

Putonghua Education in Hong Kong:

Using Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction in Chinese Classes

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Tiivistelmä

Tämä kandidaatintutkielma käsittelee putonghuan eli mandariinikiinan käyttöä kiinan kielen oppiaineen opetuskielenä Hong Kongin peruskouluissa ja lukioissa. Asiasta on paljon eriäviä mielipiteitä. Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena onkin selvittää taustalla olevia tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat argumentteihin putonghuan käyttämiseen opetuskielenä puolesta ja vastaan, sekä löytää mahdollisia aukkoja tutkimuksessa. Käsittelyn taustaksi esitellään aiheen taustaa ja historiaa, kuten Hong Kongin kielipolitiikkaa, putonghuan asemaa Hong Kongin koulujärjestelmässä sekä taustalla vaikuttavia kieliasenteita.

Kirjallisuuskatsauksessa käsitellään kahdeksaa tutkimusta ja artikkelia. Putonghuan käyttöön opetuskielenä vaikuttavat lähdeaineiston mukaan selvimmin opettajien kielellinen pätevyys, hallituksen vähäinen ohjeistus opetuskielen vaihtamiseen, opetusmateriaalien ja tutkimuksen puute, oppilaiden putonghuan kielellinen osaaminen, kieliympäristön puute, putonghuan opetuskielenä käyttämisen hyödyt ja haitat, taloudelliset syyt, poliittiset syyt sekä asenteet putonghuaa kohtaan.

Tutkielman johtopäätöksenä on, että putonghuan tehokkuutta opetuskielenä Hongkongin peruskouluissa ja lukioissa ei ole tutkittu tarpeeksi. Opetuskielen vaihtaminen kantonin kielestä putonghuaan on monimutkainen aihe, johon liittyy monitasoisia tekijöitä. Riittävä tutkimus on tärkeää johdonmukaisen ja näyttöön perustuvan lähestymistavan omaksumiseksi, kun on kyse Hongkongin kiinan kielen oppiaineen opetuskielen muuttamisesta. Toiseksi tarvitaan tutkimusta siitä, kuinka kiinan kielen oppiaineen opetuskielen vaihtaminen putonghuaan vaikuttaa kantonin kielen asemaan Hongkongissa.

Key words: Putonghua, medium of instruction, Chinese language, Hong Kong

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Background and Context	6
2.1	Language Policies in Hong Kong	6
2.1.1	Laissez-faire Perspective	6
2.1.2	Trilingualism and Biliteracy	6
2.1.3	'Mother Tongue Teaching' Policy	7
2.1.4	Fine-tuning Policy	7
2.2	Putonghua in School Curriculum	8
2.2.1	School Subject	8
2.2.2	Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction	9
2.3	Cantonese, Putonghua & Modern Standard Chinese	9
2.4	Language and Identity	10
3	Review of the Literature	11
3.1	Educational Field	11
3.2	Language Attitude	16
3.3	Coverage in News	17
4	Synthesis and Critical Evaluation	19
5	Conclusion and Future Directions	25
	References	27

1 Introduction

Hong Kong is an intriguing place in terms of language policy and planning. Hong Kong has three leading languages: Chinese, English, and Putonghua, from which Chinese (predominantly Cantonese) and English are also official languages (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2015). Hong Kong's history has affected the language environment and continues to be an area of research and further development. Especially in Cantonese and Putonghua, they have been in focus when it comes to language education and promotion in Hong Kong's primary and secondary schools, and the policies have gone through multiple changes (Valentini, 2014). Hong Kong is traditionally a Cantonese-speaking area, also known as the capital of Cantonese, and bringing Putonghua into the mix alongside English has not been easy in terms of language education, and the topic is still under debate (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2015; Valentini, 2014).

This paper will look more closely into the language medium of education in Hong Kong and especially focus on the topic of Putonghua education and Putonghua's usage in classroom teaching of Chinese language subjects. This paper reviews literature discussing the arguments for and against using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools. I will introduce the history of Hong Kong's language policies from the time of colonial rule under Great Britain to the current time, its effects on the background of the current language environment, and the inclusion of Putonghua in the education curriculum. The research question is: what are the factors that contribute to the arguments for and against using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools?

This paper aims to create a coherent overview of the current literature regarding the question of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools, as there is insufficient research supporting any particular view on the effectiveness of Putonghua education. The overall opinion is that more should be done in order to avoid negative consequences (Bolton, 2011; Valentini, 2014). This paper can possibly provide the foundation and detect gaps for future research on the subject.

This paper is composed of 5 chapters. The first chapter provides the objective, significance, and overview of the paper. Chapter 2 will discuss the history of language policies in Hong Kong and their effects on the language environment, the inclusion of Putonghua into the

education curriculum in Hong Kong, and lastly, the language attitudes and language identity of the people in Hong Kong. Chapter 3 will include a review of the literature, and Chapter 4 will provide an analysis and synthesis of the findings and point out possible trends and gaps. Finally, Chapter 5 includes conclusions from the findings of the literature review and will provide suggestions for avenues of future research.

2 Background and Context

In this chapter, I will go through the background and relevant context of this literature review. I will do a brief overview of language policies in Hong Kong, introducing them from the time of the British colony to today. I will also provide background on the emergence of Putonghua in Hong Kong's school curriculum, first as a language subject and then as the language of instruction. In addition, I will explain briefly the difference between Cantonese and Putonghua and how they relate to Modern Standard Chinese. Finally, I will give context around Hong Kong people's language identity.

