

Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme

Progress Report

Project No. : 89992031

Reporting Period: From September 2009 (month/year) to February 2010 (month/year)

Part A Development of a Self-access Reading and Listening Package for Enhancing English

Project Title: Learning Effectiveness for Community College Students in Hong Kong

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

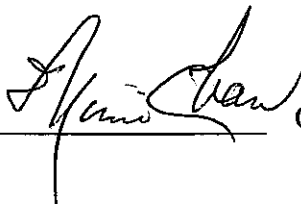
Project Period: From September 2009 (month/year) to August 2011 (month/year)

Part B

Please use separate A4-size sheets to report the progress with regard to the following aspects:

1. Types and brief descriptions of Project activities held/completed during the reporting period (*the information may be presented in the form of a table*).
2. The dates, time, venues and number of participants / beneficiaries of Project activities held, and resources (e.g. equipment, manpower) used for the implementation of Project activities.
3. Project milestone(s) and deliverables attained at the end of the reporting period and evidence showing the attainment of milestones and deliverables.
4. The percentage, in terms of key tasks, of the Project completed at the end of each reporting period.
5. Project variation*, if any, during the reporting period, together with details and justifications

Signature: _____



Organization Chop: _____



Name of Authorized Person: MIMI CHAN

Name of Grantee SPACE, The University

Organization: of Hong Kong

Position of Authorized

Person: Project Coordinator

Date: March 30, 2010

* A separate written application should be submitted to the Grant for prior written approval.

*Progress Report of Project should be signed by the head of the Grantee organization, the person-in-charge of the Project or the person who signed the Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme Agreement for acceptance of the Grant on behalf of the Grantee organization.

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

Progress Report (1 September 2009 - 28 February 2010)

Project Leaders: (*in alphabetical order*) Prof. Mimi Chan, Dr. Sabina Mak and Dr. Michael Wong

Team members: (*in alphabetical order*) Dr. Kalpana Agrawal (Part-time Research Assistant), Mr. David Cheng (Half-time Package Developer), Dr. Jessie Choi, Dr. Liu Kanglong (Project Officer), and Mr. Tommy Lui.

1. Introduction

This Quality Enhancement Grant Project titled “Development of a Self-access Reading and Listening Package for Enhancing English Learning Effectiveness for Community College Students in Hong Kong” commenced on 1 September, 2009. The project is aimed at 1) investigating the needs of full-time HKU SPACE Community College students in acquiring both academic reading and listening skills in English; and 2) addressing those needs by developing a self-access English learning package focusing on the two receptive academic English skills of reading and listening.

Since its commencement on 1 September 2009, the project has been going smoothly in accordance with the proposed schedule. A full-time project administrator and a half-time package developer were employed to monitor and facilitate the research progress and implementation issues. In October, a comprehensive questionnaire was administered to the students on Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College and more than 1,000 students responded to the questionnaire. Among them, 422 students indicated their interest in participating in this research project by sharing their learning experience in English reading and listening. As an integral part of this project, a pre-test in the form of IELTS was also completed in which 152 students participated. All the major tasks in the first phase were conducted and completed in a satisfactory manner according to the proposed timeframe in the application form.

This report summarizes the progress and emerging findings from the first six months (1 September 2009 – 28 February 2010) of the current project. Implementation issues, e.g., number of participants, resources, are described. Major milestones achieved during the first six months of this reporting period are also addressed with evidence provided. At the end of this report, the completion percentage of this ongoing project in terms of key tasks completed will be assessed.

2. Background

The aims, objectives and methodology of the project were described in detail in the original application form. They are briefly summarized as follows:

- It is generally perceived that the English standards of Hong Kong students have been declining for a number of years. There is a growing need to improve the academic English proficiency of post-secondary school students before they move on to university education.
- To address these needs, a self-access learning package, including guidelines and a progress-monitoring scheme, is being developed to enhance the students' focused skills and foster their independent learning strategies.
- This study employs mixed research methods of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology, e.g., surveys, interviews and tests, to examine the validity of the proposed learning package being developed.

