the end of the time limit, the teacher announces that each group should have a total of 9 cards. Any extras should be returned to the teacher.
5. The groups can ask the teacher if she has the cards they want. Claim them if correct.
6. Students sort out the cards in categories in each group.

7. The teacher compares the suggestions from the groups and writes up on the chalkboard (e.g., capital/scenic spots/food or drink/famous people/cultural activity/sport/animal).
8. The countries designated are arrayed across the chalkboard as the United Kingdom/China/Japan/Australia/France/the United States.
9. Each student receives the worksheet containing the matrix (to be filled in as each group presents their information later, see Appendix 1 Part A).
10. Each group is given a jumbled word list for reference (see Appendix 1 Part B).
11. Each group is required to present their cards and say what they know about them.

Sample of the classification grid is attached (see Appendix 1 Part C).

Voluntary Show & Tell: Students' Sharing of Their Travel Experience (2–5 minutes for each student)

Students are invited to share their travel experience. They can bring with them photos and souvenirs to facilitate their sharing. This echoes the teacher's presentation and sets the stage for sharing travel logs. Extensive reading material is abridged and distributed freely to individuals to help furnish the necessary language.

Spelling Review: "Dictation Master" (about 30 minutes)

This is a competitive exercise to revise some of the vocabulary encountered in the Matrix Game.

1. Students have to be seated in groups.
2. Each group has to make up a list of vocabulary to make other groups dictate.
3. Except the group that acts as dictation master, each of the other groups should send 1 or 2 representatives to stand in position before the chalkboard (others may displace them in case they cannot achieve within the given time limit).
4. Within the time limit (say 3 minutes), dictation masters prompt their list of words by either asking questions (e.g., “What is the capital of France?”) or giving a short narration (e.g., “It is a small animal with a hard shell ... people say they are ‘French snails’... the French eat them as a delicacy ... it is world famous for good taste ...”) and the representatives write the items on the board.
5. Dictation masters check and record score.

This activity demands students to take in an exotic list of “world” vocabulary by working deep into meaning and description. It is also a chance to work on asking questions for specific information, listening intensively and spelling accurately (Davis & Rinvolutri, 1988).

“Open-book Dictation” (about 40 minutes)

This is another dictation activity that helps to facilitate active listening and provides an exemplar on creative non-fiction writing.

1. *Pre-dictation review*: Students are allowed 2 minutes to browse through the dictation piece quietly prior to the dictation. Then the pieces are collected. The dictation piece is a student’s account of the teacher’s travel log. Sample pieces are shown in Appendix 2.

2. *Announcement* (to everyone's relief): "This is an open-book dictation. This means you may consult your notes, the dictionary, your electronic dictionary, or any other references as you see fit but you may not cheat, i.e., you may not copy from your friend's dictation work. Each will dictate into own exercise book while one of you will be called to take turns to do so on the chalkboard. Since your classmates may make mistakes, it is not advisable to copy from the chalkboard. Anyone may ask questions on spelling. If your problem coincides with the words I've highlighted on my master-copy, I'll work out the spelling with you. The focus is on accuracy on general usage. You should not worry too much about spelling of strange words because you must realize there is none."
3. The *whole class proofread works* on the chalkboard.

This is one way to encompass fear in spelling and switch the focus to accurate and responsible writing. All along students need to make their own judgments on accuracy. The proofreading at each stage helps to comb through muddles in fluency (Rinvolutri, 1984; Rinvolutri & Davis, 1995). Follow-up grammar consolidation or review exercises may be designed for consolidation (e.g., Appendix 3).

***Student Group Project: Introducing the "4 Musts"
of a Designated District in Hong Kong***
(about 8–10 minutes per group)

Students are requested to introduce a district in Hong Kong to their "Native English Teacher" (NET), Ms. K. Whittaker, who has just arrived in Hong Kong from Britain. As a simple guideline,

students are recommended to talk about the “4 Musts” (“Must Buy,” “Must Go,” “Must See,” and “Must Do”); a sample worksheet is shown in Appendix 4) in the designated district. The following six districts are selected: Mongkok, Causeway Bay, Lamma Island, Aberdeen, Shamshuipo, and Wanchai. Information sheet on the six districts collected from the Hong Kong Travel Association (HKTA) and the Lonely Planet guidebook are provided as reference materials. Students are encouraged to find additional information through field trips or Internet search.

Process-Writing (4 × 50 minutes)

Process-writing is a highly recommended approach to improve student writing by many second and foreign language researchers (e.g., Weissberg, 2006). The process adopted in this collaboration has multiple steps based on the following principles: (a) start small (e.g., describing only one picture); (b) thorough oral practice before writing; (c) gather ideas from all around through cooperative learning; (d) oral proofreading to enhance fluency and expression; (e) gradual development toward extended (examination format) tasks; (f) explicit scoring criteria and sample reference to define targets for improvement; (g) regular sharing of good works to boost morale; and (h) recycling products in designs for assessment.

The following describes the “process.” The class is requested to work on a series of 4 pictures selected from the textbook (*New Progress*, book 4A, pp. 92–93, by Dixon, Kent, Norberg, & Williams, 2006; see Appendix 5 for an authorized duplicated copy).

1. *Whole-class brainstorming on one picture*: Students are guided to read up instructions given. Focus is drawn to picture one only. Teacher writes on the chalkboard any casual sentences the class contributes. The displayed work is read aloud to invite scrutiny: “How far does it cope with the demand in the instructions read?” “What would you have done to improve it?”
2. *Individual work (1st written draft)*: Each is invited to try writing up his or her own.
3. *Sharing and evaluation for improvement*: The works are shared in groups of 4. One representative work is read aloud from each group. Teacher highlights a different aspect of achievement/fallacy from each reading. A summary on points to note is made on the chalkboard.
4. *Individual work (2nd written draft) to share*: Groups volunteer to read aloud to invite appraisal on the selected works from their classmates. Teacher explains HKCEE grading criteria and scores each performance accordingly. Teacher then reads out her own writing as a grade “A” sample with critique.
5. *Conferencing for expansion (writing to a theme)*: “With the teacher’s paragraph as a start, how would you use the rest of the given pictures to accomplish the task?” “Can you set a theme/give a title to your piece of writing?” “Why do you choose to tell on these incidents at all?” “How would you like your audience to feel?” “What do you want your audience to know reading your account of your trip to Hong Kong?”
6. *Individual attempt (3rd draft) as homework*: Teacher scores the works with comments.

7. *Sharing and error analysis*: Samples of good works are typed and shared over the school Intranet. Common errors are discussed for correction in class (Appendix 6). In addition, revision or remedial exercises could be developed based on the products students contrived from their writing assignment (Appendix 7).
8. *Trying out an examination task*: In order to enhance confidence in skills learned for open-examination, some sample questions on this theme is collected for the students. They may try out and hand in to the teacher for scoring and discussion in their own free time.

***Selected Reading Materials from Lonely Planet Guidebook
(With Adaptation)***

Reading materials are selected from Lonely Planet travel guidebook to enrich students' exposure to various text-types (e.g., Wheeler, 1995). Some sample pieces with adaptation are included as references (see Appendix 8). They are selected based on the following criteria: (a) simple English; (b) short and sweet (maximum length: one A4 page); (c) travel guide/log pertaining special point of view or interests, e.g., "Travel with children" written by parents who travel with infants/toddlers or teenagers, accounts written by young travelers of 12- to 14-year-olds to enhance empathy, affordable trips made in automobiles, trains, caravans and/or as backpackers, etc.; (d) motivating readers to proofread for reliability on the information provided about Hong Kong; and (e) providing contrastive views on the same destinations visited to enhance contents of individual presentations.

Putting the Plan into Practice in the Classroom

In addition to the collaboration in unit and lesson planning, the school teachers and SDOs also worked together to carry out their plan in the classroom. The school teachers were responsible for the execution of the plan, with special attention to: (a) arouse interest and motivation; (b) initiate students' own research for presentations; (c) revise and consolidate vocabulary, contexts, information contrived during the course of development; (d) train some examination formats (e.g., proofreading, matching columns) in known contexts; and (e) train reading for information in SBA format. At the same time, the SDOs were invited to: (a) observe lessons; (b) give feedback from class observations; (c) share in class teaching; (d) suggest resource reading; and (e) design attainment checks. The collaboration lasted for 11 periods over the spread of 9 school days.

Appendix 9 gives brief field records of the progress in the 4A class (the high-ability class) in this collaboration. In short, the lessons were conducted very smoothly and gracefully by Ms. Anna Fung. The performance of the students was extraordinarily good and the learning outcomes — to the astonishment of the teachers and SDOs — were even better than originally expected. Indeed, the students shared similar feelings when they were asked to share their views on these “experimental lessons.” The followings are some of the accounts written by the students (direct quotations, spelling and grammatical mistakes were not corrected):

This week, I think the English lessons are especially funny and interesting. Students in class can work in groups and try to

speak more English. The group work is also meaningful because everyone has a chance to give out ideas and present in class. This is useful for improving our oral skills.

