

Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme

Final Evaluation Report

Project No.: 89992031

Part A

Project Title: Development of a Self-access Reading and Listening Package for Enhancing English Learning Effectiveness for Community College Students in Hong Kong

Name of Grantee: School of Professional and Continuing Education, The University of Hong Kong

Project Period: From September 2009 (month/year) to August 2011 (month/year)

Part B

Please use separate A4-size sheets to provide an evaluation of the Project with regard to the following aspects:

1. Project activities contributing to the attainment of Project objectives, extent of attainment of the objectives, evidence or indicators attesting to the attainment of the objectives, and if applicable, reasons for not able to achieve the objectives.
2. Impact or benefits of the Project to the participants, the target institution(s) or the sector.
3. Cost-effectiveness of the Project against clear indicators, e.g. utilization of available resources, unit cost per beneficiaries, sustainability of Project activities/impacts, applicability of Project outcomes/deliverables to other institutions, or alternative approaches for equivalent benefits at less cost, etc.
4. Outcomes and deliverables of the Project.

Signature: T. M. Wong

Organization Chop: _____



Name of Authorized Person: T. M. Wong

Name of Grantee: SPACE, The University of Hong Kong
Organization: of Hong Kong

Position of Authorized

Person: Project Coordinator

Date: 30 November 2011

Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme (QEGS) Project

**Development of a Self-access Reading and Listening Package
for Enhancing English Learning Effectiveness for Community
College Students in Hong Kong**

Final Evaluation Report (1 September 2009 – 31 August 2011)

Project leaders: (*in alphabetical order*) Dr. Sabina Mak, Dr. Michael Wong, and Prof. Tak Ming Wong

Team members: (*in alphabetical order*) Mr. David Cheng (Half-time Package Developer), Dr. Jessie Choi, Mr. Tommy Lui, Ms. Yung Ching San (Part-time Research Assistant), Dr. Yu Ying (Project Officer).

1. Introduction

This report provides a final evaluation of the project entitled “Development of a Self-access Reading and Listening Package for Enhancing English Learning Effectiveness for Community College Student in Hong Kong”, which was funded by the Quality Enhancement Scheme Grant from the period of 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2011.

The project intends to identify the learning needs of community college students, based on which an independent learning package is developed to promote students’ academic English reading and listening skills. The project started on 1 September 2009 and lasted until 31 August 2011. For management and implementation purposes, the project was carried out in four stages.

This report, firstly, details the project activities that contributed to the achievement of the project objectives, the extent of achievement, and relevant evidence. Secondly, findings collected at the various stages of the project are reported, highlighting the impact of the project on the participating students, pinpointing the instructional implications for the English language teaching and learning in the community colleges in Hong Kong, and the report proposes suggestions and recommendations when the project outcomes are applied in other institutions. Thirdly, the report summarizes the utilization of the available resources and evaluates the cost-effectiveness of the project. Last but not least, the project outcomes and deliverables are indicated.

2. Project Activities

As was proposed in the project proposal, the objectives of the current project include:

- a) exploring the needs of HKU SPACE Community College students to acquire both academic English reading and listening skills;
- b) developing a self-access learning package, including guidelines and a progress-monitoring scheme to enhance students’ focused skills and foster their independent learning strategies

This section reports the major activities conducted that contributed to the attainment of the above objectives.

2.1. Activities exploring students' needs

2.1.1. Background survey

A background survey was conducted in September 2009, examining the students' results in the English language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and in the Use of English in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). A sample of 282 students was selected out of the 1718 students who enrolled in the General English III course. These students were from various programmes in the HKU SPACE Community College, including Associate of Arts, Associate of Business Administration, Associate of Applied Science in Life Science, Associate of Applied Science in Physical Science, Associate of Applied Science in Information Technology, Associate of Social Sciences, and Higher Diploma in Corporate Communications and Management. Random sampling was adopted to ensure that the participants best represented the student population in the college. By examining the English proficiency of these students, their strengths and weaknesses in English learning were then identified so that their needs could be better catered for in the design of the tailor-made self-access package in the later stages of the project.

