



## Challenge 4 : Maximising the benefits of the medium of instruction (MOI) fine-tuning arrangements

### Overview

#### Increased flexibility and the need for more accountability

The revised medium of instruction (MOI) framework has given schools greater flexibility to make decisions regarding which language they use to teach content subjects. This flexibility has been welcomed by many as it enables individual schools to make the instructional decisions which they consider to be the most appropriate for their students. However, there are also many teachers and school administrators who would like to be given more concrete and specific examples of how this increased flexibility can be put to good use to help them stretch the potential of their students.

Increased flexibility also brings with it the need for more accountability, more responsibility on the part of all schools to ensure that a change in the medium of instruction is accompanied by an increased focus on the quality of the teaching and learning processes that sustain it. That means, just changing the medium of instruction to say that we are better than the school next door is not enough. We must focus our attention on how those changes will affect the way our students learn, and we must ensure that we develop school-based practices that are robust enough to support high-quality learning in a second language.

This is not, however, an easy task. How can schools ensure that their practices are supportive of high quality learning? What must they take into account when they are planning their school-based language policy development and implementation?

#### How to promote Language Across the Curriculum

The school-based experiences described in this section attempt to provide the answer to four main questions we are often asked when schools come to us for Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) support.

##### 1. Finding the right entry point

The first of these four questions is related to the focus or the entry point of the intervention programme. Where should schools start? Should they choose a particular skill? Which skill should that be? But aren't the English teachers already doing that? Should they focus on vocabulary? What vocabulary should they focus on? And how should they do it? No matter what focus they choose, schools must first have a clear understanding of their context. They should look at their strengths without overlooking their weaknesses, and see these as opportunities to make sure that the threats from the increasingly competitive external environment do not materialise.

##### 2. Who to involve

The second aspect schools need to consider is the people involved in their intervention programme. Which Key Learning Areas (KLAs) will be involved? Will all KLAs be involved at the same time? Will there be progressive involvement of KLAs over a Key Stage? How can schools ensure that all the teachers involved have adequate training? How can they promote and implement staff development that is aligned with the needs of their intervention programme? Are school administrators aware of their staff's developmental needs? Who is going to take the lead?

A group of students in school uniforms are gathered around a table in a science laboratory. They are looking at a piece of equipment, possibly a microscope or a small robot, with interest. The background is slightly blurred, showing other students and lab equipment.

### 3. Challenges

The third question is about the challenges involved in the promotion of LAC. We should all be clear and honest about this – getting all KLAs to work on language in a coordinated way that has a real impact on the quality of student learning requires enormous effort from all involved. The involvement of different departments with different agendas and interests generates tension. So, the question should not be how to avoid the tension, but how to ensure that that tension is creative and constructive. What conditions must be in place for professional collaboration to flourish and yield positive results? The key, as these reports demonstrate, lies in developing strategies that are both research-based and that can be implemented in ways that are relevant to the context.

### 4. Strategies

The fourth question is related to the strategies that schools can employ to channel the tensions mentioned above in a creative and constructive way so that the students can benefit from the collaborative work of their teachers across the curriculum. The experiences reported in this section illustrate different ways of coping with the challenges of implementing LAC because the contexts are different. Each school used a different entry point, but they all have one thing in common – despite the tensions and challenges, the teachers' ultimate goal was to benefit the students and develop practices that help them challenge and support their students in equal measure.

As schools anticipate challenges and come up with strategies to deal with these, they will realise that Language Across the Curriculum is not for English Language teachers to do on their own. It is for all teachers. Working on Language Across the Curriculum involves seeing language as everyone's responsibility. Everyone uses language to communicate – subject content teachers also need to communicate. Working on Language Across the Curriculum for these teachers means that they need to recognise the fact that communication in their subjects has certain features that differentiate it from normal everyday communication. Therefore, if they choose to use a language of instruction that is not the students' first language, their classroom work will necessarily also involve a focus on language.

The key message we would like our readers to draw is that the right choice of focus, the right people, and the right strategies will help schools turn challenges into opportunities, which will in turn help them develop Language Across the Curriculum programmes that can successfully increase students' opportunities to learn English and through English. The school-based language policy should be like a building – it should have strong foundations to ensure that the use of English as a medium of instruction at junior secondary level suits the needs of different students and contributes to, not hinders, their cognitive development.

# Developing students' reading abilities for academic and intellectual purposes through cross-curricular planning

## Background

The ability to read effectively is one of the keys to a successful learning experience. This applies to both language subjects, where the students are primarily taught to read for pleasure, to learn vocabulary and consolidate knowledge of grammar, but also in subjects where the main focus is not the study of language itself, but the acquisition of content. In these subjects, the ability to extract information from texts enhances the students' capacity to consolidate previous learning and also process new knowledge.