In my opinion, students working in a group is better than doing composition and listening. It is because students can enjoy the lessons easily and they will not feel bored in the lesson. My friend, Alice, she also agrees with this because she can say more crazy things and learn more from the discussion. I think most of the students, including me, like this kind of teaching method. (Student 1)

This week I felt very happy, because in the English lesson was very funny. Ms. Fung you are so cute, I think this week the English lesson is the most funny in F4. I never try the dictation like that, it is very special and funny. This week is very happy, because we do not need to do composition and listening. In this Friday, I can't see you and have the English lesson with you (note: the original class teacher has to go out for a workshop on the Friday), I will feel very lonely and sad. I am very enjoy the English lesson. During the discussion and presentation, I can improve my speaking. This week I play less online game than the past, because I start to do my revision. I try to be serious in my studies. (Student 2)

We got some special English this week, the whole week was fun and I've learn many new thing such as, the places around the world, the structure of a sentence etc. Those things are that I didn't learn, or even not seen before. Also, the DV recording our lesson made me feel uncomfortable, but it made me use more simple English to talk with my friends. Although my ideas cannot express clearly to them, all of us got the same problem. So I'll try more and learn more until I can do so. (Student 3)

From the above accounts, we learn that students loved the class because there were lots of fun and enjoyable moments. They enjoyed cooperative learning because there were more opportunities for class and group interactions. They enjoyed most of the teaching activities because these teaching activities created genuine needs for active communication. We concluded that the design had worked very successfully in this case. Furthermore, the SDOs learned that Ms. Anna Fung's very gentle, relaxed, elegant, encouraging, and charming style was highly inductive to successful practice.

The progress in the less able class (4B) was close to that of the high-ability class. Ms. Betty Hui is dynamic, energetic, assertive, supportive, and hard-working. She has successfully conveyed her high expectations and demands on her students. She conducted the lessons very smoothly. Although the students were less proficient in English language, they worked sufficiently hard in all the activities. They spent hours (up to 4) preparing for their group presentations and everyone had his or her presentation account written in full for their oral work. The students also worked hard to prepare for the "Dictation Master" and the "Open-book Dictation" and they performed better than expected. Basically, the less able class shared the same learning activities as the high-ability class although with adaptation in ability level and lesson pacing. Alternatively, 4B class chose to skip or cut short on "Voluntary Show & Tell" and the free choice of "Writing an extended task of a self-selected travel destination." We all understood that such adaptations were necessary and appropriate.

The class teacher also adjusted her teaching strategies

by providing additional support and guidance. Specifically, Ms. Betty Hui paid more attention to students' deficiency in vocabulary and sentence structure. Students were more than willing to learn; they regularly jotted down notes from the board, underlined the strange words in the information sheet from HKTA, and so on. During the group preparation time, the students were constantly asking each other (as well as the class teacher and the SDO) questions such as "How to spell the word souvenir?" and "How to say ... in English?". It was obvious that the learning activities had stimulated their appetite to learn, but the students mostly lacked courage in speaking out in public. They fell short of language skills and strategies (such as looking up new words in dictionaries). They tended to read out from written accounts in very low volume. The teacher tends to help facilitate students' presentations by correcting their pronunciation and grammatical mistakes in a very explicit way. Such practice works very well for the more able students. However, for the less able students, the strategy does not work equally well. It appeared that the explicit feedback behaviors have generated some negative side effects on students' learning. The students were conscious in avoiding mistakes by using short phrases or broken sentences in voices hardly audible. After observing all group presentations, the post-lesson evaluation sessions brought up factors that had come into play: (a) the students were not confident in their English proficiency; (b) some of them seemed to have a "fear of failure" performance goal orientation (Elliot & Covington, 2001; Elliot & Sheldon, 1997); and (c) the teacher's explicit corrective feedback behaviors made the students feel even more nervous and hesitant to speak aloud in front of the class (a class structure

that focuses on “accuracy” had highlighted the salience of “ability” rather than “effort” in learning). In all, the students were not too willing to express themselves freely in front of the class in order to avoid exposing their weakness in ability (Covington, 1984, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1985).

Both the class teacher and SDOs were keen to change this situation. In subsequent lessons (Lessons 9 to 11), we purposefully turned the classroom into a more encouraging learning environment by employing a number of motivational and teaching strategies. We worked along two directions. First, we emphasized a “learning goal orientation” in classroom learning such that “self-improvement,” “mastery of new tasks,” and the “salience of effort” were highlighted (Ames, 1992a, 1992b; Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Second, we shifted our focus from “emphasizing accuracy” to “emphasizing fluency and participation” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Specifically, we had the following guidelines in mind and practiced what we thought: (a) emphasizing that everyone could improve from one’s baseline by hard-work; (b) demonstrating the contingency between effort and learning outcomes; (c) praising students’ effort rather than ability; (d) employing a wider range of corrective feedback behaviors (such as recast and paraphrase) according to the contexts and focus of the learning objectives (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Oliver & Mackey, 2003); (e) conveying the message that “making mistakes is part of the learning process” and everyone makes mistakes but “we can learn from our mistakes”; and (f) explaining that speaking aloud is very important in language learning and requesting our students to do so as a common act of courtesy.

The preliminary outlook was very promising. It appeared that the students were much more comfortable to express themselves and speak a little louder in the latter part of our collaboration.

Results and Discussion

We set off by posing three critical questions in teaching English in Hong Kong: (a) how to enhance students' interest and motivation in learning English; (b) how to develop students' ability in writing; and (c) how to prepare students' readiness for the SBA. We have learned a number of ideas in our empirical study.

Enhancing Students' Interest and Motivation in Learning English

Several themes have crystallized in motivating students to learn in this collaboration: (a) creating a lively classroom environment by providing meaningful and challenging learning activities and an encouraging learning atmosphere; (b) encouraging students to put effort to their work by conveying expectations and demonstrating the contingency between effort and outcomes; and (c) heightening language awareness and active participation in learning through spiraling.

The creation of a lively classroom environment that encourages English learning is a major focus of this empirical study. We learn that the nature and quality of the learning activities is one of the most critical determinants of effective learning. Learning activities that (a) matches the ability level of

the students; (b) have a personal meaning to the students; (c) relevant to students' life experience; and (d) extends students' understanding and ability would likely enhance students' motivation to learn and their involvement in classroom activities (Brophy, 1987a, 1987b, 1999). To our best knowledge, we designed our learning activities according to the above guidelines and the results are very positive and encouraging.

For example, in the introductory lesson on the theme of traveling, the teachers began with a sharing of their own travel experiences. This particular activity provided a "personal touch" and satisfied students' curiosity about their teachers. Students listened very attentively and actively to seek information and understanding. The follow-up recapitulation exercise showed complete success. No key information in the teachers' sharing fell from their attention.

After the introductory sharing activity, students were stimulated to look into their own repertoire on world knowledge (the "Matrix Game"). They were challenged to work out the uncertainties in classification through group sharing and cooperation based on the available information in the clip art. All the students enjoyed the problem-solving process. Then, students in each group were requested to prepare a brief introduction of the country their group was put in charge of. The students worked collaboratively to help each other gather meaningful substance from all available resources around. In fact, even the most withdrawn popped up to ask for information. And, since each group was responsible for a different country, students would not be bored by simple repetitions. Every student

had a chance to tell a unique and special feature about the target country and made his or her specific contribution in class. Everyone in the audience was kept busy in putting down information on their individual worksheets. All the activities (teacher's sharing, recapitulation, group game, group presentation, and individual work) were closely linked to the next, so the activities ran on very smoothly and purposefully. The two double periods of 105 minutes each were full of fun, laughter and total engagement. The products and student performances were much better than expected.

The above account not only demonstrates the importance of quality learning activities design in the classroom, it also highlights the importance of the delivery skills of the teacher. Both teachers were able to visualize the classroom proceedings during the making of the design and adapt classroom instructions according to the needs of their own specific groups. Anna tends to break long instructions into stages. She demonstrates rather than gives verbal instructions. Complicated stages developed smoothly as integral parts of a successive process. More was done instead of told. Betty tends to explicitly demand standard of performance. This alerts students to work with higher degree of concentration. Since students generally have short attention span, the brisk but sustainable variations in learning activities and teaching strategies became crucial. All in all, the "105-minute challenge" had become a necessity and a blessing for both teachers and students rather than their initial threat.

In addition to the careful design of learning activities and

the smooth transition of learning activities, we learned that the creation of a non-threatening and accommodating classroom is also very important in helping students to use and learn English. According to our field observations, we noticed that some students, especially those weaker ones, were unwilling to speak aloud in English. It was not because they did not have anything to say but predominantly because they fear exposing their own inadequacy. It seemed that the situation was even worsened with the teacher being too eager to correct and teach. Instead of pinpointing the specific mistakes, we learned just to rephrase students' utterances in correct forms as if they were their own production. And in cases where students could not make out what to do, we attempted to dig into their mind in order to help them express. This shift of strategies on emphasizing "meaning" rather than "accuracy" seemed to work very well. It appears that students began to realize the actual kind of language in demand, so they are more than willing to pick up in successive repetitions. They tend to relish the process and claim that they have learned more than ever before. They appreciate the teacher's partnership or facilitator role better than an instructor.

Encouraging students to put effort in their work is definitely very important in learning. We learn that the teacher cannot simply tell students to do so. The teacher needs to: (a) convey the message tactfully; (b) demonstrate the contingency of effort and the possible outcomes; and (c) pinpoint the pathways from here to there.

