

## **Chinese as a Second Language – some suggestions**

**LEE, Siu-lun 李兆麟**

**The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

### **Some suggestions for policy makers**

1. I believe the first priority for the government and all stakeholders is to set the targeted learning outcomes for the different stages in education, i.e. for Kindergartens, for Primary schools and for Secondary schools. Government bodies, stakeholders and experience CSL educators could collaborate to set up benchmarks and indicators for assessments. Since the final target is help the ethnic minority students to be able to get into further education as well as tertiary education and get better job opportunities. A systematic and thorough plan, which cut across the different stages in education, is needed.
2. Once the target learning outcomes of different stages have been agreed and set; assessment tools, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, teachers' trainings and preparation can be discussed and planned accordingly. Using an anti-clockwise planning approach is effective and can help stakeholders from different areas to perceive a clear target and work accordingly.
3. CSL training should be started from Kindergartens and move along the line to Primary schools and eventually target to exams after finishing Secondary schools. However, some terms, like "native-like competence" and "bridge over to mainstream Chinese Language classes" in the government policy or in related discussions need to be defined more precisely.
4. The government's proposed framework shows the HKSAR government's increasing awareness of the problems faced by the ethnic minority group. One good policy is to remove the "designated schools" approach, which is in fact hindering the actual integration of the ethnic minority to the mainstream community. The intentions and funding framework for encouraging mainstream schools to take ethnic minority students is appreciated. Careful monitoring and revision of resource allocation is needed to ensure reasonable funding allocated to schools concerned. Scientific measurements

on government level and monitoring are also needed to evaluate and revise the project items.

5. The details of the CSL Learning Framework are still need explanation and recognition on societal level is needed. All the above-mentioned issues could be discussed in Legco.
6. As a CSL teacher for over 20 years, curriculum developer and materials designer, I would like to see development of assessment tools, integrated teaching materials, effective teaching & learning activities, teachers' trainings & preparation, to hold workshops or discussion forum and share knowledge from Adult CSL learning to CSL school education. Looking forward to seeing integration as well as better education & career opportunities for the ethnic minority students and a Hong Kong, which can accept people from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Some suggestions concerning CSL for ethnic minority students**

1. The key word for CSL is "learning through using". One guiding principle is to focus on oral proficiency more than on the grammar in the trainings of the spoken language (i.e. Cantonese). Focuses should be on the use of the language in everyday and practical scenarios. Assessment of oral proficiency as well as reading and writing skills (of Standard Written Chinese) focuses on what the learners can do; what language functions learners can perform, e.g. complaining, reporting, describing, etc; rather than how many vocabulary items or grammatical points learners have learnt. Reading and writing Standard Written Chinese also follow the same principle, i.e. what the learners can do, rather than how many Chinese Characters they have learnt. It would be beneficial when assessment, curriculum and teaching materials follow a situational-functional approach focusing on communication effectiveness. Training targeted on the interface between spoken language (Cantonese) and Standard Written Chinese should also be included in CSL teaching curriculum.
2. CSL for ethnic minority school students would benefit from the experience of CSL adult learning experience. I have been teaching adult CSL learners from

different part of the world for over 20 years. Learners' countries cover the countries of ethnic minority in Hong Kong, namely, Pakistan, Indonesia, India, Bruma, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, etc. All learners are adult learners who are working or planning to work in Hong Kong with different personal and professional needs. They learn CSL in order to achieve a speaking (& listening) level in Cantonese for their daily life and for their work life. A number of learners also learn reading and writing Standard Written Chinese through Cantonese for their daily and professional activities. One relevant example group learning CSL for professional needs is the ethnic minority officers in the Hong Kong SAR Correctional Services and diplomatic services of foreign offices located in Hong Kong. CSL for ethnic minority school students could learn from successful examples of CSL adult teaching and learning.