With this in mind, the teachers in this school decided to initiate a "Reading across the Curriculum" project. Language and content subject teachers work together to enable students to read non-fiction texts on a wide range of subject topics. Reading strategies are taught explicitly and practised regularly in the language classroom whereas multiple opportunities for reading and extensive application of the reading strategies are provided in the content subject classroom. Through reading texts with different subject content and completing a variety of tasks set at the right level of challenge, students acquire the language in subject-specific contexts and develop thinking skills required by the language and cognitive demands of their academic studies.

## Levels

S1-3

## Strategies used and implementation details

### Strategy 1: Capitalising on insights developed from previous work and experiences of cross-curricular planning

#### Implementation details

- In the past three years, the school has developed important insights from the experience of **planning and working collaboratively across the curriculum** to not only support students' use of English as a medium of learning but also to facilitate the development of thinking and language skills across subjects.
- In order to plan for the integrated development of thinking & language skills and reading across the curriculum, the teachers involved used **the school-based Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) framework** that had been formulated in previous years on the basis of six target Knowledge Structures. Texts with clear **patterns of organisation (or Knowledge Structures**, namely definition, classification, description, comparison & contrast, and cause & effect) were selected as reading materials.

### Strategy 2: Enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills through a variety of professional development activities

#### Implementation details

- **A school-based workshop** was conducted for all the teaching staff in August 2010. In the workshop entitled "Using information texts to enhance students' learning", three main steps for planning a reading lesson and five reading strategies that could be applied at pre-, while- and post-reading stages (i.e. read-around-the-text, \*KWL, anticipation guide, self-questioning and visualising) were introduced.



\*(KWL refers to “what students **k**now about the topic, what they **w**ant to know about it, and what they have **l**earned.)



- During the first school term, language and content subject teachers had **lesson co-planning meetings**. They worked together to set language and content objectives for a teaching unit, designed reading tasks that reinforced subject knowledge and infused thinking and language skills into the unit with reference to the LAC framework.



Co-planning lessons



Sharing informally

The table below shows how language teachers and content subject teachers worked in collaboration and what respective roles they played in the co-planning meetings.

| Content subject teachers  |                                     | Language teachers   |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sourced information texts on subject topics</li> <li>• identified key concept words</li> <li>• revised the texts if needed                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduced the amount of content</li> <li>- modified the language</li> </ul> </li> <li>• decided on when and how to use the texts and for what purposes</li> <li>• proposed reading-related learning tasks and activities</li> <li>• developed and revised lesson plans, and teaching and learning materials</li> </ul> | <p>→</p> <p>←</p> <p>→</p> <p>←</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identified salient language features of the selected texts</li> <li>• suggested ways to “adjust” the language if needed</li> <li>• provided feedback</li> <li>• suggested better ways to reinforce and apply language skills and reading strategies</li> </ul> |

- They also had **peer lesson observation** and **post-lesson observation discussion** which generated useful feedback on how the design of the teaching and learning materials and the delivery of the lesson could be improved.
- **An in-house experience sharing session** was organised at the end of the school term to showcase good practices of teachers from different KLAs. The lesson clips, reading texts and worksheets shown in the sharing session provided concrete examples for other teachers to follow and also convinced them of the effectiveness and potential benefits of including focussed work on reading in the teaching and learning process. Participating teachers were also given opportunities to share their feelings, problems they encountered and ways to deal with them.

**Strategy 3: Curriculum mapping of reading skills and strategies and subject topics to ensure that reading plays a part in the curricula of different KLAs**

**Implementation details**

- **English Language:** The five reading strategies introduced in the school-based workshop were infused into the textbook units. For example, in S1 Unit 1, two reading strategies (“read-around-the-text” and “self-questioning”) were taught to help students predict, confirm, correct, and reconcile information with the textual clues. Students were also taught to formulate questions that were structurally correct and also ask relevant and appropriate questions. To enhance thinking skills, students had to assess the quality of the questions they asked, group and put questions in logical order for an interview with the NET.

| Units  | Tasks  | Reading foci, skills & strategies  | Questioning techniques   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Unit 1<br>Making friends                               | Read a homepage /personal blog   | <p><b>Pre-reading</b> To activate prior knowledge of what are included in a homepage /personal blog</p> <p><b>While-reading</b> To read different parts of the homepage for information (<i>*Reading strategy: Read around the text</i>)</p> <p><b>Post -reading</b> To suggest ways to improve the homepage</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ask yes/no Qs</li> <li>• To answer yes/no Qs with elaboration</li> </ul>   |
| <u>Extended unit</u><br>Knowing the NET in your school | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare and conduct an interview</li> <li>2. Write a personal profile</li> </ol> | <p><b>Language forms and functions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to formulate and answer Qs that are structurally correct               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use simple present and simple past</li> <li>- use verb <i>to be</i> and verb <i>to do</i></li> <li>- use appropriate question words (i.e. 5W1H)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ask WH-Qs for basic info</li> <li>• To ask follow-up Qs (to dig for more info and details)</li> <li>• To ask relevant and appropriate Qs (e.g. avoid Qs that are too personal)</li> <li>• To put Qs in a logical sequence</li> </ul> |

An excerpt from S1 Scheme of Work

- **Content subjects:** For each content subject, reading was introduced as a learning activity which enabled students to practise and apply in subject specific context the reading strategies and language skills taught in English class.