2.1.2. Strategy survey

In October 2009, a "Reading and Listening Strategies Questionnaire" was administered to all the 1,718 students who enrolled in the General English III course in HKU Space Community College Kowloon Bay Campus. The return rate of the questionnaire was 62.3%, with a total number of 1,071 completed questionnaires obtained. The questionnaire covered two parts: 1) academic reading strategies; and 2) academic listening strategies.

As far as reading strategies are concerned, two theoretical frameworks were used. The first one, developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), included three types of reading strategies: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support reading strategies. The second one was the comprehensive typologies of reading strategies developed by the English Language Teaching Unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Nunan, 1999).

The second part of the questionnaire, i.e., listening strategies, consisted of cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies, under each of which there were some sub-categories of strategies.

The questionnaire aimed at obtaining information concerning students' use of reading strategies, listening strategies, and independent learning strategies in academic English context.

2.1.3. Follow-up interviews

In December 2009, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews, on voluntary basis, with 12 students out of the questionnaire respondents. Through the interviews, more in-depth information was obtained concerning students' use of reading and listening strategies in the academic context, which supplemented the questionnaire data. Both the quantitative and qualitative data served to facilitate the design of the self-access learning package.

2.1.4. Analysis of Stage 1 data

The quantitative and qualitative data collected in Stage 1 was analyzed, including the background survey, the strategy survey, and the in-depth interviews.

For the background survey, the students' test results in the two Hong Kong public examinations, i.e., Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), were examined to identify their level of English proficiency at the time of their admission to the HKU SPACE Community College. Furthermore, as the present project focused on promoting students' academic English learning and the IELTS academic module was used as pre-test and post-test, the students' results in the two public examinations were benchmarked against the IELTS test, for a more scientific evaluation of students' language proficiency. The benchmarking was based on the equi-percentile formula for stratified samples of candidates taking the IELTS 2004, as well as HKCEE and HKALE produced by Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) (2008). Students' overall results in the two examinations together with the sub-scores of reading and listening were benchmarked.

Descriptive analysis was conducted of the strategy questionnaire to explore the respondents' reported use of reading and listening strategies in the academic context. The interview data were analyzed in an inductive way to allow major themes to emerge. With the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis, students' language competence, learning habits, skills, learning strategies, and their independent learning

styles were evaluated in an objective manner.

2.2. Activities for the implementation of the package

2.2.1. Pre-test and selection of participants

In December 2009, in collaboration with the British Council, an IELTS test was arranged on the HKU SPACE Community College Kowloon Bay campus. A total of 152 students made application to the IELTS test. They were beneficiaries of the project in view of the discounted rate they paid for the test. Based on the test results and a voluntary basis, 70 students were enrolled to participate in the project, who were later randomly divided into a control group and an experimental group with 35 students in each. This test was intended to serve as the pre-test of the project, providing baseline data of students' language proficiency prior to working on the self-access learning package.

2.2.2. Development of self-access reading and listening package

During the second phase of the project, the project team, following closely the research findings from needs analysis and the existing literature, worked out the design criteria and content flow of the self-access reading and listening package in order to address the learning needs of students in the community college. It was decided that the package be divided into 10 separate but not discrete modules in which all the important reading and listening strategies will be covered and taught in a systematic manner. The 10 modules were theme-based, each focusing on a theme of interest to students with authentic reading and listening materials from newspaper, magazines, and journals, etc.

To ensure the quality of the package, a number of English teachers from the HKU SPACE Community College were invited to comment on the draft package. Ongoing crosschecking and content evaluation was conducted throughout the development of the package, during which issues and concerns emerged were addressed immediately and accordingly. The project team also went through a proofreading process of the draft package and ensured consistency of contents and related strategies. The vigorous process of content development, modification and proofreading ensured a high validity and reliability of the package.