Unlike many content-bound academic subjects such as

history or chemistry, the English language subject sees no clear boundary on what must be learned at each academic level. Facing this seemingly curriculum-free but skill-oriented nature of the English subject, students can easily feel loose and lost. Students may not know what to revise and learn, even for public examinations. Some may have a strong desire to improve, yet they may not know how to invest their time and effort. Therefore, incentives for students to work hard must come from their daily sense of involvement and the achievement they reap in each lesson. Helping students to develop metacognitive awareness in their learning process furnishes ways for self-improvement. These two components are critical in developing students into active learners on their own.

The full attention of students in the writing lesson when the teacher revealed how markers score worked pieces based on samples taken from class work showed how fervently students need explicit criteria through examples. Perhaps a scenario in the classroom would help to demonstrate the argument more clearly.

In the writing conference on students' first draft of their essays in Lesson 7 in Class 4A, samples of writing in different qualities were shared and illustrated. The ones that failed to communicate meaning and were hardly understandable to the examiners would be classified into the "failed" group in the HKCEE. The ones that were able to communicate meaning barely but bearing mistakes would be classified into the "passed" group. And the ones that were able to communicate meaning properly and had interesting "twists and turns" to demonstrate

“presence” or “role to task” would be classified into the “outstanding” group (Grade “C” or above in HKCEE). The students then had a clear picture of the targets. And more importantly, the teacher further demonstrated how a piece of “passed” essay could be enriched and upgraded to an “outstanding” category through peer/group editing and whole-class conferencing. Furthermore, a student was invited to read aloud her essay that would likely deserve an above-average grading in the HKCEE. And most impressively, the teacher shared her own piece of writing on the same topic that would probably deserve an “A.” This “modeling writing through writing” had a great impact on all students. The students were then invited to discuss the apparent differences and they were encouraged to work from a “pass” to “credit” in subsequent drafts. We noticed that they were totally absorbed when they were requested to improve in this way.

The above scenario tells a lot in ways toward motivating students to learn. It conveys teacher’s expectations and the directions and methods that the students could work on. And most importantly, it establishes the contingency between effort and the possible outcomes in their works. Students would more likely invest their time and effort in their learning when they understand the causal linkage between effort and outcomes (Weiner, 1986, 1994).

In order to help students to achieve, interfering factors can be eliminated to heighten language awareness and active participation. For example, in “Open-book Dictation,” students realized that good writing involves much more than just correct

spelling. It heightens awareness on contextual clues and cohesive links. The fact that they were allowed to take reference of any available resources provided a fresh impact and eliminated their regular fear in spelling difficult vocabulary. The attention and concentration students showed on the dictation piece made it a good chance for students to read, with intensity, an exemplar for the writing work to come. The “presence” of the student is made conspicuous. As students dictate, they read with empathy the way one classmate reacted toward the teacher’s presentation and felt curious about the teacher’s personality and preferences. Besides, the constant demand to decide on what is correct clearly stretched their limits. The follow-up proofreading is non-threatening but functions to clear “muddles” not brought to the surface before. The design encourages active listening and the employment of learning strategies such as note-taking, questioning for clarification, transformation of information, and a total awareness in terms of phonics, syntax and linguistics. Above all, it demands full confidence to stand up to pronounce corrections (with good reasons) on any error detected.

Based on students’ common mistakes, proofreading exercises were developed for students to consolidate grammar points as take-home assignment and/or assessment (see Appendixes 6 and 7). We believe that by highlighting learning points in this way, individuals may learn to tackle their own problematic areas and continue to find ways to learn for success. The emphasis placed on the linkage among different learning activities and the recursive use of some of the points learned did help to convey our expectations in performance standards.

Improving Students' Ability in Writing: Developing Ideas and Sharpening Writing Skills Through Class and Peer Sharing and Teacher Demonstrations

Teaching writing is one of the most challenging tasks to English teachers. In general, students are not particularly interested in writing in English and have very limited ideas in their English writings. Probably this is the result of extended frustration felt with the repeated sense of failure in seeing their works returned covered in red ink and discouraging grades/comments. For most secondary students, they find great difficulties in formulating ideas in writing, and even though they have got something to say they may find difficulties in expressing their ideas effectively and clearly in English. So we have to tackle two immediate issues: help students (a) to develop ideas and create a need to write; and (b) to express their ideas properly in good English (Calkins, 1986).

In teaching writing in English, we have the following beliefs in mind: (a) it takes more than one attempt for a piece of writing to “mature”; (b) most students need support in ideas for content and use of language throughout the process; (c) sometimes the teacher needs to write along with the students in order to show how ideas work out on paper.

Strategically, we need to explore students' minds and help them develop ideas for their writings. We argue that writing is not totally a quiet and individual mental exercise. We believe that students could learn ideas and sentence structures through class or group interaction. With teacher and peer support, they

could also learn from their mistakes and improve their writing through editing and revising the various versions of their drafts (Tompkins, 2000). In addition, we also argue that classroom writing is much more than a “practice in writing.” It is a learning process when students can mindfully manipulate whatever they have learned to serve their specific expression. In other words, it is a synthesis of all skills. Adopting an integrated approach to teaching of writing, we develop strategies alongside our observation of students’ needs and worries. Perhaps an account of the process in one of the classrooms shows the insights we have gained.

The lesson (4A, lesson 7) started with the free-wheeled product from the whole-class brainstorming in the previous lesson:

The sky rained. My cousin was disappoint. A long stair near the Big Buddha on Lantau. Alice has her umbrella. She is climbing the stair. Natalie did not have umbrella.

This came within the last 15 minutes at the end of the day. The class was keen to pack off and go. Hence, the teacher had to pick it up in the following meeting. She pronounced this as a grade “3” (out of a maximum score of 9) according to HKCEE standard because despite errors, it is comprehensible. Most of the “content” has been explicit. Yet, it is still regarded a “failure” because it does not care to address the instruction: “Your cousin wants you to help her write a blog entry describing her visit to Hong Kong.”

The teacher invited the class to query their first attempt in the light of the following questions:

Who is “your cousin”?

Are you “Alice” or “Natalie”?

Why did they still go for the Giant Buddha when it was raining?

If they had known it would rain, they would have brought their umbrella. Why hadn’t Natalie?

What would have made them walk at such a great distance apart up the flight of steps?

Would something have happened before and after this picture?

Who could have taken this picture? Why?

The whole class began buzzing into discussion (in Cantonese, of course!). The teacher sensed that some students were teeming with ideas while others might still be at a loss. She provided a performance platform to invite concerted class effort:

“Radio 4A” opens: (Teacher holds up 10 fingers.) Within the silent count of 10, someone must contribute one sentence to keep the radio open. Otherwise, an undesirable lapse of silence will collapse the station for good. Yet, each contribution must hook on to the preceding ones as if we are all working in one voice with one brain. Otherwise, our radio audience will protest and we’ll be in trouble.

It was encouraging to see active participation from everyone around. Though mistakes appeared here and there, there were self-corrections. (At points, the teacher reiterated the student’s contribution with corrections and improvements but demanded a recapitulation by the contributor to ensure that her points had

come through. This endeavor “returns” the ownership of the contribution to the student.) In order not to interrupt the line of thinking and encourage active listening, there was no writing on the chalkboard at this point.

At the end of the contrivance, all clapped to celebrate a pause when the teacher’s fingers came down. Yet, anyone who had not contributed any statement so far was kept standing until each could recapitulate at least one sentence from memory or make a fresh contribution. New “twists and turns” arose in this round. Students began to see how improvements could be made with more serious thinking.

The whole class enjoyed the excitement and helped each other out during the entire process. Their common “enemy” was no one but time and/or their own shyness/forgetfulness. The teacher was always there to eradicate errors and demand oral corrections/improvements. Still, no writing down was allowed.

When each settled down to write their own again, everyone felt engaged and empowered because at least once, each had contributed to their concerted success. By the same token, every bit of writing was thoroughly practiced orally either as a whole class or in groups, or their individual drafts having been shared, commented and improved after several readings among their peers.

Even with the more needy class 4B (Lessons 10–11), the product from the “Radio” effort was most encouraging:

[The first few sentences were given by the teacher as a lead to the story: I came to HK for the first time last summer. My cousin Bonnie lives in HK. She had promised to show me around the top attractions. On the first day, we visited the Giant Buddha.]

When I saw the long flight of steps, I almost passed out. Then it began to rain. Bonnie ran down to the shops for an umbrella. But, when we opened it, we saw a big hole in it. How terrible! Then we saw a group of monks. They had no umbrella. They were walking up. They were walking without any umbrella. They looked so cute that we decided to follow them. Suddenly the rain stopped. A rainbow appeared. We took a lot of photos with the monks, the rainbow and the Giant Buddha. I think they were the best photos we had on this trip ... (about 100 words)

We found great improvement in this small piece of class product, for example:

1. It has become much longer.
2. “Roles” become clearly defined; i.e. “I” is the visitor, “my cousin” is Bonnie who lives in Hong Kong.
3. My “presence” is clearly stated from the start (“*I came to HK for the first time. My cousin ... show me around ...*”).
4. Interesting reflection of genuine feeling (“*When I saw ..., I almost passed out....*”).
5. Clever explanation for the wide gap between “I” and “my cousin” along the steps to the Buddha (“*... ran down ... for an umbrella.*”).

6. Excellent imaginative ideas added to the picture, seeing beyond what's shown (“... *saw a big hole in it... a group of monks ... walking without any umbrella ... rain stopped ... rainbow appeared ... took a lot of photos ... the best photos ...*”).
7. Youthful exuberance expressed with a touch of humor (“... *so cute ... we decided to follow them.*”), i.e., giving up our disappointment to pursue peace of mind in adversity.
8. Great deal of meaning expressed for including this description in the account required; able to sustain “purpose” and “role” throughout.