(Example) **S2 History**

**Topic: Traditional Rural Education**

**I. Pre-reading activity** - Teacher showed the pictures and photos in the textbook and asked questions to stimulate thinking of the topic.

**II. While-reading activities** – group work

1. Students **read textbook materials** for information relevant to the headings given (e.g. gender of students, class arrangement, study materials.)
2. Students **completed the table with key words**.
3. Students **compared** traditional rural education with present-day education.
4. Students came up with some other possible headings (e.g. uniforms, school fees) for making a comparison and **read for relevant information** in the text.
5. Students **discussed and explained** their similarities and differences in other areas.
6. Students **summarised ideas** and **made notes**.

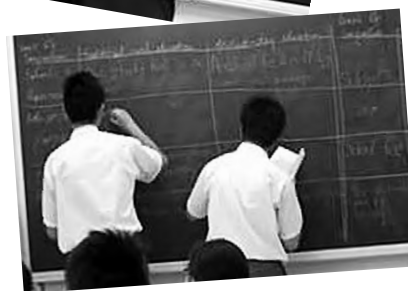
**III. Post-reading activities** – oral and written presentation

1. Students **presented ideas and information verbally** in front of the class.
2. Students **presented ideas and information in note form** on the blackboard.
3. Students **wrote a short essay** on any two differences, using language of comparison and a point-by-point structure.
4. Students **commented** on one difference and **explained** how it changed the lives of people nowadays.

SALEM - International Lutheran College  
S 2 History

Topic: Comparison of traditional rural education and present-day education in Hong Kong

| Basis of comparison    | traditional rural education                                      | present-day education   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Class arrangement      | The study halls were often small. There was usually _____ class. | The schools today are much bigger. There are _____ classes.               |
| Number of students     | There were about _____ students, but only _____ teacher.         | There are about _____ students in a class and _____ teachers in a school. |
| Gender of the students | All of the students were _____.                                  | Both _____ can go to school.  |
| Study materials        | The study of the _____ was the major subject.                    | There are many subjects.  |



#### **Strategy 4: Maximising opportunities for students to read a wide range of non-fiction texts across different subjects**

##### **Implementation details**

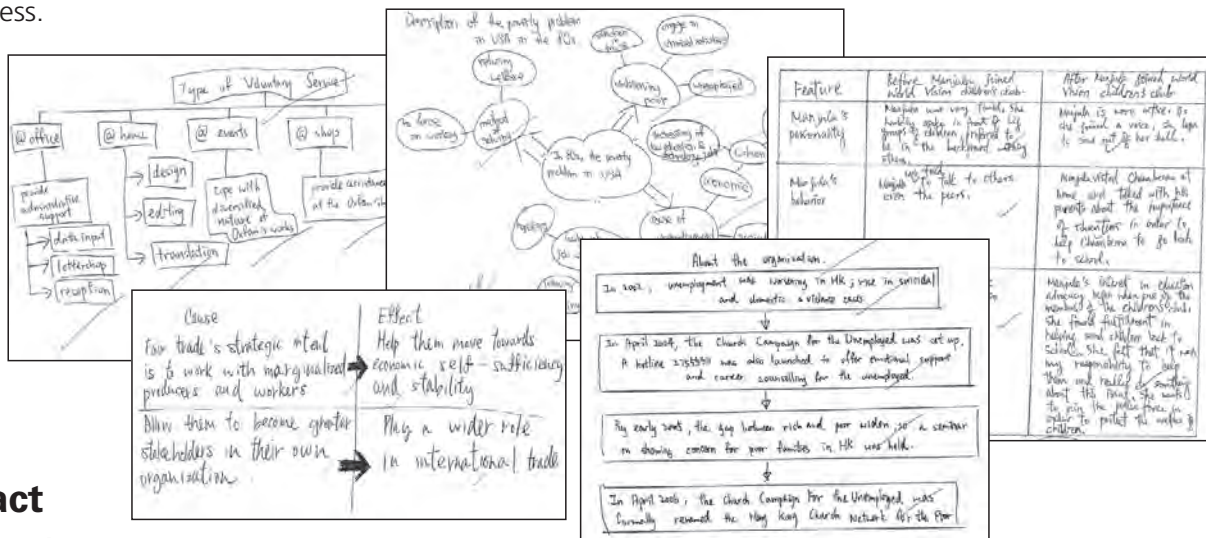
- **Reading opportunities** were created both **inside and outside classroom** to encourage students to read a **variety of reading materials** (such as textbooks, newspaper articles, magazine articles, information books, reports) **on different subject topics and for different purposes**. For example, reading assignments were given as a pre-lesson study to arouse students' interest in the topic and activate their prior knowledge, as a while-lesson activity to enable students to access subject knowledge and concept or as a post-lesson study to read for more information or clarify some unclear subject content.