2.1 Language Policies in Hong Kong

2.1.1 Laissez-faire Perspective

According to Valentini (2014), during the colonial era, Hong Kong was governed by a British Crown-appointed governor, and there was little interest in putting resources into education and welfare in the area. In terms of language policy and language education in schools of Hong Kong, during its one hundred years of colonial rule under Great Britain from 1843 to 1997, there was a so-called laissez-faire perspective, which meant that things were allowed to develop at their own pace. These two separate education styles came to be. Firstly, an Anglo-Chinese style that used English as a medium of teaching and the style of education was Western. Secondly, there was a Chinese style of education that was more similar to education in Mainland China, and the language used was primarily Cantonese. English-medium schools were regarded as higher in status (Valentini, 2014). Even though Chinese-medium schools were not discouraged during British colonial rule, there were no active measures to encourage and give financial backing to Chinese-medium secondary schools, which in turn led to the higher status of English-medium secondary schools (Clark, 2018). Also, it was not until 1974 that Chinese was made an official language in Hong Kong, which also further affected the elite status of English during the colonial time (Lee & Leung, 2012; Valentini, 2014).

2.1.2 Trilingualism and Biliteracy

After the handover to China in 1997, Hong Kong officials announced a "Trilingualism and Biliteracy" policy (三語兩文), which in practice meant that the goal of language education is to achieve biliteracy in Standard Chinese and English and trilingual ability in three languages: English, Cantonese, and Putonghua (Adamson & Kan, 2010; Bolton, 2011; Goh & Tong,

2008; Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2015; Li, 2022; Liu, 2018; Valentini, 2014; Wang, 2020). This has been a recurring theme in public discussion ever since and a topic of heated debate. Even to this day, there are no universally agreed policies on how to achieve this goal, and practices differ greatly depending on the schools themselves (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2015).

2.1.3 'Mother Tongue Teaching' Policy

After the handover, the Hong Kong government issued a policy of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools (Adamson & Kan, 2010; Valentini, 2014). This meant that schools were required to use Cantonese as the language of instruction unless they were able to prove that their students could learn the school subjects in English well enough and meet certain requirements. The idea behind this was to reinforce Hongkongers identity after the handover, but instead, it was faced with a lot of criticism from both students and parents. Before the handover, Chinese-medium schools had a lower status in comparison to English-medium schools, and after this “mother language teaching” policy, there were even fewer English-medium schools, and that gave them an elite status in society. Parents were strictly against this policy because they worried that if their children did not attend English-medium schools, their English proficiency would not be adequate later in life and could hinder job opportunities and competitiveness in the job market; therefore, Chinese-medium schools were even less wanted (Adamson & Kan, 2010; Valentini, 2014).

2.1.4 Fine-tuning Policy

The “mother tongue teaching” policy was finally replaced in 2010 by the “fine-tuning” policy. This meant that secondary schools had new freedom to choose the medium of education in their classrooms under certain criteria, and it no longer divided schools strictly into Chinese-medium and English-medium schools (Liu, 2018; Valentini, 2014). This also gives the freedom to have, for example, partially English-medium schools. There has still been a lot of discussion over this policy, and it divides peoples' opinions (Liu, 2018). This fine-tuning policy is directed at secondary schools and does not apply to primary schools. However, it can be expected that primary schools will modify their language medium of instruction based on the fact that they are preparing students to enter secondary schools with different language mediums (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2015).

2.2 Putonghua in School Curriculum

2.2.1 School Subject

It was not until the 1980s that Putonghua began to emerge in the school curriculum and was promoted by the government (Valentini, 2014). This was because the reunion with Mainland China was closing and the communication and contact keeping between Hong Kong and China was increasing. At first, in the 1980s, Putonghua was brought as an optional subject first to primary schools and later to secondary schools (Valentini, 2014). For example, according to Mee-Ling Lai (2001), in the year 1992, Putonghua was offered in the official curriculum in 17% of primary schools, and as an extracurricular subject, it was offered in 50% of primary schools. When talking about secondary schools, it was offered in the official curriculum in 25% of secondary schools and as an extracurricular subject in 42%.

After Hong Kong returned to China in 1997, multiple changes to language policy were introduced, and this gave more space for Putonghua alongside English and Cantonese, and Hong Kong was heading towards a trilingual society (Liu, 2018; Valentini, 2014). In 1998, Putonghua was made a compulsory subject in schools, starting from primary school and continuing to secondary school (Bolton, 2011; Liu, 2018; Valentini, 2014). For example, in the years 2003-2004, of primary schools, 97.6% had Putonghua as a subject, and 90.7% of secondary schools had Putonghua as a subject (Davidson & Lai 2007).

The subject of Putonghua in the present time is divided into four sections: reading, listening, speaking, and transliteration (Clark, 2018). The goal for reading is to practice reading aloud, build vocabulary and get familiar with the sentence structure. Listening includes getting students more familiar with real-life spoken Putonghua in various everyday situations. Speaking focuses on forming sentences with Modern Standard Chinese grammar and components of pronunciation such as articulation and tones. Transliteration focuses on learning the usage of Hanyu Pinyin; this is done through transliterating Putonghua into the Roman alphabet (Clark, 2018).

According to Chung (2002), Hanyu Pinyin is a Romanised alphabet that indicates how Chinese characters are pronounced in Putonghua. For example, the Pinyin for the Chinese character 书, meaning 'book' is 'shū'. There are a few reasons why Hanyu Pinyin is seen as a

useful tool for Putonghua learners such as it helps students to learn how Chinese characters are pronounced in an easier way, it also provides a systematic phonetic guide, and lastly, it can help students learn to pronounce new vocabulary with the use of Pinyin without the help from teachers (Chung, 2002).