The “monk” and “rainbow” idea went into everyone’s final version. It goes to show how they all treasured the great spark. We had stipulated that they needed to run on only for about 200 words more. Eventually, some came up to over 400 because they had so much to make out of all the 4 pictures. Some ideas were repeated. Most had new ideas of their own. Despite problems they might have with language, all ideas were “comprehensible” and “sensible,” hence they all deserved a fair “pass” or above. They got so used to “sharing” that they dashed into passing works around immediately when they received the marked scripts from their teachers. There were real causes for celebration, indeed.

Preparing Students’ Readiness for School-based Assessment (SBA)

From 2007, an SBA component would be included in the HKCEE English language examination as well as the proposed NSSE examination (Curriculum Development Council [CDC], 1999;

CDC & HKEAA, 2007). The HKCEE SBA component consists of a reading/viewing program where students read/view four texts (“texts” encompass print, video/film, fiction and non-fiction material) over the course of two years, keep a logbook of comments and personal reflections, and then take part in a discussion with classmates on what they have read/viewed. Students will also be required to make an individual presentation on the books/videos/films that they have read/viewed, and respond to questions from their teacher, which will be derived from the student’s written notes/personal responses/comments in their logbook. The assessment will be based on the student’s oral performance; that is, the reading/viewing/writing will only serve as the means to this end and the specific content of the texts will not be directly assessed (CDC, 2007).

The newly added SBA component in HKCEE examination has generated a number of new issues in the teaching and learning of English. “How should I incorporate a reading component in my scheme of work?” “How should I prepare my students for SBA?” “Should SBA lessons be set aside in the class timetabling?” “Should I ask students to buy SBA learning kits?” These are some of the frequently asked questions. Though we did not have sufficient time to address many of these issues in this collaboration, we did come up with some ideas on how to prepare students’ readiness for SBA.

The basic tenet in SBA is to guarantee that students have read a sufficiently wide range of materials to improve the substance and practice in oral presentation over the course of two years. Looking into the “communicative” classroom where

the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) are integrated, students are always required to listen actively, read thoughtfully, write purposefully, and speak expressively. It can be seen that the essential ingredients in SBA are implicitly incorporated into every lesson. Students are provided with as many opportunities to do oral presentation and reading practice as possible. In our lessons, we purposely designed the learning activities to provide additional challenges and opportunities for the students to share their experiences and exhibit their learning in an enjoyable approach. Hence, even when examination-oriented tasks were set, they were not felt. For example, students were encouraged to gather ideas (including reading up presentation) in the “Matrix Game,” “Introducing a district in Hong Kong,” “Process-writing,” and “Voluntary Show & Tell.” We also emphasized the importance of teacher input in learning; for example, the “Teacher’s Sharing” set up a learning model for oral presentation. It seems that every class learning activity is geared to the SBA training. But in fact it appears that all the learning activities are just something interesting and enjoyable. We believe that teaching and learning English like this recursively in every unit would undoubtedly improve the overall English ability of our students without explicit deliberation on examination drills.

Indeed, in this collaboration, we have the privilege to record some of the students’ presentations in the “Introducing a district in Hong Kong” and “Voluntary Show & Tell” in the 4A class for purposes of lesson study. We have reviewed the tapes on “Introducing a district in Hong Kong” with the class and analyzed their performance. In that activity, students were

requested to introduce a district in Hong Kong to their adorable and newly arrived NET. In general, they did reasonably well with respect to “Pronunciation and Delivery” and “Vocabulary and Language Pattern,” very funny and enjoyable (very relaxed and willing) in “Communication Strategies,” and very inspiring and sound in “Ideas and Organization.” We attributed their success to their hard work and positive learning attitudes. There was also a strong desire to tell their NET something off their own interest and background. The students prepared their presentation through reading text information from HKTA as well as viewing non-text information through Internet browsing. Again, we learn that once the students are getting involved in their learning, reading for information is not a big problem at all.

Seven students in the 4A class have volunteered for the “Voluntary Show & Tell.” They are the able students in the class. Their presentations are wonderful in terms of content and presentation skills. They specifically picked up some interesting episodes in their travel experiences and tried to present their ideas around a theme such as “The Lives of Beijing People,” “My Home-Stay-Trip in New Zealand,” etc. Since every account is unique and voluntary, when coupled with their facial expressions, gestures, intonations, they became exemplary. Some of them had successfully made their class burst into laughter (Appendix 9, Lessons 3 to 6 and 9). We have seen students soar toward excellence (both in speaking and writing) when they have “words to say” and “a drive to tell.” We can fairly rate their performance around level 3 to 5 according to the marking guidelines for SBA. We celebrated their great

improvement with the whole class. We were also very happy to see that they had set up very good role model for the class. As an extension and enrichment in learning, we recommended the class to read the travel experiences from some adapted articles selected from the Lonely Planet guidebook. These articles are worth reading because they have provided very interesting and distinctive travel accounts from diverse perspectives in places visited.

Time permitting, Lonely Planet guide materials could be shared first as reading/viewing instructions toward data collection. In contrast to students' personal experiences, there will be more in-depth vision to enhance content of presentations. Customarily, students read passively to be "told." In SBA, students are required to read "actively" to react. It is only through integrating the SBA component in our thematic teaching and learning that substance and content can be added to our "skills" program.

A number of ideas on SBA have become clear at the end of our collaboration. We see no reason for "drilling" or "special training" if oral presentation is treated as an integral part of all English language lessons. We may need to spend some time to help our students become familiar with the assessment format, but it is absolutely unnecessary to "separate" SBA as independent examination practice. We see the need to incorporate SBA as a reading program for Secondary 4–5 in order to broaden students' exposure and learning experiences. But we see no need to ask students to spend money and time on any of the learning kits on SBA. Again, we argue that the reading/viewing

materials (texts/videos/films, fiction/non-fiction) should be part of English teaching and learning resources and form an integral part of every unit plan.

Conclusion

In this collaboration between class teachers and SDOs to improve the quality of teaching and learning of English in the secondary classroom, we have adopted a communicative approach with the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) integrated and experimented a number of different teaching strategies. We found that the communicative approach works very well in both the high- and low-ability classes. However, there are learner-by-context interactions that students in the low-ability class need a more encouraging, supportive, and non-threatening learning environment in order to fully capitalize their potential than their counterparts in the high-ability class. We learned that our unit design which focuses on the provision of meaningful and challenging learning activities works very successfully in motivating students to learn. In addition, the demonstration of the contingency between effort and learning outcomes serves very well in encouraging students to put additional effort to their work.

We have spent several lessons on process-writing and the learning outcomes are amazingly good. It is almost unbelievable that some students can make such a great leap forward in their writing once they have discovered that they “have words to say” from within. For these students, of course, there is still long way to go and they need much more support from their teacher and classmates in order to work up to the standard

required. Nevertheless, they have found the right track to move forward.

Even though we did not have sufficient time to address all aspects in SBA, we did find that an integrated thematic design works very nicely with the essential requirements of reading/viewing input to subsequent writing/speaking output for SBA. We have a strong belief that our approach, ideas, and experiences in this collaboration would help our students to cope with the new challenges of HKDSE very successfully in the long run. Indeed, we did find some preliminary empirical support for our arguments in reviewing some of the lessons recorded during our collaboration.

In all, we have ample evidences in support of our claim of the accomplishment in our initial targets: (a) motivating students to learn; (b) improving students' ability to write; and (c) preparing students' readiness for SBA. Finally, we have to say that it is also a very nice learning experience for both the class teachers and SDOs. We do learn a lot mutually. Teachers reported that they had never tried such dictation ideas ("Dictation Master" and "Open Book Dictation") before and the results were amazing not only because of the fresh impact but more of the insight into interferences and problems student endure. They were also shocked to learn that students' ability to write can improve so dramatically within several lessons. Alternatively, the SDOs have learned from the class teachers how to tackle the backbone of each unit plan, and how to adapt it flexibly to meet the needs of different learners or the personal style and characteristics of each teacher. Both the

class teachers and SDOs have demonstrated professionally how to make choices and take responsibilities for effective teaching. It is important that teachers and SDOs should take sufficient considerations of the learners' characteristics and the classroom contexts in order to maximize the gains. Both the class teachers and SDOs have inspired each other to broaden their understanding on the importance of "flexibility" and "adaptability" in classroom teaching and learning. They all learn to take New Senior Secondary Curriculum as an opportunity more than a threat to overhaul grievances that had haunted the profession too steadfastly and too long.