## Strategy 5: Designing a variety of reading tasks and activities to enhance students' effectiveness of reading and application of reading strategies

### Implementation details

- Teachers set a variety of questions including open questions, content-centred questions and higher-order thinking questions.
- Students were also encouraged to self-question and use reading strategies such as visualising in the reading process.



## Impact

### 1. On students

In addition to textbooks, students read a variety of non-fiction texts (e.g. fact sheets, news reports, feature articles, opinion articles) in multiple subject contexts which have greatly increased their subject knowledge and exposure to the text types and language items used across the curriculum. They do not rely solely on teachers as the source of information but have developed the habit of reading outside class and taking notes of the information they have read using appropriate graphic organisers and evaluating different perspectives on the subject topics.

### 2. On teachers

**Content teachers** are more aware of the connections between language and content and have gained hands-on experience in integrating them through content area reading. With increasing confidence in using and adapting textbook materials as well as some other non-fiction texts as reading materials, they are more willing to design reading activities that help students use different reading strategies to read better and more effectively.

**Language teachers** have developed the knowledge and skills needed to support the teaching and learning of content subjects through English and work in collaboration with non-language teachers. They have demonstrated a better understanding of how a wider range of non-fiction texts can be used for academic and intellectual purposes. Their knowledge and skills in teaching reading strategies have also been enriched. With the accumulation of more teaching resources, teachers' workload can be lightened in a long run.

### 3. On curriculum resource development

Content area reading is now regarded as a useful activity to improve teaching and learning effectiveness. A variety of resources (print and non-fiction,) have been included in the teaching units on some subject topics (such as the rich and the poor, unstable earth, endangered species) in order to motivate students to learn through English and enhance their subject knowledge.

#### 4. On school development

The school's development in LAC can be sustained and extended with concerted efforts of teachers from different KLAs whose diverse expertise and experience were tapped and utilised in the process of cross-curricular collaboration.

### Facilitating factors

1. The direction for the school development is clear and reading across the curriculum is one of the major foci of the 3-year school development plan.
2. English is used as the medium of instruction for all the content subjects. Therefore, it is easier for content subject teachers to see the relevance of reading English materials on subject topics to enhance students' learning.
3. Core teachers who are the middle managers take the lead, coordinate work and provide necessary support e.g. strategic deployment of teachers and effective allocation of resources.
4. Flexibility is allowed. Non-core teachers may pilot the project at their own pace depending on their readiness and set teaching objectives and expected outcomes accordingly.

### Difficulties and solutions

| Difficulty   | Solution   |
|--|--|
| Core teachers lack time and space to plan, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the project regularly.   | Grants provided under the Refined English Enhancement Scheme will be used effectively to create time and space for the core teachers to plan, coordinate, monitor and improve the project.   |
| Teachers, particularly content subject teachers, lack skills for and confidence in adapting reading texts and designing reading activities that enhance students' content knowledge and higher-order thinking. | A longer-term teacher development plan will be developed to sharpen teachers' skills and sustain their efforts. In addition to one-off programme(s) conducted by external agents, teachers themselves can be exploited to do the follow-up such as working in closer collaboration, providing on-the-job peer support and sharing experiences. |
| Students need numerous reading opportunities, constant guidance and practice to master the reading skills essential to learning content subjects through English.  | Reading will be built into daily classroom teaching and learning of many more subjects. With careful and systematic planning within and across different year levels, reading will also be infused into the subject curricula to make connections of reading inside and outside class time.  |

### Reference

Curriculum Development Council. (2002). English Language Education: KLA Curriculum Guide (P1-S3). HKSAR: The Education Department.

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# Making the WRITE connections: Enhancing students' writing skills through the Writing Across the Curriculum programme

## Background

All content subject teachers, no doubt, will agree that writing skills are important for students. Although different subjects have subject specific writing needs, some text structures such as problem and solution, cause and effect are common among all subjects. Moreover, if we analyse the HKDSE sample papers of different subjects, it is found that students need to write effectively to demonstrate their understanding of the knowledge. It is, therefore, important for all teachers to work together to enhance their students' writing skills so that students are better equipped for the NSS and for future work.

However, not all teachers are comfortable with teaching writing skills. Some content subject teachers may have their concerns in teaching writing skills in their curriculum time. First, they do not have enough time. Second, they are not trained to teach writing skills. Third, some content subject teachers may think that it is not their job to teach writing. To tackle these concerns, Yan Oi Tong Tin Ka Ping Secondary School tried a cross-curricular approach to promote the teaching of writing text structures in different subjects using the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programme.