It is important to note that the Chinese language and Putonghua are separate subjects in Hong Kong schools even though both are under Chinese Language Education in the school curriculum. While Putonghua is a second language learning, the Chinese language subject is more academic, focusing on the language itself. Chinese Language subjects include language skills, getting familiar with the concepts of Chinese literature, Chinese culture, and values (Tam, 2012b).

2.2.2 Putonghua as the Medium of Instruction

Apart from English-medium and Cantonese-medium schools, there have been efforts to promote using Putonghua as a medium of instruction (PMI). This has been under debate ever since the handover to China, and there are no agreed views on how to do it (Bolton, 2011; Valentini, 2014; Wang, 2020). Hong Kong Education Bureau has put out policies promoting the usage of Putonghua in primary and secondary schools when it comes to teaching the Chinese language. For example, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) requested in 2008 that Putonghua should be promoted across all of Hong Kong, and funds have also been used to support teachers Putonghua training and help schools hire Putonghua teachers (Choi & Moody, 2024).

2.3 Cantonese, Putonghua & Modern Standard Chinese

Cantonese is the mother tongue of most Hong Kong residents, and it is the dominating language in Hongkongers' day-to-day life as well as in different occasions such as cultural, social, and political (Gao, Leung & Trent, 2010; Tam, 2012). It is often classified as a variety of Chinese (Gao et al., 2010), but even though Cantonese and Putonghua both use Chinese characters when writing, in Hong Kong, traditional characters are used, and in Mainland China, simplified characters are used (Gao et al., 2010; Li, 2009). Simplification of the Chinese characters in Mainland China rooted itself in the notion that it would raise the literacy rate within the nation, and this was seen as especially important during the beginning of establishing the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Baldauf & Zhao, 2011). Meanwhile,

according to He (2023), in Hong Kong, traditional characters are favoured, partially because of the area's past of being under British rule. Also, traditional characters can be seen as the symbol of Hong Kong identity (He, 2023).

Putonghua, also referred to as Mandarin, is the official language and the national spoken variety of the People's Republic of China. It is also the language of instruction in schools in Mainland China (Tam, 2012). Putonghua and Cantonese have different phonological systems. For example, Cantonese has six (Li, 2009) or nine (Li, 2022) tones, depending on how they are counted, and Putonghua has four tones (Li, 2009; Li, 2022). Also, Putonghua has neutral tones and tone sandhi, which Cantonese does not have. Tone sandhi refers to tonal changes that occur in certain contexts (Li, 2009).

As stated in the 'biliteracy and trilingualism' policy of Hong Kong, the aim is to achieve biliteracy in English and Standard Chinese (Valentini, 2014; Wang, 2020). The written Chinese language that is taught in Hong Kong and that is mainly used in public domains is Modern Standard Chinese. The grammar and vocabulary of Modern Standard Chinese are heavily based on Mandarin spoken in Beijing, and the same variety of Beijing Mandarin is also the main base for Putonghua (Clark, 2018). As Hong Kong students learn to read Chinese, they also learn a lot of vocabulary from Putonghua. However, in Hong Kong, they learn to pronounce written Chinese in Cantonese, as it is the most familiar vernacular, instead of Putonghua, as is the case in Mainland China (Li, 2009).

2.4 Language and Identity

When it comes to discussing language policies and the discussion of changing the language of instruction in schools, it is important to note Hong Kong residents' language identity.

According to Lee and Leung (2012), Cantonese is not only the most commonly used language in Hong Kong from the point of view of communication, but it is also a very significant component of Hong Kong's identity and a sociocultural factor. Cantonese is very tightly meshed together with Hong Kong culture and lifestyle (Lee & Leung, 2012). As Webster (2009) also mentions, it could be said that Hong Kong people feel a sense of attachment to Cantonese and English. Cantonese is the first language, and English is the language vessel of the socioeconomic movement. This is a factor that makes Hong Kong unique from the rest of China.

3 Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I will review studies and articles discussing the usage of Putonghua in Chinese classes in Hong Kong schools. The papers are divided into three main themes: the educational field, language attitude, and news coverage.

3.1 Educational Field

In a paper by Gao, Leung and Trent (2010), they had an interpretive inquiry where they interviewed eight Chinese teachers' experiences and views on using Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese classes in Hong Kong schools. In the interviews, the participants were encouraged to create their own narratives about their views on teaching Chinese language classes and their views on changes in the medium of instruction. In analysing the data, Gao et al. used a pragmatic cognition method to create classifications and sections from the data to find prevalent factors. The results show that there are both concerns and interest in changing the language of instruction from Cantonese to Putonghua. The reasons behind these concerns and enthusiasm are thought to be the changing political and demographic situations in Hong Kong, the teachers' practical experience with the changing curriculum, and the worries concerning the educational aspect (Gao et al., 2010).

According to the results of the inquiry, all participating teachers expressed that more studies and research should be done on the effectiveness of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Chinese classes. Many of the teachers also had skepticism about Putonghua being used as the language of instruction in Hong Kong. Some teachers believed that Cantonese would be better as the medium of instruction, referring to the similarity between writings in Classical Chinese and Cantonese. Also, it was noted that students have no use for Putonghua outside of classroom teaching. Therefore, there is a lack of practice environment. When it came to the teachers themselves, they noted that some of their colleagues also had issues switching from Cantonese to Putonghua, increasing the stress and workload. The teachers also noted that there was a difference in students' participation during Putonghua taught Chinese classes; the students tended to participate less in speaking exercises and were less active if Cantonese was not allowed. However, the teachers who supported the use of Putonghua in classroom teaching did see the possible benefits it would bring, such as helping students enhance their writing abilities and lessening the effect of Cantonese vernacular on students' written Chinese (Gao et al., 2010).

