

II Project Information

Project Title (in English)

English Cultural Literacy

Project Title (in Chinese)

英語文化識知

A. Project Summary

(please provide an executive summary of the project proposal in no more than 500 words).

As a vehicle of expression, language is both form and content. Language experts have come to see the importance of cultural awareness in language learning, particularly in a second or foreign language context. The *New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* and the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* represent some of the latest efforts in approaching language through culture. Research conducted in the UK and USA shows that there is a high correlation between cultural literacy and language proficiency.

In the new Hong Kong senior secondary school curriculum, a similar approach has been adopted in making the study of culture a resource for language learning. At the tertiary education level, there is an urgent need to introduce more courses that teach the culture(s) of English as a global language, as we prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. A major purpose of tertiary education is to equip students with the skills to work in an environment that demands knowledge of transnational culture in a world which is becoming more and more globalized. Such a purpose can be achieved through teaching English as a global language. Students in Hong Kong will be able to overcome many of the difficulties they encounter in using English as a means of international communication when they have a solid grasp of the culture(s) of English.

The project proposes to set up a programme of English cultural literacy at the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), in which students will learn the English language alongside the study of the culture(s) of its dominant varieties. Recent research on literacy and learning shows that cultural literacy is not only an important element in English language learning, but also a key to success in education, without which learning can never be effective and can only be reduced to low-level skills training. In the proposed programme, there will be courses that cover the following areas of English cultural literacy:

- (1) World English(es) and cultures;
- (2) Post-Imperial Britain and English
- (3) English in international media;
- (4) English in global popular culture;
- (5) Classic American films and culture;
- (6) Modern British and American drama and short story; and
- (7) Asian writings in English;

By completing courses in these areas, student will have an understanding of how a contemporary global culture is coming into shape through the power of English, and also gain a better sense of how the English language works in the globalized world. They will also have learnt how to speak about English cultures and write critical essays on them. Students who have attained a high level of competence at the end of the programme will join a summer study tour to the UK or USA as field work that consolidates what they have learnt.

B. Project Objectives

(please identify the needs of the target recipients and explain how the project aims to address the needs).

Similar to students in other universities in Hong Kong, most full-time students at OUHK have been learning English for 12-13 years. However, the English Hong Kong students have been learning in schools is a much localized language, and in a local context in which the focus of learning has been placed mainly on language forms with little Western cultural content. Even brightest students have problems in understanding English texts that have heavy Western cultural references. The English they learn in schools is skills oriented and is inadequate for study or work that requires high-level cultural literacy for international communication, thus putting them in a position of disadvantage when higher education or high-level jobs demand sophisticated knowledge of English-speaking cultures.

To remedy this, as well as to enhance their English proficiency, students must improve their cultural literacy and take a new approach in learning English with more Western cultural references. The English cultural literacy programme is thus designed to provide students with the basic cultural literacy for international English communication. The courses offered in the programme will cover areas of knowledge and skills in cultural literacy expected of educated citizens in major English-speaking countries.

C. Outcomes and Deliverables of Project

(please include the expected number of target beneficiaries and explain how they will benefit from the project).

OUHK currently has about 4000 full-time face-to-face students. All of them enroll for an honours degree programme, although some of them may exit with an Associate degree. Many of these full-time students have never had an English education. The programme will design courses that cover the 7 areas of English cultural literacy listed above. Students will be encouraged to take as many courses as possible in different areas of the programme.

Tangible outcomes and deliverables of the project include course materials that will be developed for the programme and, if possible, be shared with other institutions that have an interest in offering similar courses. There will be tests before and after students taking each of the courses to measure their achievements in learning. Intangible outcomes include experimenting with a new approach in teaching English proficiency and in promoting an English-speaking culture among students at OUHK. Students will become culturally more globalized after completing the programme.

D. Implementation Details

The project involves the design of a programme of courses that teach English as a global language in relation to its cultural sources. To be successful, the programme will need a team of experts who are knowledgeable about teaching English as both language and culture. Hence, the first phase of implementation will be the formation of a programme team, which will recruit staff for the programme. The second phase will be detailed work on course design, and the third phase offering courses for the programme.

The programme will form a team headed by Professor Kwok-kan Tam, the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences. The programme will recruit a programme director at the assistant/associate professor level, who has expertise and experience in teaching English language and culture. The programme will be staffed with one lecturer and three teaching assistants who may be recruited from the Fulbright English Language programme as well as locally.

In the next phase, the programme director, together with Professor Kwok-kan Tam and the lecturer, will work out the details of the courses, including their pedagogical design, course contents, teaching materials, assignments and outcome assessment. The programme will review course materials currently available at OUHK to see whether any of them can be adapted for use by the programme.

In the final phase, the programme will offer courses in the 7 areas outlined above. These courses will be extra courses for all full-time students. They are not part of the requirements for their degree programme. Passing these courses will not form part of their graduation requirement. However, the grades they have received will appear in their transcript.

As a conclusion to the successful completion of the programme, students who have outstanding performance will be allowed to join the summer study tour which combines academic study with practical work on English language and culture. In preparation for the study tour, students will have to design a research project based on a theme that they have studied in one of the courses in the programme and carry it out in the UK or USA. For example, the study tour can be fieldwork on post-Imperial imagination/descriptions of London in contemporary English fiction, or on variation in accent and pronunciation in American English.