## Levels

S1-3

## How the WAC programme addressed teachers' concerns

| Concern   | Solution   |
|---|--|
| <b>Time constraint</b><br>The programme will take too long to implement and complete.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus only on writing ONE text structure each term</li><li>• Involve only ONE subject at a time</li><li>• Need four periods from the subject throughout the year</li></ul>   |
| <b>Teachers' knowledge and skills</b><br>Content subject teachers don't know how to teach English writing skills. | To help content subject teachers understand more about text structures, the language support officer did the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A briefing session on how to conduct the WAC programme was delivered to all teachers involved.</li><li>• A WAC handbook with teaching materials was given to all teachers and steps were clearly stated for reference.</li><li>• Teaching video clips were also recorded for teachers as reference.</li><li>• Most importantly, the teaching part has been dealt with by the English teachers first. So the students have learned how to write a particular text structure before the content subject teacher starts their teaching.</li></ul> |
| <b>Teachers' mindset</b><br>Content subject teachers do not believe it is their job to teach students English.    | In the briefing session, content subject teachers are aware of the fact that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HKDSE sample papers of different subjects require students to write effectively.</li></ul>   |



## Features of the WAC programme

1. The features of the text structure are highlighted in the model text used for teaching.
2. Same assessment criteria are used to guide teachers' marking. Yet more weighting is given to content for content subject teachers.
3. Self revision checklists are given to encourage students to revise their work before submitting the assignment.
4. Sample answers are provided for analysis and discussion after students submit their work.
5. Student work is analysed for student's strengths and weaknesses.

## How the departments worked together

The programme required mapping the curriculum of the different subjects to identify their needs of writing. The English department took the lead to teach students a certain kind of text structure. Then if another department also planned to do the same kind of text structure, the two subjects worked together. For example, the S1 English teachers taught students how to write a recipe (procedure writing) first. Then later, the science teachers followed by asking students to write the procedures of an experiment (procedure writing as well). In this way, students received **repeated practice** of the same kind of writing in **different** subject contexts.

## Schedule of implementation

The school piloted this programme in the first year in S3. As results of the programme were quite positive, the LAC (Language Across the Curriculum) coordinator decided to map out specific text structure and language features with subjects. Each time, the school only dealt with one text structure with one subject, so the students would not be overwhelmed by doing too many similar practices in all subjects. The initial plan was to teach six different text structures from Secondary 1 to 3. However, due to various constraints, the teachers were able to teach four only.

## What happened

A LAC coordinator was appointed to look after this programme. She then found interested subject panel heads to talk about how they could collaborate. As this was a new project, the initial trial was carried out by the more enthusiastic teachers. After the initial consultation stage, the S3 Geography teacher and the S3 English teacher decided to work together on a "Problem-Cause- Effect-Solution" text structure. The English teacher modelled the text structure through the topic "Anti-piracy" first. Then the Geography teacher remodelled how to write the same text structure using "Desertification".

With the first year's experience, the school saw the benefits of this cross-curricular approach. Teachers also had a better idea of how much time would be allocated to each collaboration unit and they knew how things could be run more smoothly. So in the second year, with the help of the LAC coordinator, the school identified different departments to work together on different text structures. The following table provides a general overview of the programme and the KLA's involved across the junior forms:

|                       |                               |                               |                               |                               |                           |                               |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Level</b>          | S3<br>(1 class)               | S1                            | S3                            | S1                            | S2                        | S3                            |
| <b>School year</b>    | 08-09<br>(Pilot year)         | 09-10                         |                               | 10-11                         |                           |                               |
| <b>Text structure</b> | Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution | Procedure Writing             | Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution | Procedure Writing             | Compare & Contrast        | Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution |
|                       |                               | Describing trends and figures |                               | Describing trends and figures |                           |                               |
| <b>KLA involved</b>   | English & Geography           | English & General Studies     | English & Geography           | English & General Studies     | English & General Studies | English & Geography           |

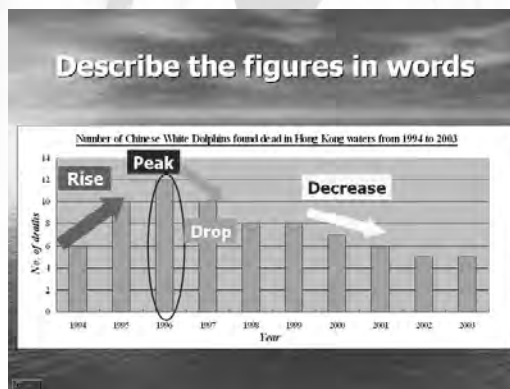
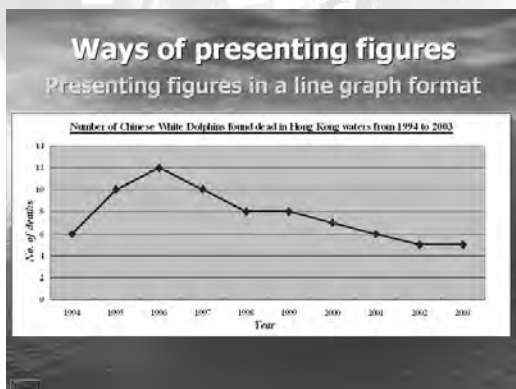
## Findings

To find out if students could master the skills taught in the English lessons and also transfer them to the content subject contexts, nine samples of student work were collected according to their language abilities: good, average and weak. Each piece of student work was marked by the same person and the same marking scheme agreed upon by all teachers (English and content subject teachers). It was found that in the pilot year, students had no problem following the “Problem-Cause-Effect-Solution” type of writing in both subjects. Yet one interesting observation was that some students who did not master the skills of writing the introduction could do better in the content subject assignment. According to the content subject teacher, she had spent quite some time explaining the writing skills and led the students to analyse the skills step by step using the model text. She also raised students’ awareness of the use of certain language functions such as how to give reasons and suggestions in her subject context. From these samples, it seemed that students wrote better in Geography than in English. It could be due to the fact that when teachers spent more time to remodel the writing skills, students might write better because extra practices and demonstration were provided by the content subject teacher.