In the article written by Davison and Lai (2007), they analyzed the development of different programs in Hong Kong schools using Putonghua as the medium of instruction. According to Davison and Lai there are multiple issues that arise when it comes to changing the MOI in Chinese classes to Putonghua. These issues included things such as a lack of qualified and experienced teachers, a lack of suitable teaching materials and study resources, difficulty in adapting appropriate teaching methods, and integrating curricula taught in multiple languages (Davison & Lai, 2007).

Multiple schools name the lack of qualified teachers to be the main reason for not changing the language medium of Chinese Language classes to Putonghua (Davison & Lai, 2007). Many teachers think that their Putonghua is not proficient enough to teach the Chinese Language. When it comes to classroom teaching, there is a lot less talk from teachers in Putonghua-taught classes than in Cantonese-taught classes. The uncertainty about right Putonghua pronunciation and correct translations makes it more difficult for the teachers. Also, students participate less in Putonghua-taught Chinese Language classes and tend to be more tense and nervous. In addition, Cantonese is still often used in classroom discussions despite the classes being taught in Putonghua, and there are no clear guidelines for first and second language usage during the classes (Davison & Lai, 2007).

In a case study made by Tam (2012a) it was investigated what type of issues secondary school teachers and administrators come across in implementing Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese language classes. The school that was examined had been using Putonghua for 10 years to teach all Chinese language classes. The study included interviews, classroom observations, and documentary analysis, and the research used a constant comparison method. The findings of this study found issues such as inconsistent beliefs about the implementation of PMI, teachers, and students not having adequate Putonghua knowledge, lack of suitable teaching resources, and the lack of practical support from the government (Tam, 2012a).

When it comes to beliefs, administrators were in support of PMI, whereas teachers had differing views both in support, opposition and ambivalence (Tam, 2012a). School administrators had the belief that PMI would benefit the school, students and parents. Having PMI could possibly attract more thriving students and increase students' Putonghua knowledge. Teachers had different kinds of views; most believed that learning the Chinese

language using Putonghua as the language medium would bring more problems than benefits. While the teachers believed that students' Putonghua communication skills would be increased, they also doubted whether using Putonghua would benefit students' academic language skills. Some teachers also believed that using PMI to teach Chinese language would not have an effect on students' writing skills in Chinese (Tam, 2012a).

Many of the teachers also thought that using Putonghua to teach the Chinese language puts students in a disadvantaged situation when compared to teaching it in Cantonese (Tam, 2012a). According to the teachers, the speed of learning and teaching was notably slower. Instead of focusing more on the subject matter, the energy went into focusing on Putonghua pronunciation, grammar, and language structure. Partially the issue in teaching also was the language proficiency of both teachers and students. Even though, according to the Education Bureau, the teachers are qualified to teach the Chinese language in Putonghua, they felt their teaching could have been more effective due to language issues. In classroom observations, it was noted that students tended to be quiet, and interactive conversations were likely to not happen. Also learning was more superficial and mostly around facts and concepts. Another issue surrounding teaching is the lack of suitable and good-quality teaching materials (Tam, 2012a).

Finally, according to the teachers interviewed in the case study, the government did not offer any practical support when it came to teachers getting educated in Putonghua instruction (Tam, 2012a). In order to be eligible to teach in Putonghua medium classes, the teachers are required to pass a language proficiency test that only assesses their Putonghua language abilities, ignoring the pedagogical skills necessary for Putonghua instruction. Teachers also pointed out that the government has not been supportive in providing suitable curriculum, education materials, and research, which can make it difficult for schools to change their medium of instruction from Cantonese to Putonghua (Tam, 2012a).

In another case study done by Tam (2012b), she studies how teachers' beliefs play a part in how they conceptualize using Putonghua as the medium of instruction, how these beliefs also play a part in making decisions about the curricula and how the implementation of Putonghua medium instruction is done. In this case study, 10 secondary school teachers were interviewed, and the study also included classroom observations; in analyzing data, the constant comparison method was used. Tam prefaces the study by explaining how belief

systems are an active part of how teachers can positively or negatively affect the success of curricular changes and the implementation of new ideas. A major issue in implementing Putonghua as the medium of instruction is that there has not been enough clarity on how the implementation is expected to be done and the lack of measures followed up afterward, in addition to there not being clear guidelines for teachers to transform these policy changes into action (Tam, 2012b).

According to the study's findings, the implementation of Putonghua as the medium of instruction was done in two phases in the focused secondary school (Tam, 2012b). In the first phase it was misunderstood that PMI meant Putonghua education. During the first phase, the focus was more on correcting students' Putonghua skills rather than the subject matter of the Chinese Language. The result of this phase was that the students' Putonghua was improved, but the skills necessary in the Chinese Language were ignored. In the second phase, the focus is put back on the subject matter of the Chinese Language. However, according to the interviews with the teachers, the syllabus is seen as "fragmented," and in general, students did not have good skills in Putonghua. There are also different views on what it means to implement Putonghua as the MOI in Chinese classes. Some teachers think it simply means changing the language of instruction from Cantonese to Putonghua without having to make any changes to the teaching. Some think it can be beneficial to the students as it provides them more chances to use Putonghua, and this can, in turn, improve students' Chinese writing. However, there are also issues in the interaction between teachers and students, causing the classes to be tenser, as it seems that both students' and teachers' Putonghua proficiency is not adequate (Tam, 2012b).