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Appendix 1

Matrix Game on World Knowledge

Part A: Vocabulary List for Students' Reference

- Louvre Museum
- Mississippi River
- Great Barrier Reef
- Golden Temple
- Chairman Mao
- Kangaroo
- French President Chirac
- Niagara Fall
- Washington DC
- Eiffel Tower
- Tap dance
- River Thames
- Statue of Liberty
- Rooster
- Crane
- Hawk
- Tokyo
- Miss Universe 2004
- Princess Masako
- Hamburger
- Yellow River
- Fashion design
- The Forbidden City
- Ayers Rocks
- Scottish bag-pipe & kilts
- Geisha
- David Beckham
- Stonehenge
- Peking Opera
- Football
- Versailles Palace
- Fish & chips
- Lion
- Mt. Fuji
- Sushi
- President George Bush
- Sumo wrestling
- Canberra
- Bungee jump
- Peking duck
- Tokyo Tower
- The Great Wall
- Sydney Opera House
- Surfing
- Escargot
- Big Ben
- Yachting
- Kungfu
- Beijing
- Paris
- London
- Panda
- Lobster
- NBA

Part B: Classification Grid (Student Worksheet)

	United Kingdom	China	Japan	Australia	France	United States
Capital						
Scenic spot(s)						
Food/drink						
Famous people						
Cultural activity						
Sport						
Animal						

Part C: Classification Grid (Teacher Reference)

	United Kingdom	China	Japan	Australia	France	United States
Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> London 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beijing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tokyo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canberra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paris 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Washington DC
Scenic spot(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Ben Stonehenge River Thames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Great Wall The Forbidden City Yellow River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Golden Temple Mt. Fuji Tokyo Tower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sydney Opera House Ayers Rocks Great Barrier Reef 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eiffel Tower Louvre Museum Versailles Palace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niagara Fall Statue of Liberty Mississippi River
Food/drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish & chips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peking duck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sushi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escargot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamburger
Famous people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Beckham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman Mao 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Princess Masako 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miss Universe 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French President Chirac 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President George Bush
Cultural activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish bagpipe & kilts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peking Opera 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geisha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bungee jump 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fashion design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tap dance
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kungfu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sumo wrestling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surfing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yachting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NBA
Animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kangaroo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rooster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawk

Suggested follow-up:

1. A choice of group presentations at completion of the matrix.
2. Celebrate and learn vocabulary from the set-up (for a spelling contest next lesson).
3. Map the countries and capitals (mountains/rivers) on an outline map of the world.

Appendix 2

Teacher's Travel Account for Open-book Dictation

Dictation Piece 1* (4A class)

Today Ms. Fung shared her travel experience in class. I think I got to know her better for it.

Like all hard-working teachers in Hong Kong, she thinks she needs to go away in the holidays in order to relax and recharge. I think she must be a family girl. In 2003 when the SARS outbreak lowered air-fares, she took her family of 6 to England. Still, I thought it must have cost her a fortune to do that.

When she was on her own, she went through France with 3 of her best friends on a bus tour. Just imagine, she had to cook, wash and work hard all the way. Yet, she said she liked it better than any of those package tours because she hates dining with strangers. I wonder who the other "strangers" were on that tour bus with her!

She looks young and wild in her photos. She went cycling in Lake District and hurt herself in an accident. I just can't imagine Ms. Fung doing that in Hong Kong! She even visited a wild-life safari park in South Africa. I think it must have been terribly expensive trying the meat of the Big Fives in the restaurants there. However, "Meat is meat," She told us, "there's nothing special to it!" She must be a big spender. She told us she even bought a diamond ring as souvenir from South Africa!

It must be fun traveling around the world like that. I want to be able to do the same some day and share my own experience too.

Dictation Piece 2* (4B class)

Our English teacher, Ms. Hui gave us a surprise by sharing her travel experiences with us last Friday. I really enjoyed looking at the pictures she showed us.

She's been to Japan, Taiwan and Australia in the past three years and the place that impressed me most was Japan. She visited a Japanese temple where she looked so cute standing in front of a giant straw slipper. She also took a ride on Neko Bus in a shopping arcade. I suppose it is the Japanese name of the famous Cat Bus which is actually a character in the film "Totolo." Am I right? It would be very interesting to sit in the midst of all funny cartoon characters! I really love to do so! Again, Ms. Hui smiled lovely in the picture.

We wondered whether she had gone to Japan on her own. Oh, no! She was holding TWO umbrellas and we are sure that there had been someone with her on the tour. Of course, she was too shy to admit that. She showed us the magnificent Tokyo Tower in which she took a bird's eye view of this fascinating city. I think Tokyo Tower is like the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Don't you think so?

* *The dictation piece is cut into meaningful phrases/clauses to make sure everyone had a go on the chalkboard.*

Appendix 3

Teacher's Own Travel Log as Context for Internal Assessment (Examples)

Exercise 1 (With Suggested Answers)

Proofread the following and correct the mistakes.

Ms. Hui's Travel Log

Our English teacher, Ms. Hui gave us a surprise by sharing his travel experiences
(her)
with us last Friday. I really enjoyed look at the pictures she showed us. She's been to
(looking)
Japan, Taiwan and Australia in the past three years and the place that suppressed me most
(impressed)
was Japan. She visited a Japanese temples where she looked so cute standing in front
(temple)
of a giant straw slipper. She also took a ride on Neko Bus in a shopping RK.
(arcade)
I suppost it is the Japanese name of the famous Cat Bus which is actually a character in
(suppose)
the film "Totolo." Am I write? It would be very interesting to sit in the midst of all
(right)
funny cartoon characters! I really love to do so! Again, Ms. Hui smiled lovly in the
(lovely)
picture. We wondered weather she had gone to Japan on her own. Oh, no! She was
(whether)
holding TWO umbrellas an we are sure that there had been someone with her on the
(and)
tour. Of cause, she was too shy to admit that. She showed us the magnificent Tokyo
(course)
Tour in which she took a bird's eye view of this fascinating city. I think Tokyo Tower
(Tower)
(think)
is like the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Don't you thing so?

Exercise 2 (With Suggested Answers)

The following is the travel log of Ms. Hui. There is ONE mistake in each line. Your teacher has underlined the mistakes and has put some correction symbols to help you.

W = choice of word or part of speech

N = number

T = tense

S = spelling

^ = missing word

Ms. Hui's Travel Log

W (her)

Our English teacher, Ms. Hui gave us a surprise by sharing his travel experiences
S (Friday)

with us last Five day. I really enjoyed looking at the pictures she showed us. She's
N (years)

been to Japan, Taiwan and Australia in the past three year and the place that impressed me
^ (a)

most was Japan. She visited Japanese temple where she looked so cute standing in
T (took)

front of a giant straw slipper. She also takes a ride on Neko Bus in a shopping arcade.
W (of)

I suppose it is the Japanese name at the famous Cat Bus which is actually a character
S (right)

in the film "Totolo." Am I write? It would be very interesting to sit in the midst of all
W (funny)

fun cartoon characters! I really love to do so! Again, Ms. Hui smiled lovely in the
S (whether)

picture. We wondered weather she had gone to Japan on her own. Oh, no! She was
N (umbrellas)

holding TWO umbrella and we are sure that there had been someone with her on the
T (showed)

tour. Of course, she was too shy to admit that. She show us the magnificent Tokyo
W (which)

Tower in that she took a bird's eye view of this fascinating city. I think Tokyo Tower
^ (is)

like the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Don't you think so?

Appendix 4

Activity Guidelines for Students' Group Project: Introducing a Designated District in Hong Kong

Group Discussion

Situation

Our new English teacher, Ms. Whittaker, does not know much about Hong Kong. This is her first year teaching in Hong Kong. She would like to know more about the city. Work in groups and introduce a district in Hong Kong to Ms. Whittaker. You may like to talk about:

- What must she see in the district?
- What must she eat in the district?
- What must she buy in the district?
- What must she do in the district?

Note: Be ready to share your ideas with the class after the discussion.

Suggestions for group discussion

Your district is _____

- How often do you visit this district?
- What do you usually do there?
- What kind of *shops/people/events/activities ... do you come across?
- Identify the 4 MUSTs (see/eat/buy/do).
- In what ways would you say they are special/different from those in other districts in Hong Kong?
- What comments/recommendations would you give for your target audience?
- Give photos or pictures of some points of interest about your district to help others understand what you mean.

Appendix 5

Short Writing Exercise Selected From New Progress, Book 4A*

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Short Writing: A Holiday in Hong Kong

Your cousin from Australia is visiting you in Hong Kong. The pictures below show where you have taken her so far. Your cousin wants you to help her write a blog entry describing her visit in Hong Kong.



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Appendix 6

Analysis of Common Errors in Students' Writing *Assignment: Linguistics Concern for Follow-up Work*

Primary Verbs: "be," "do" & "have"

Example 1 "Bonnie *was not brought* an umbrella. But luckily, I *was brought*."

Corr.: 1. ... *did not bring* *did*.

2. ... *had not brought* *had*.

Review: *Functions and usage of primary verbs*

Example 2 "They *were not an* umbrella and they *were got* wet."

Corr.: 1. ... *did not have an* *got* ...

2. ... *had no* *got* ...

3. ... *hadn't any* *got* ...

Review: *Negation and associated inflexions involving "no," "any" ...*

Example 3 "The dog *was not jump* out from the tram. It *was not bite* me. It *was kiss* me."

Corr.: ... *did not jump* *did not bite* *kissed* ...

Review: *Formation of simple past tenses: "be" vs. "do"*

Use of verb "to be" as linking verb, the progressive tenses and passive voice ...

Example 4 "When I was very young, I *had already the dog was bite* me."

Corr.: 1. ... *was bitten by a dog*.

2. ... *had already been bitten (many times) by dogs*.

Review: *Time references: simple past vs. past perfect*

S/V relationship and decision in using active or passive voice ...

Example 5 "In the jungles, it *has many wild animals*."

Corr.: ... *there are* ...

Review: *Use of "it" vs. "there"; singular/plural in S/V relationship*

Bare Infinitive/Participle Usage After Verbs of Perception: e.g., "saw"/"heard"

Example 1 "We *saw a rainbow appeared*."