For Secondary One students, they had no problem with procedure writing since writing a recipe or designing an experiment seemed quite easy to them. Yet when it came to describing trends and figures in the second term, students experienced some difficulties in the content subject assignment. The major problem was not the language expressions but drawing conclusions from the figures. All students could describe the trend and figures correctly in General Studies but some average and weak students were unable to give the right explanations for the change. They were also unable to write the conclusions based on these figures. It seemed that when there was an information overload, students needed more help in their writing.

(The project was only extended to S2 in April 2011, so no findings for that cohort of students were available at the time of publication.)





Teaching materials for describing trends and figures

## What students think about the programme

Students were quite positive about this programme in general. In the post-project interview, one student expressed his gratitude to the school because he liked the idea of applying what he had learned in the English lessons in the content subject contexts as well. One student also pointed out that using a model text to highlight the features of a certain text structure helped him understand how he could organise his own writing. He also expressed that he liked to know how teachers would mark his writing before submitting his work. Another student liked using a revision checklist to help her find out what was missing in her writing. Generally speaking, all students would like to work on the same programme in the coming years.



Student interview

## Difficulties and suggestions

The difficulties encountered by the LAC coordinator can be summarised as follows:

### 1. Finding the right partner and knowledge of academic literacy

In order to implement a project which aimed at enhancing the students' ability to write information texts across the curriculum, teachers must first identify which text structures are used in their own subjects, then ascertain whether there is a genuine need to collaborate with other departments. However, not all teachers understand what "text structure" means. So the LAC coordinator had to spend time explaining the concepts to their colleagues.

### 2. Finding time for implementation

To make the WAC programme work, the LAC coordinator needed to synchronise the implementation time for both subjects. It would be advisable to do the curriculum mapping before the academic year starts.

A group of students in a classroom setting, looking at a book or document together. The image is faded and serves as a background for the top section of the page.

## Conclusion

The success of cross-curricular collaboration depends on whether the departments have a common concern or genuine need to develop writing skills in their own curriculum. To facilitate the implementation of this kind of project, it is important that the school management pays attention to, first, the buying in of the programme by subject teachers. Second, the school needs to appoint a person like the LAC coordinator or the Vice Principal to oversee the programme. The person chosen needs to have good interpersonal skills and be in a senior position to mobilise colleagues and coordinate meetings. Third, all teachers in the WAC programme need to be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation stage. Finally, students' voices are essential to help teachers make improvements to the programme. Through the concerted efforts of different departments, students' writing skills can be enhanced.

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# Promoting Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) through holistic planning - getting the whole school involved

## Background

Based on the insights developed from the cross-curricular collaboration between the English and Integrated Science departments last year, Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College decided to extend the initiative further by adopting a holistic approach to the implementation of Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) in the school, aiming at maximising the benefits of using English to learn content subjects in order to develop students' academic literacy skills.

In view of the school's contexts and teachers' different concerns, interests and readiness, the school set up an LAC task group and adopted a step-by-step approach to make cross-curricular links among different Key Learning Areas (KLAs) to promote LAC.


## Levels

S1-3

**A three-year LAC development plan (2009-2012)**

| Subject                    | Year             |                  |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                            | Year 1 (2009-10) | Year 2 (2010-11) | Year 3 (2011-12) |
| English                    | S2               | S1, S2           | S1, S2, S3       |
| Mathematics (Maths)        |                  | S1               | S1, S2           |
| Integrated Science (IS)    | S2               | S1, S2           | S1, S2, S3       |
| Integrated Humanities (IH) |                  | S1               | S1, S2           |
| Visual Arts (VA)           |                  | S1               | S1, S2           |
| Religious Studies (RS)     |                  |                  | S1               |
| Computer Literacy (CL)     |                  |                  | S1               |

## Strategies used

| Concern   | Action taken  |
|---|---|
| <p>☹️ <b>Lack of clear direction</b> for the development of LAC</p>  | <p><b>Setting up an LAC task group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to facilitate the planning and implementation of LAC with a whole school approach, an LAC task group was set up to conduct holistic curriculum mapping, promote cross-curricular collaboration among different KLAs and support teachers on the material design through giving advice and feedback.</li> </ul> <p><b>Formulating a 3-year holistic plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A three-year holistic plan was formulated to give teachers a clear direction on cross-curricular collaboration and planning of different KLAs. Detailed information such as levels, subjects, strategies adopted, expected outcomes, implementation stages and roles of different parties concerned was provided clearly as guidelines for teachers to follow.</li> </ul> |



☹️ **Lack of knowledge and skills** to implement LAC



### **Adopting the “Train the trainer” approach**

- The four teachers who were involved in last year’s pilot project on integrating English into IS were invited to be members of the LAC committee. In their role as trainers and advisors, they organised workshops and informal meetings to equip their colleagues with the required knowledge and skills. In addition to that, they supported teachers to design relevant materials and provided constructive feedback on the lessons observed.