In a case study conducted by Wang and Kirkpatrick (2013), they investigated the implementation of trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools. The data collected included interviews with the school staff, questionnaires for the students, and classroom discourse data analysis. I will focus on the results regarding Putonghua used as a medium of instruction in Chinese classes. In an interview with the school's principal, she thought putting Putonghua as the instruction medium was desirable. When it came to the teachers teaching Chinese literacy in Putonghua, they thought that using Putonghua provides an advantage since spoken Putonghua and Standard Written Chinese, also known as Modern Standard Chinese, which is used during the lessons in writing, match each other well. In this way, it is possible to avoid the issue of spoken Cantonese not matching with the formal written Chinese. On the

other hand, the teachers noted that some students may struggle with understanding instructions and classroom teaching in Putonghua because of inadequate Putonghua proficiency. This may cause damage to their Chinese literacy skills (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013).

In general, the teachers were content with students' proficiency in Putonghua (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013). They thought that students' abilities were not so much dependent on the effort that was put into it during classroom time but more so on the family's support. Students whose families put extra effort into providing their children with additional Putonghua resources and language environments, such as tutors, did not have as many struggles during classes compared to the students without any additional resources. The teachers also thought that Chinese literacy would be best taught in a language that the students are most familiar with, in this case, Cantonese. But they also note that since Mainland China is becoming more important politically and economically, a lot of students' parents see Putonghua as important for the future. However, the teachers think that in the current language environment in Hong Kong, the students have very little contact with Putonghua outside of classroom teaching, making it a challenge to use it as the language medium in instruction (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013).

In a paper written by Li (2009), he discusses the 'biliteracy and trilingualism' issues and dilemmas in the medium of instruction debate, looking at it from different stakeholders' points of view. These are government, employers, parents, school principals, educationalists, and students. I will focus on the discussion around Putonghua as the medium of instruction. Overall, the need for Putonghua in Hong Kong is increasing as trade and other interactions between Mainland China and Hong Kong are increasing and Putonghua is firming its role as the lingua franca in China among different minorities (Li, 2009).

Putonghua as a language subject has been taught in Hong Kong primary and some secondary schools, but the results of learning and language proficiency have not been satisfactory (Li, 2009). This is one reason why some do think that it would be necessary to start teaching Chinese language and possibly Chinese history in Putonghua. The ones opposing this are worried that it will hinder the position of Cantonese, which is the most common vernacular in Hong Kong, if Chinese literacy is taught in Putonghua. Also, some believe that teaching these subjects in teachers' and students' mother languages, in this case Cantonese, will make

interactions during classroom time easier and facilitate learning better. From the government's point of view, there are a few challenges to having Putonghua as the medium of instruction. Firstly, for Hong Kong students, Putonghua has second language learning characteristics, such as different phonology. This makes changing the MOI a more difficult issue. In addition, there is a lack of a Putonghua language environment for students to practice in as they do not have usage for Putonghua outside of classroom teaching. Lastly, there is a lack of qualified teachers who could teach in Putonghua. From employers' point of view, having Putonghua proficiency is necessary when working with businesses in Mainland China. The work market appreciates multilingual workers, and this has also increased Hongkongers' willingness to learn Putonghua as it increases their value in the job market (Li, 2009).

3.2 Language Attitude

In an article written by Li (2022) it is analyzed what type of attitude Hong Kong residents have towards Putonghua and what kind of status it has in Hong Kong society. The findings show that the status of Putonghua has become better in recent years, but the attitude towards it remains neutral or negative. In Hong Kong, the percentage of the population that speaks Putonghua is small, and this leads to the necessity of Putonghua in Hong Kong society to be limited as well. According to Li (2022), there are multiple reasons that affect Hong Kong people's attitude towards Putonghua, such as identity, language attitude, and concerns about preserving Cantonese culture.

Overall, Hong Kong Chinese think of themselves either as Hongkongers or Chinese (Li, 2022). The reason behind this is that Hong Kong has had a unique history in comparison to Mainland China, and therefore, Hong Kong people might not identify with Mainland China. This may cause them to be against using Putonghua in their day-to-day life. Also, language attitude can be in connection with people's experiences with the native speakers of that language. Li (2022) points out that Hong Kong residents might have a feeling of superiority when interacting with Mainland Chinese. The reasons behind this may be seen in the fact that as a former British colony, Hong Kong has a strong relationship with the West, and it is economically seen as an international center. Also, the conflicts between Mainland visitors or working immigrants and Hong Kong locals may create a negative attitude towards learning and using Putonghua. Lastly, Hong Kong residents hold Cantonese heritage in high regard. They may fear that learning and using Putonghua might endanger Cantonese culture (Li, 2022).

Li (2022) also mentions reasons that might be affecting Hong Kong people's willingness to learn Putonghua. The first thing is that Cantonese and Putonghua are pronounced differently. Even though both are tonal languages, it is still challenging for Cantonese speakers to speak Putonghua. The second issue is that during classroom teaching, Cantonese may still be used even if the medium of instruction is Putonghua. This leads to students having even less usage for Putonghua outside of language classes. Finally, there is not enough external reason for students to motivate themselves to learn Putonghua. When it comes to academic performance or job prospects, learning and having good proficiency in English may be enough. It is seen that the benefits brought by learning Putonghua are less than learning English. Also, language attitude affects the internal motivation to learn Putonghua, and as Hong Kong students find it difficult to identify with Mainland China, it can be challenging to find enough reason to learn Putonghua (Li, 2022).