E. Implementation Schedule <i>(Please extend this table if necessary.)</i>		
Estimated start date of project:		April 2009
Action <i>(please indicate key milestones)</i>	Timeframe	Cashflow Requirement
April-August 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of a programme team • Programme and course design (including purchase of teaching materials, books, films) • Writing course syllabi • Meetings to discuss course syllabi • Approval of courses 	April 2009 May-Aug 2009 May-Aug 2009 May-Aug 2009 May-Aug 2009 May-Aug 2009	200,000 Expenses absorbed by OUHK
September 2009-August 2010 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a programme executive director • Appointment of a lecturer • Appointment of 3 teaching assistants • Offering courses in English Cultural Literacy • Conducting language and culture study tour • Assessment of project outcomes in the First Year 	Sept 2009-Aug 2010 Sept 2009 -Aug 2010 Sept 2009 -June 2010 Sept 2009 - May 2010 May-June 2010 June-July 2010	700,000 (Half of the expenses to be absorbed by OUHK) 350,000 540,000 Other expenses absorbed by OUHK 200,000 (To be covered by other external funding source or OUHK) Expenses absorbed by OUHK

Funding for the year 2009-10 is estimated to be HK\$1,990,000, of which HK\$550,000 will be absorbed by OUHK. Hence, the request from QEGS is HK\$1,440,000.

September 2010-August 2011 <u>(All expenses in the year will be covered by other external funding source or OUHK)</u>		
• Appointment of a programme executive director	Sept 2010 - Aug 2011	700,000
• Appointment of a lecturer	Sept 2010 - Aug 2011	350,000
• Appointment of 3 teaching assistants	Sept 2010 - June 2011	540,000
• Offering courses in English cultural literacy	Sept 2010- May 2011	Expenses absorbed by OUHK
• Conducting language and culture study tour	May-June 2011	200,000
• Assessment of project outcomes in the Second Year	June-July 2011	Expenses absorbed by OUHK

Estimated completion date of project:

July 2011

F. Project Budget						
Projected Expenditure <i>(Please provide detailed breakdown under each item)</i>	Amount in HK\$					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
a. Manpower	1,590,000	1,590,000				
b. Equipment / Facilities	200,000					
c. Services						
d. General Expenses (study tour)	200,000	200,000				
e. Others (e.g. auditor's fee)						
Total Expenditure :	1,990,000	1,790,000				
Projected Income	Amount in HK\$					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
a. (e.g. fees received)						
b.						
c.						
Total Income :						
Sources of Funding OUHK will either absorb or seek other external funding for \$2,340,000.						
a. Amount of grant sought under this application: <u>HK\$ 1,440,000</u>						
b. Other sources of funding (<i>this may include donations, contributions from the applicant/its parent organization, etc. Please give the name(s) of the sponsor(s), the amount of funding, and indicate whether the funding has been secured.</i>):						
<u>(i) HK\$1,440,000 from the QEGS will be used to fund the project only for 2009-10.</u>						
<u>(ii) The expenditure of HK\$1,790,000 for the second year will be covered by other external funding source or OUHK.</u>						

G. Monitoring and Self-evaluation Mechanism

The team in charge of the project will work under the supervision of the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences and will report to the Vice President (Academic) on the progress of the project and related academic issues. Administrative and financial matters will be reported to the Management Board every half year.

All courses offered in the programme will be approved by the OUHK Senate and evaluated by the University's planning officer to assure their quality. The course syllabi will be made available for public scrutiny. Student progress and achievements will be monitored through course assessment, as well as through pre- and post-course tests.

H. Management Support and Key Personnel Involved

The project will be headed by the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences, who has academic and clerical staff in the School to provide administrative support. The senior management of OUHK fully endorses the idea of English enhancement through the teaching of cultural literacy. In the year 2008-09, OUHK has already invested HK\$1 million in support of the offering of small-scale pilot classes in English cultural literacy.

I. Special Justifications if the Grant Sought Exceeds \$2 million

III Other information

1 Project Sustainability (*If applicable, please describe how the recurrent expenditure involved will be met after completion of the proposed project*)

Based on the experience gained in this project, OUHK will consider ways to incorporate courses in this area in the undergraduate curriculum. Though being a self-financed institution, OUHK is prepared to absorb the recurrent expenditure involved. Part of the costs can also be recovered by charging tuition fees for the credits these courses bear.

2 Preparatory work done (*If any*)

Many full-time face-to-face undergraduate programmes at OUHK already have some language courses as part of the degree requirement. Many of the language courses are on the use of the English or Chinese languages. The proposed initiative goes beyond the teaching of the use of English by bringing in the cultural element.

In the year 2008-09, OUHK has experimented with offering small classes in English cultural literacy with the help of 4 teaching assistants recruited from the Fulbright Programme. The classes offered include "Classic American Films," "Hitchcock Films," "British and American Short Stories," and "Modern British and American Drama." These classes are not part of the regular programme and students are not charged tuition fees for taking them. They do not earn credits from them and they take them mainly for interest. These classes have demonstrated both the feasibility and effectiveness of teaching English through culture.

In the proposed project, OUHK will formalize the programme and expand its course offerings, and also include an English culture study tour. Students will be encouraged to take courses in the programme and their achievements will be recorded in their transcript of studies.

3 Past experience in organizing projects of similar or relevant nature and achievements (*If any*)

The project will be headed by Professor Kwok-kan Tam, Dean of Arts and Social Sciences, who was former Professor of English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and had headed the English Department there. He had experience working with tutors from Yale University in offering a literary and critical writing programme for English majors, and designed a new component of world Englishes which provided a focus on global English when he was at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has also obtained grants from the Research Grants Council for projects on English language education in Hong Kong, and published extensively on subjects related to English and globalization. Professor Tam has been invited to give keynote speeches or focus lectures on world Englishes at international conferences. The programme team will also involve language teaching experts currently available at OUHK.