- The study is being conducted within HKU Space Community College. As a result, major participants and beneficiaries of this project are students of the college. However, students from other community colleges will also benefit from the findings and the learning package being developed in this project.

3. Types and Descriptions of Project Activities Held

Since the project officially started on 1 September, 2009, a number of research activities have been conducted, setting a good foundation for subsequent research schedules. Major research activities during the first six months are summarized here and presented in Table 1.

	Types	Description of Project Activities	Purposes
Needs Analysis	Background survey	A background survey was carried out to study students' results in English language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and in Use of English in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). The test results of a sample of 282 students were analyzed.	To get a sense of the background and level of the students (e.g. their level of proficiency in English when applying to the Community College) for the purpose of identifying their possible needs.
	Literature Review	Major literature on the skills and strategies of academic reading and listening was reviewed and classified.	To provide information for designing the "listening and reading strategies questionnaire" and the learning package.
	Questionnaire	The "listening and reading strategies questionnaire", with a total of 113 items/questions, was prepared. The questionnaire covers three areas: academic reading strategies and skills; academic listening strategies and skills; and independent learning strategies (for learning in general). The questionnaire was administered to the students on Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College in October 2009 with a response rate of 62.3%.	The questionnaire was conducted to evaluate students' learning strategies in academic reading and listening. This is to help conduct a needs analysis to address their needs and possible weak areas.
	Interviews	Follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 students to obtain information about their learning strategies in addition to the questionnaire.	Qualitative data obtained from the interviews are to supplement the quantitative data of the questionnaire for facilitating the design of the self-access learning package.

Pre-test	A pre-test in the form of IELTS in which 152 students participated was conducted on Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College.	The pre-test is to provide first-hand data of students' level of proficiency in English and a benchmark for the selection of 70 subjects to be divided into a select group and a control group.
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Table 1. Description of Project Activities Completed in the First Six Months

4. Implementation Issues

In this section, implementation issues in relation to the enforcement of the current project are briefly summarized. These include: 1) dates, venues and participants of the project activities; 2) resources used for implementing the project.

4.1. A list of activities carried out in the first phase of the research project is briefly summarized in the following table (Table 2).

Dates	Venue	Participants / Persons Involved	Activities
Oct, 2009	KEC*	1,718 students of HKU SPACE Community College	In October 2009, a questionnaire aiming at obtaining information of students' learning strategies in academic reading and listening was administered, targeting all 1,718 General English III students on Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College. A total of 1,071 completed questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 62.3%.
Oct, 2009	KEC	422 students of HKU SPACE Community College	422 "Optional Reply Slips" were received from the students who indicated their interest in sharing with us their experiences in academic reading and/or academic listening.
Oct-Dec, 2009	N/A	Research Team	Some reference books on IELTS and academic English reading and listening were ordered and purchased through A & P Bookshop, the Joint Publishing Company, Cengage Learning and Dawson Books.
Nov-Dec, 2009	KEC	About 90 students of HKU SPACE Community College	Three information seminars for promoting the "IELTS Preparation Scheme" were conducted for facilitating the selection of eligible participants for the current ongoing project.
Dec, 2009	KEC	152 students of HKU SPACE Community College	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. Also, because of the discounted rate, 7 additional students will get fully subsidized. This means that a total of 77 instead of 70 students as originally proposed will receive full subsidy.

Dec, 2009	KEC	12 students of HKU SPACE Community College	In addition to the questionnaire, follow-up interviews with 12 students to find out their English learning strategies, particularly listening and reading skills, were conducted.
09-10 Jan, 2010	KEC	152 students of HKU SPACE Community College	A total of 152 students took the IELTS exam jointly held by HKU SPACE Community College and the British Council. Results of the test will be used as first-hand data for the pre-test.

* Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College

Table 2. Dates, Venues and Participants of Project Activities in the First Phase

4.2. Resources and Manpower

For enforcement of the current project, HKU SPACE Community College has provided related resources, including office areas, office facilities, management and logistics support, etc. In addition to the researchers/teachers within the college who are directly involved with the current research, some full-time/half-time/part-time staff are employed for facilitating the implementation of the project. The names, duties and employment period of these added staff are summarized in Table 3.

Names	Title	Employment Period	Duties
Kwok Sai Kit, Steven	Project Officer (Full-time)	1 Sep 2009 — 3 Jan 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 Mar 2010 — 31 Aug 2011	Same as above.
Cheng Chi Tan, David	Package Developer (Half-time)	1 Sep 2009 — 31 Aug 2011	Development and implementation of the self-access reading and listening package for the project by designing relevant learning materials.
Kalpana Rajesh Agrawah	Part-time Research Assistant	1 Sep 2009 — 31 Mar 2010	Processing of questionnaire data in computerized form, data coding and assistance in other research work.

Table 3. Staff Employed for Implementing the Project

5. Project Milestones and Deliverables

In line with the project activities, the key milestones set out in the project for the first phase have been successfully achieved during this period. These milestones include:

5.1. Needs Analysis Report

A preliminary needs analysis report was completed, covering a) a background survey analysing students' results in English language in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and in Use of English in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination; b) language learner's strategies questionnaire; and c) follow-up interviews to investigate their learning habits and skills.

5.2 Selection of Participants

The selection of participants is based on a voluntary basis. All participants interested in joining this project needed to complete the questionnaire first, sign the "Optional Reply Form" to indicate their interest in joining this project, and take the IELTS exam which provides first-hand data of their level of proficiency in English as a pre-test. For this reason, we collaborated with the British Council in arranging an IELTS exam at a discounted rate, targeting at all the students on Kowloon East Campus of HKU SPACE Community College. Three information seminars were conducted to promote the "IELTS Preparation Scheme" to encourage students to take part in this project. At the end, 152 students took the IELTS exam and 70 of them have been selected to participate in this project.

5.3. Pre-test

A pre-test in the form of an internationally recognized English language test, i.e., IELTS, was taken by 152 students on 09-10 January, 2010. The purpose of the pre-test was to identify and select eligible participants in addition to the data collected from the background survey, questionnaire and optional reply form. The test data are used as the major criterion for dividing the selected students into a select group (35 students) and a control group (35 students) and ensuring that students in these two groups are not statistically different in their English language level in general and listening and reading competence in particular. The other reason for conducting this pre-test is that part of the current project involves an experimental design, i.e., "Pre-test—Treatment—Post-test", hence the test results from the pre-test will provide a benchmark based on which effectiveness of the treatment can be measured through comparison with the post-test.

6. Evaluation of the Project

As set out in the proposal, all milestones in the first phase have been successfully attained by conducting related project activities. The percentage, in terms of key tasks, of the project completed at the end of the current reporting period is about 25%. This has paved the path for the project to enter into the second phase where the major focus is the development of a self-access learning package aiming at the two receptive English skills of listening and reading. Although all specified objectives were met and to a great extent quite satisfactorily, we will continue to analyse the data collected

during the first phase in order to address students' needs better by developing a systematic and user-oriented learning package.

7. Budget and Expenditure

So far as the current project is concerned, there is no change in the implementation of our proposed project activities and attainment of milestones in the first phase except for some minor alterations regarding the expense on the budgeted items. The unspent budget fund applies to two items, i.e., "design of questionnaires" and "printing of questionnaires" (together amounting at HKD 8,000), which were completed using the resources and manpower within HKU SPACE Community College. A detailed breakdown of the expenditure for budgeted items will be provided in the final report after auditing of the whole project is completed.

8. Summary

This progress report summarizes all the major activities, milestones, implementation issues in relation to the participants and beneficiaries of the current project during the first six months. Apart from an overview of the research progress in the first phase, a broad and contextual assessment of the project in terms of the research activities completed is also provided. Based on what has been achieved during this period, it can be seen that the project is being carried out, with the aim of completing the research goals and milestones in compliance with the proposed timeframe.