3.3 Coverage in News

In a paper written by Shao (2016) it is examined how the local Hong Kong print media participated in the PMI policy process and how the articles framed the views on PMI. The paper includes 138 articles that were collected within one year. The analysis of the data is done through the multiple streams approach framework. The findings of this study are divided into four frames. They were 'the Legal status of Cantonese,' 'Culture/Language crisis,' 'Politics,' and 'Pedagogy and Linguistics.' The frame about the legal status of Cantonese was used only in a few articles, and the points were about Cantonese not having legal protection from the Hong Kong government, and some articles emphasized that Cantonese is a language instead of a dialect. The frame about the Culture/Language crisis shows a suggestion that local Cantonese culture and language are under threat because of the PMI policies. Only three articles wrote that there is no danger at all, saying that using Putonghua as the MOI in Chinese language classes would not affect students' other language abilities (Shao, 2016).

The frame about Politics painted an idea that the issue around using Putonghua as the medium of instruction is not simply a pedagogical issue but a political one (Shao, 2016). The Politics frame was the most used frame from the gathered articles. It was written that PMI is used as a strategy by Beijing in order to have more power over Hong Kong. Opposing views in a few other articles said that the issue would not have become political unless the ones opposing PMI would not have made it so. The issue of PMI has also become a tool within Hong Kong

Mainland conflicts (Shao, 2016).

In the frame of Pedagogy and Linguistics, some articles emphasized how Cantonese is superior to Putonghua, referring to the fact that Cantonese has more tones than Putonghua and Cantonese is closer to classical Chinese texts (Shao, 2016). However, it was also said in defense of Cantonese that no language is superior to others, which conflicts with the other claims. There was also mention about there not being enough evidence to support the use of Putonghua as the language of instruction, and therefore it should not be widely promoted in Hong Kong schools. Also, the notion of using the mother language, in this case, Cantonese, as the language of instruction was brought up, referring to its studied benefits. However, some argue that because of poor results from Putonghua examinations, there should be more Putonghua used as the MOI. Finally, it was also pointed out that using Putonghua as the language of instruction blurs the lines between second language learning and just using the language as the MOI (Shao, 2016).

4 Synthesis and Critical Evaluation

In this chapter, I will go through the findings of the literature review and compare and synthesize key themes and debates. The most prevalent themes that arise from these papers are teachers' competence, lack of guidance from the government, lack of teaching material, lack of research, students' Putonghua proficiency, lack of language environment, benefits and disadvantages of using Putonghua as the PMI, economic reasons, political reasons and attitude towards Putonghua. After synthesis, I will go through the used studies and articles and evaluate them.

In multiple papers, it was mentioned that teachers' competence is one of the main issues affecting the usage of Putonghua as MOI. It was said that teachers, on average, have inadequate knowledge of Putonghua (Gao et al., 2010; Davison & Lai, 2007; Tam, 2012a; Tam, 2012b; Li, 2009). According to Gao et al. (2010) teachers think that changing the MOI from Cantonese to Putonghua may bring additional stress and increase the already big workload. Davison & Lai (2007) also point out that from the schools' point of view, it is a challenge to find proficient teachers in Putonghua to teach the Chinese language, making it difficult to change the language of MOI. They also mentioned that teachers struggle with things such as uncertainty about right Putonghua pronunciation and correct translations, and this has the effect that teachers talk less during classroom time in comparison to the Cantonese-taught classes (Davison & Lai, 2007). Tam (2012a) points out that in order to be eligible to teach Chinese language classes in Putonghua, the teachers need to pass a language proficiency test. Even though, according to the Education Bureau, these teachers are eligible to teach in Putonghua, the teachers still feel that the teaching is not effective. One issue is that the language proficiency test only evaluates language abilities while ignoring pedagogical aspects of using Putonghua as the MOI (Tam, 2012a).

Another major theme is that there is a lack of guidance from the government on how to implement Putonghua as the MOI (Davison & Lai, 2007; Tam, 2012a; Tam, 2012b). For example, according to Tam (2012b), there is no clarity on how the implementation is expected to be done, and there are no measures to see the effectiveness afterward. Also, the teachers thought that the syllabus for teaching the Chinese language in Putonghua was "fragmented" (Tam, 2012b). According to Davison & Lai (2007), Tam (2012a) and Tam (2012b), there is also a lack of suitable teaching material. Also, because of the unclear guidelines, Cantonese is

still often used as the language of discussion during Chinese classes even though the language of instruction is supposed to be Putonghua (Davison & Lai, 2007; Li, 2022). In addition, the major issue regarding the promotion of Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Chinese language classes is that there is a lack of research done on the effectiveness of PMI, and therefore it should not be so widely promoted in Hong Kong schools (Gao et al., 2010; Tam, 2012a; Shao, 2016).

Students' proficiency in Putonghua and the benefits and disadvantages of using Putonghua were prevalent themes throughout the papers. According to Tam (2012a), Tam (2012b), and Kirkpatrick & Wang (2013), students have inadequate proficiency in Putonghua, and this was seen as a possible damaging factor to students' Chinese language academic skills. Also, instead of focusing on the subject matter of the Chinese language, a lot of effort went into correcting students' Putonghua (Tam, 2012a; Tam, 2012b). Shao (2016) pointed out that using Putonghua as the language of instruction can blur the lines between second language learning and using the language as the MOI. The benefits of using Putonghua as the MOI are that it might enhance students' writing abilities and lessen the effect of Cantonese vernacular on students' written Chinese (Gao et al., 2010) and that students' Putonghua proficiency will be improved (Tam 2012a; Tam, 2012b).

