

Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme

Language Lab for Chinese and Non-Chinese Students

Scheduled Comprehensive Report for Phase I

(the first six months)

I Introduction

Hong Kong Institute of Technology was approved under the 'Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme' to operate the project titled 'Language Lab for Chinese and Non-Chinese Students' hence referred to as 'Project'.

The project was approved in early 2009 and the first phase was scheduled from May 2009. The Project team had placed great importance to accommodate several of the deliverables for the successful completion of the project.

The following report illustrates how the scheme has operated at this first phase of operation, and the achievements therein that are quantifiable in the best possible manner.

II Implementation Scheme for Phase 1

The critical paths involved in setting up and getting the systems live have been completed during this phase, the only exception being the student pilot study and the activities related therein. This was due to the fact that the project had to start with a two month delay which led to the timeline to spill over in to the summer period of studies. As such, no full time students were able to bring into the mainstream for this pilot and inevitably these stages were to be pulled over to the First Semester of our academic calendar that is starting from October 2009.

<u>Cumulative Outcome of Phase I of the Project</u>	
Milestones	Actual Completion
1. Pre-scheme survey of students' English and Putonghua level and attainment in the four macro skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing by means of grading tests and questionnaires	May-09
2. Data recorded for comparison with post-scheme survey data	May-09
3. Set up of Advisory Group	May-09
4. Laboratory Setup	June 2009 - October 2009
5. Designing and trial-running intensive courses	June 2009 - October 2009
6. Developing teaching and learning materials from authentic and semi-authentic sources (including newspapers, magazines, TV programmes, websites)	June 2009 - October 2009
7. Developing Multimedia based learning materials and environment	June 2009 - October 2009
8. Trialling workshop and other "hands-on" activities using authentic and semi-authentic materials and recording the outcome data	October 2009 - November 2009

9. Administering course evaluation questionnaires and conducting sample interviews and analysing data for improving and fine-tuning course design and materials development and production	October 2009 - November 2009
10. Piloting trialled courses offered to a given group of students	October 2009 - November 2009
11. Course evaluation - by sample interviews and feedback questionnaires and data analysed for revising and improving course designs for implementation in the second phase of the project	October 2009 - November 2009
12. Evaluation and feedback for the on-line self-access learning package for improving and fine-tuning the package for implementation in the second phase	October 2009 - November 2009

III Important Milestones completed as part of Phase 1

1. Pre-Scheme Survey of Students' English and Putonghua level and attainment in the four macro skills of reading listening, speaking and writing:

HKIT conducted a pre-scheme evaluation of language skills and macro skills therein on a sample set of 6 students from various academic and social backgrounds in the form of recorded interview. The student interviews were conducted on a selected representative group of students representing the vast majority of the student population of HKIT.

Report on Student Interviews

In view of HKIT's plans to establish a Language Lab in the campus, which will give students an avenue to learn Putonghua and English, a series of interviews on several ethnic minority and local students were conducted to provide insight on various language issues.

Having administered the one-on-one interview method as opposed to a standard survey questionnaire, we managed to get responses from students that catered to their language proficiency and background. It was felt that a personal interview would solicit better and more detailed answers as opposed to a standard survey which would potentially foster ambiguous responses.

Interviewees

- 4 Ethnic Minority Students
 - Nepalese
 - Pakistani
 - Indian
- 2 Locals Students

The interview addressed few issues that the students faced in their academic and social life. The summary of results on some of the contentious issues is illustrated below:

a. On China and being part of the growth and opportunities

The ethnic minority students who were interviewed already had prior knowledge of the English Language and therefore felt that learning Putonghua was of far more importance with 'the rise of China'.

According to Club Thapa, 18, *"China is leading the pack in terms of the business market and it's extremely important to me to learn Putonghua."*

Sharing similar sentiments, Divya Harish Kumar, 21, having studied in Singapore for 2 years, feels that learning a language depends on where you live. *"If you're working in China or Singapore, it would be an asset to learn Putonghua while working in Hong Kong would require you to learn Cantonese,"* she said.

b. On Putonghua lessons

Students were exposed to and taught Putonghua in primary school but that was never enough to help them grasp a proper understanding or command of the language.