Afterwards, 10 students were invited to participating in the trialing of the selected

modules from the package. Overall, the students' responses to those modules were positive. They commented that they were motivated to work on the complete package later. In addition, the trialing helped the project team to identify what seemed to have been ignored in the package from the students' perspective, and thereafter modify some of the contents and strategies accordingly in order to better meet the students' needs and to facilitate the later implementation of the package.

After the modifications, the package was sent to a professional native English-speaking copy-editor for final editing and formatting. The editing not only ensured the quality of the package but also improved its layout so that the contents were better presented and the package became much more user-friendly. After changes were made in the format and presentation of the contents according to the copy-editor's comments and suggestions, the package was finalized and sent to a printing shop for print.

2.2.3. Development of user guideline

To guide and facilitate students' effective use of the package for self-access learning, a user guideline was developed. The development went through rounds of discussion during which the project team contributed ideas and insights to make sure that the instructions show clearly to students as to how to make the best out of the package rather than merely treating it as examination preparation materials.

The guideline was printed as a separate brochure, which allowed students to refer to it easily and whenever necessary, without having to turning back and forth between pages if otherwise attached to the package.

2.2.4. Copyright clearance

Authentic reading and listening materials were emphasized and used in the development of the package. Therefore written and audio texts, such as research report, newspaper articles, and lectures from external resources were incorporated in the design of the learning activities. Copyright holders of these materials were contacted via email and permissions were obtained from them for the use of relevant materials.

2.2.5. Implementation of the package

A briefing session held in November 2010 for the 35 selected students marked the commencement of the implementation of the package. The briefing session introduced the structure of the package and modules, the timelines for work on the package, the requirements involved, and the students' learning responsibilities. Strategies of independent learning, such as making action plans and time management, were also suggested. In addition, the students were informed of the resources available to facilitate their learning, which include learning materials, equipment, and consultation.

The students were required to work on the package in the college library so that it was possible for the project team to keep track of their progress. The students' copy of the package was kept at the library counter, marked with their names and student number. Each copy was attached with a separate brochure of the user guideline. The students signed in and out on a log sheet available at the counter that recorded their attendance and the amount of time they spent each time. The students were found to spend, on average, about two and a half hours on one module of the package, close to the estimated three hours we recommended for a single module.

The project team reviewed regularly the progress of the implementation, checking the students' work on the package, discussing among members of the team how to address issues coming up along the way.

2.2.6. Consultation sessions

Throughout the implementation of the package from November 2010 to April 2011, the project team provided consultation sessions for the students on workdays at fixed time slots. The students were advised to consult the project team with problems and difficulties they encountered when they worked on the package. Through questioning and scaffolding, the project team helped the students identify their strengths and weaknesses in academic reading and listening, and suggested directions for improvement. A consultation form was developed for the use of the teachers in charge of the consultation sessions in order to facilitate probing and record keeping. During the implementation period of the package, altogether 436 hours of consultation sessions were provided by the project team.

The project team reviewed regularly the effectiveness of the consultation sessions through meetings and oral work report.

2.2.7. Post-test

The implementation of the self-access reading and listening package was completed on 10 April 2011. A post-test in the form of IELTS test was arranged in collaboration with the British Council at the KEC campus on the 16th and 17th of April 2011. In the end, 60 students participating in the project enrolled in the test, 31 from the experimental group and 29 from the control group. The rest 10 students who initially joined the project withdrew from the project for either personal reasons or being unable to follow the project schedule and therefore decided not to take the test.

2.2.8. In-depth interviews

In order to have a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of the package, in-depth interviews were conducted in June and July 2011. 18 students from the experimental group were invited for face-to-face interviews and were encouraged to comment on the package, their strategy use, and the consultation sessions. Another 8 students from the control group were invited for interviews, mainly commenting on the effectiveness of the consultation sessions.