According to Li (2022), the percentage of the population in Hong Kong using Putonghua is relatively small, meaning that there is not a lot of usage for Putonghua in day-to-day life. There is a lack of language environment and a lot of the time; students do not have usage for Putonghua outside of classroom teaching (Gao et al., 2010; Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013; Li, 2009; Li, 2022). Lastly, Davison & Lai (2007), Tam (2012a), and Tam (2012b) mention that students tend to be more tense and nervous during Chinese language classes taught in Putonghua. Tam (2012a) also points out that the learning tended to be less interactive and more superficial.

There is a prevalent debate about using Cantonese or Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese language classes. The ones defending Cantonese claim that it is more similar to Classical Chinese writings compared to Putonghua, therefore being the logical choice for MOI (Gao et al., 2010; Shao, 2016). Defenders of Cantonese also refer to the benefit of learning through one's mother language; in most Hong Kong students' case, that language is Cantonese (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013; Li, 2009; Shao, 2016). According to Shao's (2016)

study, some news articles also claimed Cantonese to be a superior language to Putonghua, referring, for example, to the number of tones; however, Cantonese was also defended by saying no language is superior to any other language. Therefore, those two statements are in conflict.

The defenders of Putonghua refer to the advantage that spoken Putonghua and Modern Standard Chinese, which is used during writing, match each other well and, this way, minimize the issue of Cantonese vernacular not matching with written Chinese (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013). Some also argue that since students' Putonghua examination results have not been satisfactory, it would be beneficial to use Putonghua as the MOI during Chinese language classes to improve students' proficiency (Li, 2009; Shao, 2016). The ones opposing Putonghua as the MOI fear that it might negatively affect the position of Cantonese language (Li, 2009; Shao, 2016) and Cantonese culture (Li, 2022; Shao, 2016).

There are also themes around economic reasons, political reasons and attitude. It is viewed that Mainland China is becoming more important to Hong Kong both politically and economically (Kirkpatrick & Wang, 2013) as the trade and other interactions are increasing as well as the position of Putonghua as the lingua franca is becoming more prevalent within China's minorities (Li, 2009). According to Kirkpatrick and Wang (2013), a lot of students' parents see Putonghua being important for the future. Also, from the employers' point of view, it is necessary for employees to have proficiency in Putonghua when working within businesses in Mainland China. This, in turn, has increased Hong Kong people's willingness to learn Putonghua as it might increase their value in the job market (Li, 2009). However, differing views came up in Li's (2022) article. According to Li, students do not have enough external motivation to learn Putonghua, as English proficiency may be enough when it comes to job prospects and academic performance.

From a political point of view, the ones opposing Putonghua as the medium of instruction claim that PMI is used as a strategy by Beijing to gain more power in Hong Kong (Shao, 2016). The ones defending PMI in a few news articles say that the issue would not have turned political, unless it was made it be so by the opposing voices (Shao, 2016). According to Li (2022), Hong Kong residents' attitudes towards Putonghua are either neutral or negative. Some reasons behind this were referred to be issues with identifying with Mainland China and

negative experiences with native Putonghua speakers causing negative attitudes towards Putonghua, which in turn might affect Hong Kong people's willingness to learn Putonghua.

In Gao et al.'s (2010) study they examined Chinese teachers' experiences on using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Chinese language classes. They also wanted to find out what these teachers' perceptions are based on. Gao et al. explain that teachers have a critical role when it comes to educational changes, and therefore, it is important to study their experiences and perceptions. The study included eight Chinese language teachers, half of which were originally from Mainland China and half from Hong Kong. The study included in-depth biographical interviews with the participants, and these interviews were also recorded and transcribed word for word, which increases the accuracy of analyzing data. In analyzing the data, Gao et al. used a pragmatic cognition method to create classifications and sections from the data to find prevalent factors. One weakness of this study is that the number of participants was relatively small, as it only included eight Chinese language teachers, this is also mentioned in Gao et al.'s conclusion. However, the method of the study was useful in gaining information on how the teachers view MOI changes and perceive the increased use of Putonghua.

In Davison & Lai's (2007) article, they analyzed how programs using Putonghua as the medium of instruction have developed within international and local schools in Hong Kong. In the article they compared the reasons that are behind the development of Putonghua MOI programs. They go through the history of Putonghua in Hong Kong schools, underlying discussions and common issues found within using Putonghua as the medium of instruction. The article is written in a comprehensible way, and sources are cited clearly.

Tam's (2012a) case study investigated what type of issues secondary school teachers and administrators come across in implementing Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese language classes. The school that was examined had been using Putonghua for 10 years to teach all Chinese language classes. The number of participants was 10 Chinese language teachers, including the department head, the principal, the vice principal, and school administrators. The study included interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and the research used a constant comparison method. In this method, the data is sorted and organized into groups according to their features. This study gives great insight

into how different stakeholders view PMI from this sample school's point of view. As Tam also stated, the study cannot be generalized as it is a case study about a single school, and it does not include possible comparisons between school administrators' and teachers' views on increasing the use of PMI. Lastly, the number of participants is also relatively small.

