

Proposal in response to public consultation of the 3 applications for Domestic Free Television Programme Service Licences

This writing proposes to impose strictly the requirement of biliterate (Chinese and English) and subtitling in its granting of any license for Domestic Free Television Programme Service.

The subtitling requirement and that of English programmes provision have always been the utmost concern of the general public towards language demands in a keenly competitive knowledge-based society.

Figures to support Domestic Free TV as the dominant mass medium

According to the Broadcasting Authority's survey findings (2010 Mid-Term Review of the Domestic Free Television Programme Service Licences of ATV and TVB P92-93),

1. Almost all (99.8%) households in Hong Kong (consisting of persons aged 15 or above) were able to watch the four channels (TVB Jade, TVB Peral, ATV Home and ATV World) of free TV programmes at home.
2. Almost all (96.0%) persons aged 15 or above had watched them (the domestic free television programme services) in the month prior to the Opinion Survey.
3. Among those who had watched free TV (at least one day a month), the average time spent on watching free TV was 3.2 hours per day.

Public concern about the biliterate and subtitling requirement

According to SCOLAR (Standing Committee on Language Education and Research)'s Final Report (2003 P68-70),

1. The most popular media among students, in order of preference, were television, radio, magazines/weeklies, the Internet and video-tapes/VCDs
2. Overwhelming public support for the provision of English subtitles for English television programmes in the public consultation exercise.
3. Public consultation exercise reviewed that people expressed their concerns about the reduction in exposure to English. They concluded that it is important to increase students' exposure to English outside the classrooms(3.2.9).
4. Public demanded the television services in English and Putonghua be strengthened in both quantity and quality.
5. General consensus was that television services could be better utilised for the learning of English and Putonghua.

Obviously, free TV strongly influence the whole community. Any prospective provider must recognise the need to play the role of the dominant public medium. The enhancement of the strict biliterate (Chinese and English) and subtitling requirement is critical to the success of Hong Kong as an international city.

WONG Sau Wan Teresa
Television and Radio Consultative Group Member

20 July 2010