3. Objectives achieved

3.1. Needs analysis report

A thorough needs analysis report was completed in February 2010 (see the Progress Report dated September 2009 – February 2010), based on the background survey, the strategy questionnaire, and the follow-up interviews.

3.1.1. Background survey

The background survey collected students' (N=282) test results in English in the HKCEE and HKALE. The results were benchmarked against the IELTS test following a formula the HKEAA (2008) develops.

Results from the background survey revealed that with regard to the results in the HKCEE, 54 students achieved Score 1, 103 students Score 2, and 62 students Score 3. These altogether accounted for 77.7% of the sampled students. For the reading part of the test, 56% per cent of the students obtained Score 2 (82 students) or 3 (76 students). As for the listening part, 60% of the students received Score 2 (97 students) or 3 (73 students). If benchmarked against the IELTS, Scores 2-3 in the HKCEE fall within

the IELTS score range of 5.32 to 5.92.

As for the HKALE Use of English, 76.2% of the sampled students scored Grade D (115 students) or Grade E (100 students). For the reading part of the test, 63% of the students obtained Grade D (89 students) or E (90 students). As for the listening part, 68% of the students received Grade D (96 students) or E (95 students). If benchmarked against the IELTS, Grades D-E in the HKALE fall within the IELTS score range of 5.40 to 6.03.

As is known, most universities and institutions of higher education in Hong Kong, or even abroad, set the score of 6.5 in the IELTS test as the minimum language proficiency requirement for application and admission. What was revealed in the background survey suggests that majority of the students failed to meet universities' entry requirement for English and there was still much to be improved in their reading and listening sub-skills. As many community college students aim at pursuing degree programs in universities eventually, the need for improvement in these two skills is rather urgent and necessary.

3.1.2. Strategy survey

In the meantime, the strategy survey administered to a total number of 1,071 students provided useful information of the pattern of their strategy use in academic English reading and listening.

As far as reading strategies are concerned, two theoretical frameworks concerning reading strategies are used. The first one was developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) who distinguished three types of reading strategies, i.e., global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies and support reading strategies.

Results concerning this part of the questionnaire revealed that the students relied heavily on problem-solving strategies. A possible reason might be related to students' constant exposure to school-related materials which required them to answer a number of questions while/after reading. To a certain extent, students are trained to pay much attention to such strategies of problem-solving in order to get a higher score in exam situations. However, global strategies and support strategies, particularly the latter, seemed to be underused by the students. For example, most students seemed reluctant to discuss what they knew or not with their friends or teachers. Although the

use of such strategies might not directly lead to good reading performance, the result is noteworthy as it points to the fact that most students more or less associate reading with comprehending classroom or examination-like materials.

The second framework is the comprehensive typologies of reading strategies developed by the English Language Teaching Unit of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Nunan, 1999). Analysis of this part of data shows that the five most frequently used strategies include: "previewing", "inferring unknown vocabulary", "using background knowledge", "having a purpose", and "clustering". In contrast, "reviewing", "reading actively", "reading to present", "avoiding bad habits" and "identifying figurative language" are the five least frequently-used strategies. Regarding the item of "avoiding bad habits", the results indicate that certain negative practices are still prevalent among a number of students. These include "translating the sentences into one's native language for the main idea of the passage" and "breaking sentences into phrases or words for understanding of the passage".

To a certain extent, the findings reported above suggest that the students have limited reading purposes and scopes. It would be beneficial if they can be taught to improve their reading skills by reading a diversity of materials instead of focusing on classroom or textbook-based materials only.

The listening part of the questionnaire consisted of two categories of strategies: cognitive strategies and meta-cognitive strategies, under each of which there are several subcategories. The results are reported below according to the sub-categories.

