

Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minorities. Registration reference number is F9B9B559.  
Maggie Holmes

First - can we stop referring to the students as Non-Chinese speakers? After 10 years at one of your schools are they still 'non-Chinese speakers'? They are students of Chinese as an Additional Language. Students of CAL.

We put our 2 children in Cantonese medium primary school. And I'm now doing volunteer tutoring at a couple of charity run centres - I'm also teaching beginners Cantonese to a new arrival.

I would like to share some observations from what I've seen.

**Firstly**, In theory, EDB provides funding to support these children with their Chinese studies. I've not seen any evidence of this so far.

The Chinese textbooks are written **by** native Chinese speakers **for** native Chinese speakers. There are no English explanations of grammatical points. No helpful lists of target vocabulary. No support tools.

The children all work from a fairly limited series of textbooks - it would be so easy to run up electronic flashcards to support the target vocabulary ... put the text on audio.

Crucially there is no use of jyut ping - the romanized form of Cantonese.

The proper use of jyut ping speeds the acquisition and retention of new vocabulary.

How often do I see a child copying out rows of characters - you ask - what does that say - and they have no idea.

I have seen it used in one school - but the children I work with have no knowledge of it.

**Secondly** - For the children in the English language medium schools, they definitely do not get enough Chinese language exposure to achieve the high degree of fluency needed to fully integrate here.

We do not magically 'pick up' Chinese. We need to actively learn lots of vocabulary. A couple of pieces of Chinese text a week, usually involving dragonflies and historical figures – is not enough. They need texts about a much wider range of subjects - football... hospitals... .. science... the weather??

They need a reading programme. How can you NOT have a reading programme?

Telling the children to 'go and read some Chinese books' is not a graded reading programme. We need attractive books that have a glossary of core vocabulary and **audio**.

### **Thirdly.**

We desperately need EDB to set up a department to specifically deal with the needs of students of CAL.

At the moment any information about this subject is very hard to access.

I mentioned that I'm working with a recent arrival. She didn't know any Chinese but her teacher gave her a P5 textbook and told her to 'do her best'.

I have tried to find materials to help her learn Cantonese from scratch and I can't find anything. I'm writing my own lessons.

Are there any resources out there??? I've no idea. Who knows? I called EDB – they don't seem to know either.

Of course, the underlying problem is the educational apartheid which segregates ethnic minority children and deprives them of the opportunity to integrate and become fluent Cantonese speakers. Is there anywhere else in the world that still does this?

The kids I work with are so bright. They are your engineers of the future. Your doctors, businesspeople... and Legislative council members. Or they could be. But if they don't get Chinese to a good enough level their choices will be extremely limited. That is shameful.