### **Building up a sharing platform**

- To increase teachers’ awareness and professional knowledge and skills on LAC, teachers of different KLA’s exchanged ideas and experiences through co-planning, discussion, peer lesson observation and regular reporting of work in staff meetings.

☹️ **Different levels** of teachers’ readiness

☹️ **Lack of time** for English and subject teachers to plan together



### **Adopting different approaches**

Both intensive and less intensive modes were adopted to support teachers with different levels of readiness and needs.

#### **a) Cross-curricular collaboration (intensive mode)**

- IS and VA teachers worked together with English teachers to develop pilot projects on integrating English into VA and IS in S1.
- Both subjects chose a topic addressing a particular language focus/ knowledge structure.
- Only 6 English periods, and 4 IS and VA periods were used in each term.
- The teaching periods of both subjects were synchronised to allow students to recycle the language learned.

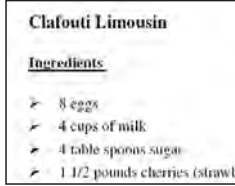
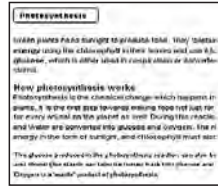
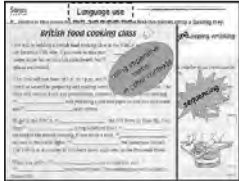

#### **b) Reading across the curriculum (less intensive mode)**

With support from the LAC committee members, S1 teachers of Maths, IH and IS used reading as an entry point to infuse English elements into their subjects. They:





- identified 4 topics to work on over the period of an academic year.
- designed topic-related reading texts for teaching purposes.
- identified related knowledge structures (e.g. compare and contrast) to be taught through the text.
- developed relevant materials for students to apply the relevant knowledge structures and language skills.

# What happened

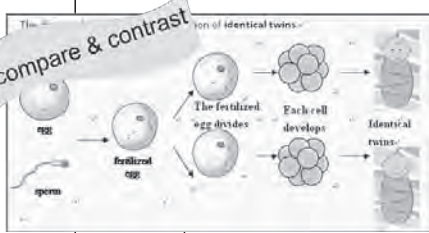
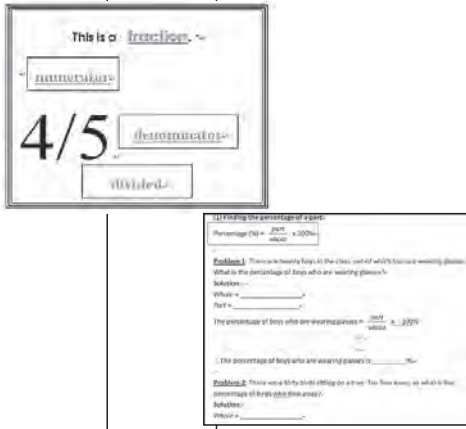
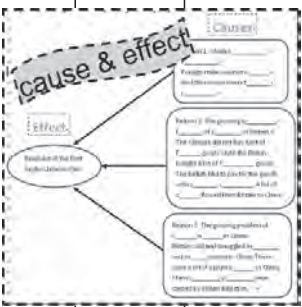
## A) Integrating English into IS (09-10)

| KLA                       | English  | IS   |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Topic</b>              | International Food   | Photosynthesis   |
| <b>Objective</b>          | To develop students' reading & writing skills  |  |
| <b>Reading</b>            | * recipes from different countries   | * sequential texts illustrating the process of photosynthesis  |
|                           |  <p><b>Clafouti Limousin</b><br/><b>Ingredients</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 8 eggs</li> <li>➤ 4 cups of milk</li> <li>➤ 4 table spoons sugar</li> <li>➤ 1 1/2 pounds cherries (straw)</li> </ul> |  <p><b>PHOTOSYNTHESIS</b></p> <p>Plants produce their own sugar to grow and live. They obtain energy using the chloroplasts in their leaves and use the glucose, which is often used to complete other activities.</p> <p><b>How photosynthesis works</b></p> <p>Photosynthesis is one condition change which happens in plants. It is the way that plants make their food for their energy and to live. They use light energy from the sun and water to produce their glucose and oxygen. The glucose is used for energy and the oxygen is used for breathing.</p> |
| <b>Grammar in context</b> | * action verbs related to giving instructions<br>* imperatives<br>* sequence words   | * verbs used in experiments<br>* imperatives<br>* sequence words   |
|                           |    |    |
| <b>Speaking</b>           | * demonstration of how to cook a dish  | * description of how to do an experiment   |
| <b>Writing</b>            | * recipe   | * recount of an experiment on a blog   |