Results concerning cognitive strategies show that "reconstruction", "inferencing" and "contextualization" are the three sub-categories of cognitive strategies used most frequently by the students, whereas "translation", "visualization" and "fixation" are the least frequently used. This shows that students seem to direct more concentration on global rather than local textual contents with an aim of obtaining a general synopsis of the textual message. Students also avoid translating what they hear while listening, a strategy perceived by researchers as a negative strategy that "slow[s] down processing and often take[s] informants' attention away" (Goh 2002:192). However, it should be noted that satisfactory comprehension of a listening task is to a large extent dependent on the successful interplay of a number of strategies and factors (Goh, 2002). Therefore, training should aim at an overall improvement of all

positive strategies in order to address students' needs of enhancing their listening competence.

For metacognitive strategies, students are found to use the three sub-categories of strategies most frequently, i.e., "directed attention", "selective attention", and "real-time assessment of input". The least frequently used sub-category of strategies is person knowledge, which include two items "I decide what problems I have, affecting me from completing the task successfully", and "I question myself about what I do know and what I do not know about a topic". Apparently, this sub-category of strategy is related to how students assess their strengths and weaknesses after a listening task. The low mean score of this sub-category indicates that reflecting on one's self-efficacy occurs relatively less frequently among students. As listening is an instantaneous activity, and in most cases, students are often required to complete certain multiple choice questions or filling information gaps while listening, they may get used to focusing on the while-listening process and thus ignore the post-listening process which may otherwise help them enhance their listening competence in subsequent listening activities. The training of this particular strategy can, therefore, be attached more importance to classroom listening activities.

The other two less frequently used sub-categories of strategies include "comprehension monitoring" and "pre-listening preparation". It should be pointed out, however, that there seems to be no big differences among the sub-categories in metacognitive strategies.

To sum up, the findings of the needs analysis were incorporated in the development of the self-access reading and listening package in the following ways:

1. A repertoire of strategies was included in the package, and at the same time the strategies were considered appropriate to students' level of English proficiency.
2. As students were found to be exam-oriented in their strategy use, a diversity of materials, instead of exam-preparation materials, were used in the package.

3.2. Self-access reading and listening package

The package consists of ten modules, each on a specific theme. The themes cover a range of social, economic, and cultural issues, such as family, education, technology

as well as information advancements, language and culture. The purpose of selecting these themes is to equip students with the necessary encyclopedic knowledge and to broaden their perspective.

In each module, there are two major parts, reading and listening. Each part consists of two sections. The first section explains the strategy and skills that students are supposed to acquire in this module, with some learning activities included for students' immediate practice. The second section mainly involves integrated learning tasks for further drilling. All of these are based on the specific theme of a particular module.

The package also emphasizes promoting independent learning abilities, such as monitoring, identifying skills needed, and self-reflecting. For instance, in the user guide, an action plan is developed that help students work out a scheme of work before getting started. Then in each module, at the end of the reading and the listening part respectively, a checklist is provided for students to monitor to what extent they understand and can apply the strategies learnt in each module. At the end of each module, a list of additional learning materials and online resources is recommended for students' further studies, if they find necessary. Last but not least, a progress report is designed for students' use upon completion of each module, which encourages students to reflect on their performance in the module, areas for further improvement, and actions to be taken for improvement, etc.

4. Benefits of the project to the students

4.1. Students' performance in the pre- and post- tests

By the end of the project, altogether 60 out of 70 participating students from both the experimental group (N=31) and control group (N=29) took an IELTS test as post-test.

As the experimental group worked on the self-access reading and listening package for about 6 months and the control group received some input on writing skills during the same period, we wanted to find out whether each group of students made improvements after the training, especially in the areas they were trained. Therefore, these students' results in the post-test were compared with those in the pre-test. A number of paired sample t-tests were conducted with SPSS 18, comparing the overall score as well as the sub-scores of listening, reading, and writing.