Corr.: ... *appear*.

Example 2 "We *saw two monks was walked* calmly up the steps."

Corr.: ... *walking* ...

Example 3 “I **saw** a thief *was stealing* from a woman.”

Corr.: ... *stealing* ...

Review: *Finite vs. infinitive*

Example 4 “She said that she **would** *brought* us to Lamma Island.”

Corr.: ... *would bring* ...

Example 5 “But we **didn’t** *caught* any fish.”

Corr.: ... *didn’t catch* ...

Example 6 “I **didn’t** *knew* what I could do.”

Corr.: ... *didn’t know* ...

Example 7 “She **couldn’t** *followed* me.”

Corr.: ... *couldn’t follow* ...

“excite” (Verb)/“exciting” (Adjective)/“excited” (Adjective)

Example 1 “I was very *exciting*. It was really an *excited* trip.”

Corr.: ... *excited* *exciting* ...

Example 2 “All of us *was feel exciting*.”

- Corr.: 1. ... *were excited*.
2. ... *felt excited*.
3. ... *were feeling excited*.

Review: The “*agent*” is “*exciting*.”: (*adj. describing property of the inducing “agent”*)

The “*person*” is “*excited*.”: (*adj. describing how the “person” is affected: “passive”*)

“like” as Verb vs. Adverbial Particle

Example 1 “I *am very like* HK.”

Corr.: ... *like HK very much*.

Example 2 “It *likes* a pearl in the orient.”

- Corr.: 1. *It is like* ...
2. *People say it looks like* ...
3. *I feel it runs like* ...

Others: ... *behaves like* ...
... *weighs like* ... *etc.* ... (*something else*)

“travel” vs. “visit”

Example 1 “I think *HK must have a lot of places to travel**.”

* This is *Chinglish*. To clarify the “muddle”:

- Corr.: 1. *I think there must be a lot of places in HK worth the visit.*
 2. *I think tourists enjoy visiting a lot of places in HK.*
 3. *I think it must be fun traveling in HK.*

Other Idiomatic Usage

Example 1 “The pollution there is very serious. *By the way*, I hate that place very much!”

Corr.: ... *In fact*, ...

Example 2 “My friend told me that *there was many cheap things to buy*.”

- Corr.: 1. ... *there would be a lot of good bargains.*
 2. ... *goods was generally inexpensive there.*
 3. ... *I could buy a lot of inexpensive goods there.*

Example 3 “*I was looking for this tour for many months*.”

- Corr.: 1. *I had been looking for this kind of tour for many months.*
 2. *I was looking for this tour and I found one many months ago.*
 3. *I had been looking forward to this tour months ago.*
 4. *I had been looking forward to this tour for a long time.*

Example 4 “*I had watched TV. Jacky Chan said that HK was a good place for a trip*.”

- Corr.: 1. *I saw on TV that HK was ...*
 2. *On TV, Jacky Chan had said that HK was ... so I came.*
 3. *I had been watching until Jacky Chan told us, on TV, that HK was ... so here I came.*

Appendix 7

How Good Works From Students Could Be Adapted for Drilling

Three illustrative examples were designed to demonstrate how good works from students' writing assignment could be adapted to drill open-examination question formats. Examples 1 and 2 are matching exercises to deal with cohesive devices installed, whereas Example 3 is a proofreading exercise to review on grammar errors dealt with in class.

Works From Students' Writing Assignment

I am Natalie. I came from Australia. Hong Kong had always been my dream destination before I actually paid my first visit last summer.

My cousin, Alice, lives in HK and she had promised to show me around the top attractions.

My first Sunday here was bright and sunny. Alice suggested we visit the Giant Buddha on Lantau. When I saw the flight of steps leading up to the statue, I was excited. I decided to jog up for exercise. Alice said that would be too much for her, so she would just take it easy.

Suddenly, the weather changed. Rain poured and it grew dark and windy. When I looked around, I could not find her anywhere. I grew anxious. Then I saw a big blue umbrella coming towards me. It was Alice! Yet, to my surprise, she was just as wet as without the umbrella.

"I bought this expensive umbrella from that store down there. In my hurry, I didn't check. There's a big hole here, see!" She pointed.

I insisted we take it back. We had to argue a long time with the shopkeeper before he finally gave us a good one. Isn't it risky to shop in Hong Kong?

Example 1: Matching Exercise I

Column I	Column II
1. I am Natalie ... (<i>more about "I"</i>)	A. I actually paid my first visit last summer.
2. HK had always been my dream destination before ... (<i>from "dream" to "action"</i>)	B. I decided to jog up for exercise.
3. Alice lives in Hong Kong ... (<i>how can she help me?</i>)	C. It began to rain heavily.

- A. so she would just take it easy.
- B. before I actually paid my first visit last summer.
- C. We had to argue a long time
- D. I didn't check.
- E. we visit the Giant Buddha on Lantau.
- F. Rain poured and it grew dark and windy.
- G. to show me around the top attractions.
- H. a big blue umbrella coming towards me.
- I. I decided to jog up for exercise.
- J. from that store down there.

Example 3: Proofreading Exercise

Instructions

With reference to the hints given at the end of the following text, try to proofread the text at the points underlined and numbered (1) to (15).

Hints to help proofreading

1. Ask: When did the action take place?
2. Ask: Does Alice still live in HK at the moment of speaking?
3. Use the infinitive of the verb after "suggest."
4. Wrong word used. When found indoors, we call them "stairs"; what do you call them when found outdoors?
5. Use the infinitive of the verb after "to."
6. "exercise" is used as a noun, not a verb here, so it does not take on tenses.
7. There is only one verb with no comparison in time.
8. Compare the use of "see" vs. "look."
9. "may" vs. "can"
10. As in Hint 8.
11. Use infinitive or present participle after "see" (verbs of perception).
12. Check the closeness in the past tense verb form of the two verbs "bring" vs. "buy."
13. Check the important usage of verb to "be" vs. "do."
14. Use infinitive or present participle after "insist."
15. As in Hint 13.

Proofreading copy

I am Natalie. I came from Australia. Hong Kong had always been my dream destination before I actually (1) pay my first visit last summer.

My cousin, Alice, (2) live in HK and she had promised to show me around the top attractions.

My first Sunday here was bright and sunny. Alice suggested we (3) visited the Giant Buddha on Lantau. When I saw the flight of (4) stairs leading up to the statue, I was excited. I decided to (5) jogged up for (6) exercises. Alice said that would be too much for her, so she would just take it easy.

Suddenly, the weather (7) had changed. Rain poured and it grew dark and windy. When I (8) saw around, I (9) might not find her anywhere. I grew anxious. Then I (10) looked a big blue umbrella (11) came towards me. It was Alice! Yet, to my surprise, she was just as wet as without the umbrella.

“I (12) brought this expensive umbrella from that store down there. In my hurry, I (13) wasn't check. There's a big hole here, see!” She pointed.

I insisted we (14) took it back. We had to argue a long time with the shopkeeper before he finally gave us a good one. (15) Doesn't it risky to shop in Hong Kong?

Appendix 8

Excerpt Selection From Lonely Planet's Travel with Children (Wheeler, 1995)

The following pieces are suggested:

1. *Singapore* by Peter Turner
2. *USA & Nepal* by Tashi Wheeler
3. *Outback Australia* by Hugh Finlay
4. *Europe* by Julie Young
5. *USA, Africa & Nepal* by Kieran Wheeler

For the less able students, the passage might need to be rewritten to a shorter and easier version. The following serves as an example:

Singapore by Peter Turner

Singapore has plenty to keep young people amused. The government is well aware that Singapore is a family destination. It is keen to promote and develop attractions for the family. The tourist office produces a good booklet "Family Fun Island," outlining mostly theme parks like the Sentosa Island.

Sentosa has fun rides, museums, water sports, aquariums, a monorail, cable car ... etc. for the whole family to enjoy. My girl, Ruby, was just a bit too young to appreciate most of the rides but the nature trail was certainly exciting. All over Asia little monkeys hang out at temples and trees waiting for scraps of food from visitors, and if they don't get them — watch out! They snatch anything that looks like food right out from your hands.

Like most Asian countries, restaurants tend to be noisy and crowded. Yet, unlike Australian restaurants where children are not welcomed because they are rowdy, self-centered and anti-social, it is a bazaar of delights for all. By far the best place to take children is to the food centers. Not only can you get a complete range of all Singapore's cuisine at cheap prices but children can run freely, make plenty of noise and not be noticed at all. The Newton Circus food center, not far from Orchard Road, is a good place to take the family. It is a slightly more upmarket, tourist-oriented place. It is a pleasant, open-air center in the evenings with plenty of room for kids to run around.

Shopping is one of Singapore's main attractions and young folks are well catered for. The Forum Galleria on Orchard Road has many shops dedicated to youths and people young at heart.

Though Singapore has a rather cold image as a soulless, money-making society, the family is sacred and, indeed, family values are laid down in law. Children are well cared and attended to. Ruby received plenty of attention there. Above all, her red hair was a show highlight. Wandering around the backstreets of Chinatown, every Chinese grandmother went out of their way to stroke Ruby's hair or pinch her cheeks. The Malays and Indians are no less fond of children. In one shop in Little India, Ruby had everyone in the shop admiring her.

"So cute. Is this your first?" said the shopkeeper.