When asked why they never thought of engaging in private lessons in secondary school or in their teenage years, similar responses all across the board revealed that they neither had the time nor the interest at that point of time to look up courses.

David Lau, 20, currently doing a degree in International Business, has already got a head start in learning the language.

"At an early age, my parents felt that I should study Putonghua and it's because of them pushing me to learn, I've become to pick up the language pretty well so far," he said.

c. On the Language Lab

The interview concluded that the students, in general, liked the idea of having a Language Lab and also brought to light several suggestions on how the classes can be conducted:

Students felt that a mix of software learning and writing would be a good way to learn the language.

According to Club Thapa, *"I'd rather use a pen and jot down notes but using software would be interesting as well,"* he said.

To further enhance the level of understanding, David Lau feels that games should be introduced to make the class fun to learn in. *"There could be role playing where students can have a drama and they can only speak the particular language. So the role play, will help you communicate with others and use the language to ask people for directions etc. and integrate it in everyday life."*

Observations

The result of the interview re-emphasised the need for effective implementation of language lab and the opportunity to further enhance the language skills of the students.

2. Setting Up Of Advisory Group:

Advisory group was set up with a membership of 7 members as below:

- Mr. TH Wong (Former Senior Member of Hong Kong Vocational and Training Council, experienced educator in Hong Kong Higher Education)
- Mr. CC Choi (Former Secretary General of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, expert in examination and assessment system)
- Prof. Enoch Young (Former Director of School of Professional and Continuing Education, The University of Hong Kong, experienced educator in Hong Kong Higher Education)
- Prof. Chan Wing Wah (Professor of Music and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Chinese University of Hong Kong, experienced educator in Hong Kong Higher Education)
- Dr. Joy Shi*
- Mr. Andrew Hall*
- Mr. Thejaswi Padmanabha*

* HKIT full time staff members participating in the project on a voluntary basis

3. Laboratory Setup

The major tasks accomplished were:

- Installation of the computers.
- Testing and implementation of the language lab softwares and language training softwares

4. Designing and developing course materials and teaching materials and methodologies:

Various resources like DDCODE and English and Putonghua materials compiled by the course writers were collectively organised in a cohesive package so that they can be used for classroom discourse and in enabling the objectives of the lab.

5. Library Resources planning, collection and implementation:

With assistance from HKIT librarian and advice from the advisory group, a set of vast resources of various types including reference materials, CDs and DVDs were collected for compilation and usage of the students of the laboratory.

See Appendix I, II, III, IV, V and VI for more details on supporting materials that was procured at the behest of this project.

6. Delivery of the Pilot and Course Evaluation:

The Pilot was undertaken and one of the primary goals of the task was to assess the weakness in the planned delivery of the programmes through the lab. A pre- and post- course evaluation was conducted to analyse the effectiveness of the course (see *Appendix VII and Appendix VIII*).

No. of respondents: 21 for pre- and 13 for post- course evaluation

Summary of the evaluation

Pre-course evaluation:

According to the pre-course evaluation, it was observed that the major issues with the students are reading and decoding of text. It was also found that students have difficulties in differentiation between vowel/consonant minimal pairs and like/similar sounds. Furthermore, many of them have pronunciation problems like lack of final consonant diction which impeded comprehension significantly.

Post-course evaluation:

77% respondents found the course is interesting and 69% of them found it is useful. All respondents enjoyed the classes and happy with the class arrangement. Some trivial issues in language learning were observed and progressive improvement was observed as evidenced in this questionnaire. Difficulties such as those with pronunciation and speaking were identified on an individual basis with this pilot exercise.

7. Review of the delivery methodology:

The conclusion of pilot programme has enabled the course team to finalise the learning materials and the delivery and assessment method for enhanced outcome based learning approach.

8. Launch of Learning Management system (LMS) and a Supporting website for the language lab:

A new website was developed (<http://llab.hkit.edu.hk>) to provide as portal and central repository of information on the language lab. Subsequently a fully fledged learning management system was developed (LMS) (<http://lms.llab.hkit.edu.hk>) to enable the students and teachers undertaking the course to share various resources and create a forum for discussions and platform for effective communication (see Appendix XI and X). The platform supports various functionalities like online assessment, submission of assignments, test, quizzes etc. Also provided is an online discussion forum for the benefit of the students.