Results of the analysis show that, for the experimental group, statistical significant differences are found in the overall score ($p=.003$; $p<.05$) and the sub-scores of listening ($p=.041$; $p<.05$) and writing ($p=.002$; $p<.05$) between the pre-test and post-test, and these scores in the post-test are all higher than those of the pre-test. The results suggest that the students made improvements in these areas, and the improvements were tested to be statistically significant. As for the reading part, the students' score also went up in the post-test (Mean=6.44) as compared with that in the pre-test (Mean=6.33), although the differences between the two were not found to be statistically significant.

With regard to the control group, the students' overall score ($p=.001$; $p<.05$) and the sub-score for writing ($p=.006$; $p<.05$) in the post test are higher than those in the pre-test, and the differences are tested to be statistically significant. This means, the students made improvements in their overall score and writing score up to a statistically significant level. With regard to the sub-scores of listening and the reading, no statistical significant differences were found between the two tests. (See Appendix II for the detailed T-test results)

These results indicate that the experimental group of students made improvements in their reading score and the overall score, while the control group of students' scores improved in the writing and the overall scores. It could be argued that the self-access learning package given to the experimental group seemed to be effective in promoting their English reading and the input provided to the control group was beneficial to their writing. It is worth noticing that the experimental group of students also improved in their score of writing up to a statistical significant level. This might have to do with the amount of reading input and the vocabulary related to various topics and themes they obtained from the package. In fact, some students mentioned this in later interviews. This will be discussed later.

4.2. Students' perceptions of the package

At the end of the project, 18 students from the experimental group were invited to comment on how effective the package had been in helping them to improve their reading and listening.

4.2.1. Intensive language input

Majority of these students found the package especially helpful in that they were provided with more practices in reading and listening and had more exposure to the English language. More specifically, the students reported that the reading materials in the package enlarged their vocabulary through a wide variety of topics and themes, which helped them tackle reading and listening tasks more effectively and successfully. Some students even reported being able to apply the vocabulary learned into their writing. In addition, materials related to those topics and themes also enriched their knowledge in different fields, which they believed would be helpful in their future academic study. The listening part of the package, as these students pointed out, familiarized them with different accents, different speeds of speech, and the various meanings associated with different tones and pitches. This, they believed, had helped build up the confidence in the IELTS test.

4.2.2. Systemic strategy training

Also, a large number of students commented that the package provided them with systemic strategy training, which started with some basic and relatively easy skills and strategies, and later on moved on to the more comprehensive ones. This step-by-step guidance enabled them to grasp the gist of those skills and apply them in real contexts. For example, one student remarked,

I think the package is good in that it teaches us some strategies, which we can apply and use. Normally, at our schools, teachers didn't teach us strategies. This was not the usual practice at schools. For instance, teachers usually gave us passages to practice for the HKAL exams. They would check the answers with us but they seldom taught us strategies. For this package, it is quite good as it teaches us strategies which we can actually use.

There were a few strategies mentioned by the students as most useful. One of them was skimming and scanning. A large number of students reported that they were able to speed up their reading with the use of this particular strategy and they became more conscious in identifying key words and locating topic sentences in the reading materials. All these, as they commented, were essential skills in the exam situations when time was limited.

Another strategy that most students found useful was note-taking. As some of the students pointed out, although this strategy was not new to them, the training and

practices they received from the package made them realize how useful it could be in their reading as well as listening. These students even mentioned that they gradually built into a habit of taking notes while reading, which they had rarely done before. In terms of listening, some students mentioned that they learned to take quick notes from the package by using symbols or abbreviations.

4.2.3. Enhancing independent learning skills applicable to other studies

Apart from the above strategies that the majority of the students considered as most useful, different students reported finding different strategies particularly helpful for them, probably because of the students' strengths and weaknesses were different. To name a few, for instance, some students found understanding discourse markers particularly important to them as it helped them understand the relationships among sentences or ideas much better and more easily, which they had often failed to do before; some others reported that understanding graphics and tables were especially useful as they had had difficulty identifying key information and trends in graphics and tables in the past; and some considered that the package helped strengthen their skill in summarizing main ideas of reading and listening materials.