"Yes"

"And is it a boy or girl?"

"A girl"

"What a waste," he said smiling, as if the disappointment of having a girl was a self-evident truth.

Appendix 9

Class Observation in 4A: Field Notes

(11 lessons over 9 school days from 26 January 2007 to 7 February 2007)

Class: 4A (27 students), Lessons 1–2 (13:20–15:00, 26/01/07, Friday) Instructor: Anna Fung

Task	Lesson observation
Teacher's sharing of her own travel experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On PowerPoint, teacher presented her travel experience in England, France, and South Africa. Students were told: "There will be an 'Open-book Dictation' based on the account given. It is advisable to keep your note-take intact."
Class recapitulation	<p>Recapitulation through Q & A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which 3 countries did I visit? What happened to me in Lake District? What do I need to do touring on a bus there? What did I eat at the special restaurant in South Africa? The odd cards were: Lion, Hawk, Fish & chips, Ayers Rock. The students enjoyed the activity very much. Ten minutes were given for the students to prepare for their group presentation. The group presentations were very good.
Matrix Game on our world knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which country is my favorite? What kind of tour did I join in France? Why? What did I do in South Africa? What did I buy as souvenir from South Africa?
Survey on students' scope of travel experience	<p>By a show of hands, students were asked to show the places they have traveled (results included: Chinese mainland, Macau, Thailand, Korea, Singapore, Italy, New Zealand, the Philippines, France, and Portugal).</p>
Group project: Introducing a district in Hong Kong — District allocation	<p>Each group is designated a district in Hong Kong to present before a camera in forthcoming lessons for the sake of their new Native English Teacher (NET) who is first time in HK (districts included: Aberdeen, Lamma Island, Shamshuiipo, Mongkok, Causeway Bay, Wanchai).</p>
Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All should review the list for the group dictation on the next day. Each group should design at least 5 questions based on what they have introduced in their presentation to enable them to become "dictation masters" the next day.
Post-lesson discussion and sharing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lesson was very smooth! Anna (the teacher) is very skillful in presenting ideas and instructions. The students were excited by the teacher's sharing and the "Matrix Game." The teacher had created a very warm and supportive learning environment! The students were fully engaged in learning. Anna said that the students were unexpectedly good in the presentation of their world knowledge in the "Matrix Game." This is a wonderful lesson!

* All 150 Secondary 4 students (originally from 4 classes) have their English language lesson at the same time in 5 separated classes. There are about 27–32 students in each class.

Class: 4A (27 students), Lesson 3 (14:10–15:00, 29/01/07, Monday) Instructor: Anna Fung

<i>Task</i>	<i>Lesson observation</i>
<p>Voluntary Show & Tell (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two students were asked to share their travel experiences with their classmates. The first student, May, talked about her trip to Beijing and the other student, Martin, his tour to New Zealand. Both of them had prepared their presentation very well beforehand. May gave a very vivid description of the lives of Beijing people. When she talked about how dangerous it was to ride a bicycle in the streets of Beijing, her classmates were startled and some of them opened their eyes wide. Martin brought some beautiful pictures he took in New Zealand and a bottle of kiwi jam (the product of New Zealand). He described in detail about his days in a home stay family. He talked about his trip with great enthusiasm and his classmates did enjoy very much his presentation. Both students were very confident to speak up in front of their classmates, teacher, and guests. The atmosphere was very relaxed and everyone was enjoying what their classmates were talking. There was no fear of making mistakes! There was lots of laughter throughout!
<p>Preparation for “Dictation Master” (5 min.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students worked in groups and prepared questions for “Dictation Master.” The students were given 5 minutes to practice the questions they had prepared for group dictation. In order to give the students a clear idea of what questions they should ask, the teacher gave them an example: “What’s the capital city of Italy?”
<p>“Dictation Master” (30 min.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At first, three students from each group had to write the answers on the chalkboard. When the teacher found that it was too crowded to have too many students stand in the front, she immediately changed her strategy. Later, one student from each group acted as the representative at one time. It was found that the more the students asked, the better quality the questions were. Some good questions are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Which museum keeps the picture of Mona Liza?” “Which food is famous in France and it is without legs?” “Which things women like most?” “Which fall provides hydro-electric power?”
<p>Group project: Introducing a district in Hong Kong — Giving information sheets</p>	<p>Students were asked to study the information at home and find out the “4 Musts” (must see, must eat, must buy, & must do) in the designated district.</p>
<p>Post-lesson discussion and sharing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher was pleasant and relaxed; she herself enjoyed the lesson. She did not deliberately correct her students’ mistakes but instead she let her students talk and enjoy talking. She only gave a mild comment on May’s presentation: “Speak up. Don’t look at your notes so often.” There were genuine interactions between students and teacher, and among students themselves. The dictation lasted for about 33 minutes! It was fun and enjoyable but the teacher thought that it was too time-consuming. She said that her students had not tried this type of dictation before and believed that it was a good way to build up their vocabulary and to polish their “Wit” questions. It is important to note that the whole lesson was video-taped but no students were afraid of speaking in English. They, indeed, enjoyed the lesson throughout! So did the teacher and the guest! The learning atmosphere was so natural and relaxed! A wonderful lesson!

Class: 4A, Lesson 4 (Cont'd)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the “Shamshuipo” group, all students were involved and interested in the place they were discussing but they could only provide broken sentences or single words. The same thing happened to the “Aberdeen” group; two students dominated the discussion and all of them were not able to provide complete sentences. Interestingly enough, the students in this group repeatedly said that they had to take Ms. Whittaker’s (i.e., the NET) interest into consideration.
<p>Group presentation on introducing a district in Hong Kong (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Lamma Island” group, the “Causeway Bay” group, and the “Aberdeen” group were asked to stand in front of the class and talk about “one must.” • The “Lamma Island” group gave a very good introduction and explained why they recommended a place of interest to Ms. Whittaker. The NET was advised to go to Tin Hau Temple as it was one of the oldest buildings on the island. She had to eat the seafood at Sok Kwu Wan and to buy salted fish as souvenirs. She could have a swim, a sunbath and go cycling and hiking on the island. She could also enjoy a cup of coffee at the beach. • The “Causeway Bay” group gave a brief introduction and did not explain the purpose at all. They suggested the NET going to Baulhinia Plaza and Central Library, eating delicious fish balls, going shopping at famous shopping centers. They thought Ms. Whittaker must like shopping because all women loved shopping. • The “Aberdeen” group did not explain the situation but instead gave a description of Aberdeen. They recommended the NET to visit the oldest buildings and take photos there. They thought Jumbo Kingdom was a good place to visit and enjoy seafood. They also recommended Ms. Whittaker to visit Ocean Park to look at the pandas and try the exciting thrillers. They thought Ms. Whittaker might be interested in taking a ride on sampan.
<p>Post-lesson discussion and sharing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students who did the presentations were confident and dared to say the words even though they did not know the words very well. Again, there was no fear of making mistakes. Indeed, no one in the class laughed at them! The learning atmosphere was very strong and all of them were relaxed and enjoyed very much listening to others. • The teacher gave very positive comments: “Interesting activities”; “You take care of Ms. Whittaker’s family as well!”; “She only corrected her students’ mistakes in a very mild manner: “Don’t hide your face”; “on Lamma Island” instead of “in Lamma Island.” It sounded that she was trying to give them some suggestions, not finding her students’ faults and mistakes. The students did really feel GOOD!

Class: 4A (27 students), Lessons 5–6 (14:00–15:45, 01/02/07, Thursday)

Instructor: Anna Fung

<i>Task</i>	<i>Lesson observation</i>
<p>Voluntary Show & Tell (3)</p>	<p>A student gave a vivid description of his trip to New Zealand. He shared his joyful experience in a funny way and aroused lots of laughter all the way. His classmates also gave active response by asking him questions. The student remembered that the farm owner had been very nice to them and had given them “fresh kiwi and fresh honey” as “souvenirs.” He had also noticed that “there’re more sheep than people” and that “I [he] can find the sky is very blue.” “There’s no TV, no computer, no Play Station but I [he] never feel boring. I [he] chat with the animals.”</p>
<p>Group presentation on introducing a district in Hong Kong (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three groups of students were asked to do their presentation. The first group introduced Mongkok to their NET, Ms. Whittaker, the second group Shamshuipo, and the third group Causeway Bay and Wanchai. • The first two groups of students were very nervous and dared not look at the audience. Some of the students were trembling and were unable to concentrate on their group mates’ presentation. The audience could hardly hear what they were saying because the students spoke very softly and produced hesitant speech. However, the third group of students was comparatively more confident and relaxed and explained why they recommended Ms. Whittaker to go to Causeway Bay and Wanchai. They wanted Ms. Whittaker to have a good impression on Hong Kong and they believed that the two chosen places were the most famous places in Hong Kong. • Evidently, the teacher was very tolerant and patient though the first two groups of students did not do their job well. She well understood that it was hard for her students to stand in front of the audience and give presentation in English. She did not raise her voice and order her students to speak up. But instead she used a mild tone and advised her students to “please speak up, speak louder.” She told the students the correct way of saying “Langham Place” and added that “Langham Place is the newest shopping center in Mongkok.” She tried to clarify what her students had said by asking: “Electrical goods? What do you mean by ‘electrical goods’?” “Do you mean fortune telling?” Fortune telling is to tell what I’ll be. Is that what you mean?” • The teacher was friendly, open-minded and adopted a democratic and flexible attitude. She let her students speak up in English and corrected them one or two mistakes. The teacher and students tried to work out the correct answers together in a collaborative manner.
<p>“Open-book Dictation”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was the first time that students were asked to have such special type of open-book dictation. The main focus of the dictation was not only on how accurately the students could spell the words but also on how well they could produce grammatically correct English. Students were allowed to refer to any sorts of resources to help them work out the whole piece of dictation and to ask the teacher or classmates to spell the words. Students had to work on their own piece of dictation and had to take turns to come out to dictate a sentence/a phrase on the chalkboard at the same time. They were allowed to check others’ work on the chalkboard if they spotted any mistakes. Students found this sort of dictation very challenging and it was of great fun finding other students’ mistakes.