## B) Integrating English into VA (10-11)

|                       | English  | VA  |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Topic</b>          | My School  | Impressionism   |
| <b>Language focus</b> | + adjectives for physical and psychological description<br>+ phrases used for making evaluative judgements and expressing preferences                        | + adjectives to describe artwork<br>+ phrases used for making evaluative judgements and expressing preferences  |
| <b>Reading</b>        | + floor plans about school's design & facilities<br>                      | + artwork painted by Monet and guidelines on making art appreciation and criticism<br> |
| <b>Writing</b>        | + letter to a pen-friend describing favourite teachers and new school<br> | + short critical essay on a classmate's artwork based on exemplar given previously<br>  |

**C) Reading across the Curriculum in IS, IH and Maths (10-11)**

| Subject | Level   | Topic covered  | Learning focus   | Strategy used   |
|---------|---------|--|--|---|
| IS      | S1 & S2 | + Water<br>+ Reproduction<br>+ Photosynthesis<br>+ Forces<br> | + description of processes<br>+ comparison and contrast<br>+ cause and effect<br>+ procedural ordering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduce target vocabulary and IS specific concepts</li> <li>- design topic-related reading texts</li> <li>- infuse vocabulary building skills into learning activities (e.g. use of action verbs and sequence words)</li> <li>- use of graphic organisers (e.g. flow charts) to illustrate the key concepts</li> <li>- design reading tasks to let students apply the vocabulary and knowledge structures learned</li> </ul>         |
| Maths   | S1      | + Percentages<br>+ Statistics<br>                           | + vocabulary building on some mathematical terms<br>+ developing writing skills                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use authentic diagrams (e.g. charts and tables) to introduce key vocabulary related to mathematical terms</li> <li>- design simple activities (e.g. labelling and blank-filling) for students to apply the vocabulary</li> <li>- use examples to illustrate the strategies of writing calculation steps systematically</li> <li>- design authentic tasks to let students practise their skills on writing calculation steps</li> </ul> |
| IH      | S1      | + Internet addiction<br>+ Anglo Chinese War<br>             | + identifying main ideas<br>+ sequencing<br>+ cause and effect   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- highlight target vocabulary to be learned</li> <li>- design topic-related reading texts</li> <li>- illustrate key knowledge structures through graphic organisers (e.g. tables)</li> <li>- teach reading strategies for content reading (e.g. skimming and scanning)</li> <li>- design related reading tasks for application of knowledge and skills</li> </ul>  |





## Impact

### On teachers

#### 1. Increased awareness of how to develop students' academic literacy

Through adopting different approaches to increase students' language exposure in different KLAs, teachers have become more aware of the importance of infusing English into the content subjects to strengthen students' language ability.

#### 2. Stronger collaboration among teachers of different KLAs

With the support of the LAC committee, teachers of different subjects were able to exchange ideas and experiences through cross-curricular planning, in-house staff meetings and informal discussions. This helped them gain a better understanding of the language needs of the different KLAs and understand the challenges involved in promoting better language use across the curriculum.

#### 3. Supporting teachers' capacity building

With the adoption of the "Train the trainer approach" and the positive experiences generated from the previous year's pilot project, the school was able to transfer the knowledge and skills from one subject to more subjects and from one level to more levels.

### On students

#### 1. Increased awareness of how to learn content subjects through English

Students have a better understanding that the integration of language and content is conducive to their learning in academic subjects. Through vocabulary building and content reading and writing, students are more aware of how to use different strategies to support their acquisition of content subject knowledge through English.

#### 2. Enhanced thinking skills and application of subject specific knowledge

The school's curriculum across subjects is organised according to knowledge structures (e.g. compare and contrast). With the use of authentic information texts and graphic organisers, students were able to develop their thinking skills and apply the knowledge structures and language learned in subject-specific contexts.

## Facilitating factors

1. Setting up the **LAC committee provided the platform for** inter-departmental collaboration and whole school development of LAC.
2. Identifying **appropriate entry points** such as the use of knowledge structures and the development of students' reading skills helped teachers integrate language focusses into content subjects and make cross-curricular links among different KLAs.
3. **Systematic and strategic planning** allows for the implementation to be extended from one level to more levels and from one year planning to cross-year planning.



## Difficulties & suggestions

| Difficulty   | Suggestion  |
|--|---|
| Lack of time to have cross-curricular planning     | The school may consider arranging a cross-curricular planning period to facilitate inter-departmental collaboration.  |
| Lack of space to design relevant reading materials | With the help of the Refined English Enhancement Scheme (REES), the school will be able to employ an additional teacher to take up some of the duties of the LAC committee members. Thus, extra space can be created for them to do planning and support teachers to design relevant materials. |

## Way Forward

After a year's work, the school will review the existing practices and celebrate the good work done by teachers in the in-house sharing held in July. In addition, the LAC task group will work with subject panel heads to develop a coherent school-based curriculum across subjects.

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