4.2.4. Enhancing motivation for learning

One thing that emerged from the interview data is worthy of note. A number of students mentioned that joining the project gave them a sense of commitment and pushed them to take more responsibility for the whole learning process than they would in a total self-learning situation. In fact, the students commented that the package served as a framework for learning. Whereas, when they had learned on their own before, they tended to get lost very easily. As one of the students said,

It gradually upgrades our reading and listening aspects and provides us with good foundations. In self-studies, we may not know where to start, e.g. we may read many passages and does not find the reading useful. These modules provide many strategies, which help us keep track of what we have learned and our progress. And one thing I would like to emphasize is that the package is not only useful for examination.

4.3. Benefits of the consultation sessions

Apart from the 18 students from the experimental group who we interviewed, another 8 students from the control group were also invited to comment on the consultation sessions.

Generally speaking, all the students' responses to the consultation sessions were found to be positive. For the students from the experimental group, they reported that they were able to obtain immediate help and support to solve any problems encountered when working on the package. Although answers for exercises and practices were provided at the back of the package, the students commented that they also wanted to know the reasons for the mistakes they made, which they were able to obtain from the consultation sessions.

Teachers responsible for the consultation not only provided solutions to problem solving, as some students pointed out, but helped categorize the mistakes that a student made, pointed out this particular student's strengths and weaknesses, and suggested ways and methods for further improvement.

Some students also mentioned that the consultation sessions helped build up their confidence in English learning. For example, one of the students commented,

After each consultation sessions, the teacher always encouraged me by saying 'keep going!' And he kept track of my progress, seeing me slowly improved each time. This really raises my confidence. And I think that previously when I was doing self-learning, I did not have such marked improvements, but within these few months, I really improve a lot. And I feel really happy about that. I have previously felt bad about my English level.

As for the students from the control group, the students considered the consultations extremely helpful, in that their strengths and weaknesses were identified. Had they worked on their own, as the students pointed out, they would have had no idea what level of proficiency they were at in writing.

The students also reported that various time slots for consultation allowed them to have the flexibility to choose the time that was convenient for them. A few students mentioned that in some cases group discussions were conducted when more students were present in the consultation sessions, and therefore they were able to share views on each other's writing. The students found this practice rather rewarding in that it was not only time efficient, but they were also able to learn from others' writing, be it

mistakes or strengths. In addition, they became more motivated to improve their writing skills. In fact, a few students even suggested that they would hope to have more group discussions like that if there were chances to join similar programs in the future.

5. Cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the project

5.1. Resources and Manpower

The project gained support and resources from HKU SPACE Community College for its smooth implementation, which included office areas, office facilities, management and logistic support, and so on. Apart from the researchers/teachers from the college who were directly involved in the research project, some full-time/half-time staff were employed to facilitate the management and implementation of the project.

The names, duties and employment period of these staff are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Staff Employed for the Project

Name	Title	Employment period	Duties
Kwok Sai Kit, Steven	Project Officer (Full-time)	1 September 2009 — 3 January 2010 (resigned on his own accord)	Facilitating the coordination and implementation of the current project, performing administrative duties related to the day-to-day operation of the project and producing regular reports on the project.
Liu Kanglong	Project Officer (Full-time)	1 March 2010 — 29 September 2010 (resigned on his own accord)	Same as above
Yu Ying	Same as above	30 September 2010 — 31 August 2011	Same as above
Cheng Chi Tan, David	Package Developer (Half-time)	1 September 2010 — 31 August 2011	Development and implementation of the self-access reading and listening package for the project by designing relevant learning materials, development of diagnostic tests for the package, and consultation for the participating students.
Kalpna Rajesh Agrawah	Part-time Research Assistant	1 September 2009 — 31 March 2010	Processing of questionnaire data in computerized form, data coding and assistance in other research work.
Yung	Part-time	1 May 2010	Data processing, data management, and

Ching San	Research Assistant	– 28 February 2011	assistance in other research-related work.
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5.2. Budget and Expenditure

The project was cost-effective in terms budget and expenditure and at the same time the project team was able to achieve the proposed milestones and objectives in each stage of the project.