Class: 4A, Lessons 5–6 (Cont'd)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the whole piece of dictation was worked out, the teacher went through it sentence by sentence in detail. For example, the sentence “She said, <u>meat</u> is meat. There is nothing special to <u>it</u>.” The teacher tried to prompt the students whether small letter “m” or capital letter “M” should be used. The opinions were so divided that the teacher asked the students to vote. Afterwards, she explained why the answer was the capital one. She discussed with the students on a wide range of common grammar mistakes, ranging from punctuation to tenses. She employed different strategies to help the students to work out the answers on their own. For example, she asked the students to listen to the following two sentences carefully: “There is nothing special to it [it]” and “There is nothing special to eat [it].” • Apparently, the teacher did not give the answers directly but she kept on prompting her students by giving them clues. She played the role of giving suggestions and of seeking for clarification. She put forward questions like: “Do you think it is correct?” “Is it correct now?” “Do you say . . .?” “Have you got any ideas?” “How to correct?” “Anyone knows?” “Some say wrong?” “Is it different from yours?” “You like to try?” When the whole piece of dictation was worked out, the whole class cheered together at the same time! A joyful moment! A sense of satisfaction!
<p>Writing on picture 1 (<i>New progress</i>, book 4A by Dixon et al., 2006, p. 92)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were asked to look at the first picture of a story and to brainstorm for sentences to describe the picture. The teacher put down some questions on the chalkboard as a guide: “Who are the people you see?” “Where do they come from?” “Where are they in the picture?” “What are they doing there?” “What special incident is happening in the picture?” “How would each feel?” “Would you add anything before and/or after the snap shot?” • In class discussion, the teacher helped the students to develop their ideas about the picture. • Teacher noted down students’ suggestions freely on the chalkboard. The class worked together to correct the mistakes on the spot. The following sentences were developed: “It was raining and windy.” “My cousin felt disappointed!” “There was a long stair near the Big Buddha on Lantau Island.” “Helen was taking a blue umbrella and climbing the steps.” “But Natalie (my cousin) did not have an umbrella.” • Students were then asked to work in groups and made sentences on the other three pictures (every two groups work on one of the remaining three pictures independently). It appeared that the previous class discussion had set up a very good model for the students. They felt easy, comfortable and tried their best to make sentences. They corrected their classmates’ mistakes as well.
<p>Post-lesson discussion and sharing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher was friendly, approachable, and open-minded. Her flexible attitude created a harmonious, encouraging, and inspiring learning atmosphere. Students were encouraged to make guesses and take risks. It was clearly evident that the teacher tried not to interrupt the students’ presentation in “Voluntary Show & Tell” and group presentation. What she did was to highlight one or two mistakes made by the students. • For the last two parts (Dictation and Picture Writing), the teacher and students worked together and tried to work out a piece of a passage. However, the teacher did not put herself in an authoritarian position finding the mistakes of the students. Instead, students had to help other students to correct their mistakes. The teacher acted as a facilitator giving hints and prompts. The students felt better because it was not their teacher who tried to find their faults. The atmosphere was relaxed and pressure-free, which indeed was a very favorable factor for English learning.

Class: 4A (27 students), Lesson 7 (13:20–14:05, 02/02/07, Friday) Instructor: Karen Pang[#]

<i>Task</i>	<i>Lesson observation</i>
<p>Conferencing on writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher discussed with the students on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How to improve our writing? To work up a purpose & to instill interest for the reader. b. How candidates' works are marked against a scale of 9 in HKCEE? Define personal stance as marker and convey high expectation. • The teacher declared the grade scored by the work produced last time. • Students were requested to suggest how the work can be improved. The teacher pointed out what/why such elements did not exist so far (students write without a purpose in mind). • By means of "Radio 4A" the whole class brainstormed more systematically to reconstruct picture 1.
<p>Group writing</p>	<p>The class is divided into groups. Every 2 groups work on one of the pictures and share the product.</p>
<p>Homework: Individual writing</p>	<p>Each writes up his/her own for sharing in the next lesson. (P.S. Teacher compiled the group works into 4 long rolls for display the next day.)</p>
<p>Post-lesson discussion and sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discussion on marker's practice on grading students' works in HKCEE was persuasive. Students were very attentive and listened very carefully. • The discussion on the ways to improve the first draft was fruitful and encouraging. Students were totally engaged when they were requested to work on their second draft through "Radio 4A" and group writing & sharing. 	<p>The original English language teacher, Anna Fung, had to go out to attend seminar on SBA. Karen Pang was invited to substitute for the lesson.</p>

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Class: 4A (27 students), Lesson 8 (10:30–11:15, 05/02/07, Monday) Instructor: Karen Pang[†]

<i>Task</i>	<i>Lesson observation</i>
Group sharing on individuals' works	Each group is given 5 minutes to share works of group members to select the best to represent the group.
Conferencing on writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher pointed out that some students have chosen to write in 1st person while others in 3rd. Students were asked to compare the effect. • Students were requested to compare the works orally presented with the displayed works on the chalkboard to see if there's still room for improvement. • The teacher highlighted the fact that such writing lacks a purpose /title. Students are invited to design suitable titles to "house" their own ideas. • Teacher makes her own suggestions and reframe the work on picture 1 accordingly. The teacher encouraged the students to define their own title and try in similar ways.
Post-lesson discussion and sharing:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group sharing and conference worked very well. Students got feelings and the ideas on how to improve their own work. • It is a great idea that the teacher wrote her own account on picture 1 and shared with the whole class. The students were able to point out that there were rich ideas and the "use of dialogues" in the teacher's piece had enriched the story.

[†] Karen Pang was invited to complete the whole process-writing cycle.

Class: 4A (27 students), Lesson 9 (08:55–09:45, 06/02/07, Tuesday) Instructor: Anna Fung

<i>Task</i>	<i>Lesson observation</i>
Voluntary Show & Tell (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two students were asked to give presentation on their travel experiences. • The first student talked about his trip to Hanzhou. He described the beautiful scenery of West Lake and mentioned a list of things such as the temples, bridges, waterfalls he had seen on the trip. But, the teacher and students could hardly understand what the presenter was talking about he spoke with frequent mistakes in pronunciation. After the whole presentation, the teacher and students did not understand which city the presenter was referring to. • The teacher asked the first student which city he was referring to. When the students found that it was Hanzhou that the students had been talking, they all shouted, "Oh!" • The second student talked about her trip to Macau. She mentioned the museums she had visited, the food and things she had tried and bought. She also suggested her classmates trying egg tarts when they went to Macau. The most important thing she found was that the relationship of her family got closer after the trip to Macau. • The teacher suggested the second student making appropriate awareness of audience.

Class: 4A, Lesson 9 (Cont'd)

<p>Proofread exercises on the composition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students were given 3 minutes to proofread a composition of their classmate on their own. Then students were asked to work in groups of four and to decide the correct answers.• Five minutes later, a representative from each group came out and put down their answers on the chalkboard. Students were encouraged to make changes after having looked at other groups' answers. Some students did make use of the final chance to make necessary changes.• Students were asked to read aloud the whole piece of corrected writing together. The teacher highlighted the correct pronunciation of the commonly mistaken "ed"-ending sounds (excited, decided).
<p>Warm up on writing on my "dream" trip</p>	<p>Students were asked to write a piece of composition at home. The topic was "My 'Dream' Tour in Hong Kong." The teacher asked the students why the word "Dream" was put in inverted commas. She encouraged her students to make guesses and emphasized that there was no right or wrong answer.</p>
<p>Post-lesson discussion and sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers are always worried about when it is the right time to deal with accuracy if they pay too much emphasis on fluency. The teacher in the present case illustrates very well that the best way to help students improve their accuracy is to let students help their fellow students. In this case, all students worked together and made contribution to their own learning. There was no fear of making mistakes and they did not feel ashamed of changing their answers when they found that the other groups' answers were the more suitable. Throughout the whole lesson, they were learning from their peer. It is a sort of "bottom-up learning." Students preferred working as a team to working as an individual. All individuals were provided opportunities for participation and there was good rapport. The teacher did not act solely as a subject-matter tyrant who told, fed, disseminated, and gave correct answers. It was not a sort of "top-down learning." There was no fear, no pressure from the authority. But, there was pleasure because the teacher acted as a facilitator who helped students stretch their potential and guided them on to the next level of challenge. Their students were empowered and given a real sense of ownership of their own learning.	

Class: 4A (27 students), Lessons 10–11(14:00–15:45, 07/02/07, Wednesday)

Instructor: Anna Fung

Two more lessons were allowed for the students to complete their write-up on "My 'dream' tour." The lesson was not observed or video-tapped.