In Tam's (2012b) case study, she studies how teachers' beliefs play a part in how they conceptualize using Putonghua as the medium of instruction, how these beliefs also play a part in making decisions about the curricula and how the implementation of Putonghua medium instruction is done. In this case study, 10 secondary school teachers were interviewed, and the study also included classroom observations; in analyzing data, the constant comparison method was used. Tam prefaces the study well in explaining how belief systems are an active part of how teachers can positively or negatively affect the success of curricular changes and the implementation of new ideas. The study gives a new perspective on how to examine the issue of PMI from teachers' point of view, as the previous studies have often been about teachers' competence and, for example, lack of suitable materials. This study delves into the beliefs that teachers have and what effect those beliefs have on using PMI. The number of participants, however, was also small, as it included only 10 teachers.

In a case study conducted by Wang and Kirkpatrick (2013), they investigated the implementation of trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools. The school that was chosen for this study is a government-funded school. The data collected included interviews with the school staff, questionnaires for the students, and classroom discourse data analysis. The number of staff interviewed was 13, and from Primary 4 to Primary 6, 121 students were surveyed. This case study gives useful information on how trilingual education is implemented in the sample school, and it can give an idea of what issues arise and how they could be addressed. However, as the scope of study is rather narrow, including only one school, it cannot be generalized.

In a paper written by Li (2009), he discusses the 'biliteracy and trilingualism' dilemmas in the medium of instruction debate, looking at it from different stakeholders' points of view. These are government, employers, parents, school principals, educationalists, and students. Li (2009) prefaces the paper by going through the education policy about biliteracy and trilingualism and dissects issues and challenges emerging from it. He goes through the point of view of each stakeholder in a coherent way. He has referenced sources clearly.

An article written by Li (2022) analyzes what type of attitude Hong Kong residents have towards Putonghua and what kind of status it has in Hong Kong society; it also investigates reasons that might affect the willingness to learn Putonghua and the factors behind their attitude towards Putonghua. The article was clearly separated into themes, and it made it easy to get an overview of the issues and factors and the sources were referenced clearly.

In a paper written by Shao (2016) it is examined how the local Hong Kong print media participated in the PMI policy process and how the articles framed the views on PMI. The paper includes 138 articles that were collected within one year. The analysis of the data is done through the multiple streams approach framework. Shao explains that using MSA is useful in analyzing the mass media's participation and its role in the policy process. This study offers information on how the mass media can affect the policy process around the discussion of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools. The amount of data as news articles collected in this study was enough to give a good overview of the issue and look at different points of view. Also, the time to collect these articles was relatively long.

Most of the studies made about the topic of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction are case studies focusing on a specific school. These studies give useful information on the multiple factors influencing this issue and the administrators' and educators' views. However, as these studies are not made on a wider scale, on their own they cannot be generalized. But even so, these studies all pointed out similar themes and discussed PMI from different points of view giving reasons for and against using Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese classes. Few of the papers were articles that discussed these issues based on different research and papers. These articles give good additional information.

5 Conclusion and Future Directions

This literature review aims to review existing literature and examine arguments for and against using Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese classes in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. I wanted to find out what are the factors that affect the reasons behind these opposing or supporting views. There were multiple factors that I was able to identify. The main issue is around government not being clear enough on the implementation process and goals of the PMI policy. Schools are left by themselves to conduct and solve rising issues, and this can be seen in the curriculum being “fragmented”, there being a lack of teaching materials, and a lack of guidelines for teachers. This, in turn, causes issues that teachers have to deal with, such as orienteering through the process of changing the MOI from Cantonese to Putonghua. Some sources do claim that the government is putting effort into teachers’ Putonghua proficiency, but from the reviewed literature, it can be noted that there are still issues around this topic, as schools also struggle to find qualified teachers.

There is an ongoing debate around whether using Putonghua as the medium of instruction is beneficial for the students. Opposing views claim that Putonghua will not bring additional benefits, but it might, in turn, hinder students' academic language skills within Chinese language subjects, as a lot of energy needs to be put into correcting Putonghua usage and the classes being tenser and less interactive. The ones supporting it, however, do bring out the benefit of Putonghua matching well with Modern Standard Chinese and the overall improvement of student’s Putonghua proficiency. Another issue that arose was that changing the language of instruction is also a charged issue politically. According to the findings of the literature review, there were underlying issues affecting Hong Kong people’s attitude towards Putonghua and fears of PMI policy causing harm to Cantonese language and culture.

In my literature review I was able to identify multiple factors that affect the reason behind supporting or opposing using Putonghua as the medium of instruction during Chinese classes. Also, there is a clear debate on whether it is effective to use Putonghua from the students’ abilities point of view and what are the possible consequences on society’s level if widespread PMI policy is applied in schools. However, in my literature review, there were quite a few wide-scale themes that came up, and therefore from some of the themes, in-depth analysis was challenging to do. For future literature review, I would focus on one main theme and

delve deeper into that in order to gain a more precise overview of the specific issue.

For future directions, my literature review detected two main gaps in research. Firstly, there is not enough research done on the effectiveness of using Putonghua as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. This is crucial in order to adopt a coherent and research-backed approach when it comes to changing the language medium of Chinese language classes in Hong Kong. Secondly, there is a need for research on how the change in the language medium of Chinese language classes to Putonghua might affect the overall status of Cantonese in Hong Kong. More specific areas of future investigation could be what kind of long-term effects Putonghua instruction has on language identity in Hong Kong.

Changing the language of instruction in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools' Chinese language classes from Cantonese to Putonghua is a complex issue that has multilayered factors at play. This topic is an important area of future research, as resolving the debates surrounding PMI is crucial for Hong Kong's education system.

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