Table 2 summarizes the expenditure of the project. A professional certified auditing company *Chandler Partners Ltd/Chandler Consulting Ltd* was hired to conduct auditing of the project. A detailed breakdown of the expenditure for budgeted items is to be provided in the Audit Report.

Table 2 Actual Expenditure against Approved Budget

Expenditure	Approved budget	Actual expenditure	Balance
Equipment	39,100	37,351	1,749
Manpower	1,234,900	1,071,950	162,950
IELTS application fees	210,000	66,150	143,850
Printing of questionnaires	6,000	16,340	(10,340)
References	90,000	88,385	1,615
Software for project	15,000	11,066	3,934
Others (e.g. tapes for interviews, postage, stationery, design of questionnaires, printing & copying of the self-access package and audit fee)	50,000	23,498	26,502
Copyright clearance/license	35,000	11,709	23,291
Total	1,680,000	1,326,449 (B)	353,551

Income	Approved budget	Actual income
Grant from Government	1,680,000	1,512,000
Bank interest received	0	4,326
Total	1,680,000	1,516,326 (A)

Amount to be refunded to Grantor (A) – (B)	189,877
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5.3. Sustainability and applicability of the project

After the completion of the project, copies of the self-access reading and listening package are now available in the college library and open for use for all students in the HKU SPACE community college.

For the implementation of the project, a collection of reference books has been purchased. These references have been shelved in the college library and open for use for both teachers and students in the HKU SPACE Community College.

For the implementation of the self-access learning package, a few laptops were purchased. The laptops are now placed in the college library and open to use for multimedia learning purposes.

Copies of the self-access learning package, in the form of CD-ROM, have been sent to other community colleges / sub-degree providers in Hong Kong. Teachers in these institutions can either adapt the package as extra learning materials in the classroom or make it available to students' self-access learning purposes, wherever applicable.

6. Outcomes and deliverables of the project

Throughout the implementation of project, a number of outcomes and deliverables were achieved.

6.1. Needs Analysis Report

A needs analysis report was produced, covering a) students' level of English language proficiency upon entrance to the HKU SPACE Community College, as manifested in their results in English in HKCEE and HKALE; and b) the students' strategy use and learning styles in academic English reading and listening contexts.

6.2. The Self-access Reading and Listening Package

The development of the package incorporated the findings from the needs analysis report and the recent trends in ESL academic reading and listening research. A tailor-made self-access package for community college students, the package addresses the immediate needs and weaknesses of this particular group of students in academic English context.

The package consists of 10 modules in total, covering a range of themes, such as

“happiness”, “family”, “earth”, “language and culture”, and “education”. The rationale for such design was to equip students with the necessary background knowledge of social, economic and cultural issues which are of immediate importance for academic English learning. Through introducing the theme-based self-access materials, the package intends to develop students’ effective reading and listening strategies.

A user guide was also developed to guide students in using the package. In addition, the guide suggests some independent learning strategies that students can apply while working on the package. More importantly, a progress report is attached at the end of the guide that encourages students to reflect upon their progress and performance after completion of each module.

6.3. Publications

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire and interview conducted in the first phase, a research paper entitled 香港社區學院學生學術英語閱讀策略研究 was accepted and presented at the Eleventh Cross-strait Forum on Continuing Education (第十一屆海峽兩岸繼續教育論壇) on 18th and 19th of November 2010. The paper was later published in the conference proceeding.

Another article entitled “How to enhance Academic English in reading and listening” (in Chinese) was published in Wen Wei Po on 18 November 2011.

It is believed that the findings based on the students in HKU SPACE Community College will benefit other schools of a similar nature. In this regard, dissemination of knowledge is equally important for improving the teaching quality of community college education in Hong Kong.

References

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