IV Accountability and Project Execution

As an important step for accountability and transparency, the following records of actions regarding project execution illustrate the various resources that has been utilised during the first phase of the project.

The following figures are for reference, and a detailed audited report will be submitted as per the agreement through the end of the execution phase of the project.

Summary of expenditures for the project (Phase 1)

Item	Approved Budget	Actual Expenditure	Remarks
a. Manpower			
○ 1 full-time Project Manager	\$90,000.00	\$40,444.75	
○ 2 part-time IT Officers	\$90,000.00	\$24,580.00	Changed to 1 full-time IT Officer
b. Equipment/Facilities			
<u>Computer Lab</u>			
○ 45 Computers	\$202,500.00	\$202,455.00	
○ Furniture and fixture	\$8,000.00	\$6,177.00	
○ Wiring	\$6,000.00	\$5,626.00	
○ Projector and other teaching facilities	\$8,500.00	\$8,320.00	
<u>Language Training Software</u>	<u>\$50,000.00</u>		
○ Raeback - DDCODE		\$12,000.00	Installation sum of \$5000 has been unused because of free installation
○ Phonetic Master		\$17,928.00	
○ OUP -IELTS Examination Test Preparation - 45 Test Set		\$2,373.11	
○ Language learning with Music Tools		\$6,700.00	
○ Hans Vision DXT V9 Student Edition Software		\$426.00	

c. Services			
<u>Course design and Programme development</u>			
○ Reference books	\$20,000.00	\$19,947.30	See appendix I
○ Electronic journal databases	\$40,000.00	\$77,940.00	\$77,940 for Full Year subscription
○ In house development of the Multimedia based learning environment	\$30,000.00	\$30,238.00	
○ External development of the Multimedia based learning environment	\$50,000.00	\$53,220.00	With the consideration of language training software were installed at no installation cost, a sum of less than 10% of this section (HKD 3,200) has been carried over from Section B
○ English & Putonghua CD & DVDs	\$20,000.00	\$20,205.80	See appendix II
<u>Advisor Fee</u>			
○ Consulting fee for course design	\$25,000.00	\$12,500.00	
○ Consulting fee for programme development	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
<u>Teaching and learning materials development and production costs</u>			
○ Newspapers, magazines, etc	\$5,000.00	\$5,050.00	See appendix III
○ Online resources and TV programmes	\$5,000.00	\$5,086.00	See appendix IV
○ English and Putonghua materials' writers	\$40,000.00	\$23,000.00	See appendix V & VI
Total	\$715,000.00	\$599,216.96	

V. The percentage, in terms of key tasks, of the Project completed at the end of each reporting period

<u>The Percentage of Project Completion</u>	
Milestones	Percentages of Actual Completion
1. Pre-scheme survey of students' English and Putonghua level and attainment in the four macro skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing by means of grading tests and questionnaires	100%
2. Data recorded for comparison with post-scheme survey data	100%
3. Set up of Advisory Group	100%
4. Laboratory Setup	100%
5. Designing and trial-running intensive courses	100%
6. Developing teaching and learning materials from authentic and semi-authentic sources (including newspapers, magazines, TV programmes, websites)	100%
7. Developing Multimedia based learning materials and environment	100%
8. Trialling workshop and other "hands-on" activities using authentic and semi-authentic materials and recording the outcome data	100%
9. Administering course evaluation questionnaires and conducting sample interviews and analysing data for improving and fine-tuning course design and materials development and production	100%
10. Piloting trialled courses offered to a given group of students	100%
11. Course evaluation - by sample interviews and feedback questionnaires and data analysed for revising and improving course designs for implementation in the second phase of the project	100%
12. Evaluation and feedback for the on-line self-access learning package for improving and fine-tuning the package for implementation in the second phase	100%

Phase I has been carried out successfully. It is estimated that the whole project got 33% completed.