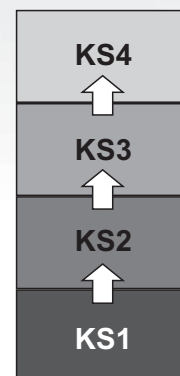


Supporting transition across key stages

Overview

Supporting transition as a major challenge for schools

Promoting progression across key stages (KS) is one major challenge for schools in Hong Kong. Teachers not only have to help students adjust to a new learning environment when they change from a primary school to study at a secondary school, but most importantly they also have to ensure that their students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills at each key stage to cope with the requirements and expectations of the next. There has been considerable discussion among teachers on how best to respond to this challenge. The following table shows teachers' major concerns about how to support students' acquisition of knowledge and skills to ensure better transition across KS, and the coping strategies that some of our collaborating schools have adopted:




Teachers' major concern	Schools' coping strategy
How to plan the school-based curriculum to support progression across KS?	Planning the curriculum holistically to make vertical and horizontal alignment
How to help students at KS2 build a firm foundation to prepare for the curriculum at KS3?	Developing essential knowledge and integrated skills in a progressive manner at KS2
How to prepare students at KS3 to meet the challenges at KS4?	Developing a broad knowledge base and critical thinking at KS3 to prepare students for KS4
How to identify students' learning gaps to support transition across key stages?	Making effective use of data and appropriate tools to identify students' learning gaps

Planning the curriculum holistically to make vertical and horizontal alignment

The English Language curricula for KS1-4 are closely connected and should be viewed as one coherent English Language curriculum. To ensure vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment, it is necessary for teachers to plan the school-based curriculum holistically by making reference to key knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn at each level and across levels. All cases in this part are about how to make coherent links among the curricula at different KS. Two primary school cases 5.10 and 5.11 are included to show how teachers plan the curriculum strategically by using non-fiction texts and integrated skills as entry points to meet the increasing demands on students' language proficiency and skills at secondary level. There are also two secondary school cases 5.12 and 5.13 to illustrate how teachers at KS3 have integrated knowledge and skills of the elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum to develop students' interest in learning elective modules when studying at senior secondary level.

Developing essential knowledge and integrated skills in a progressive manner at KS2

To prepare students at KS2 for the secondary curriculum well, primary teachers need to be aware of the major changes occurring in secondary schools such as the introduction of the Elective Part and School-based Assessment at KS4 and the fine-tuning of the medium of instruction. Because of such changes, secondary



students make use of more non-fiction texts not only in English lessons but also in content subject lessons in which English is used as the medium of instruction. Case 5.10 explains how primary teachers respond to such challenges by encouraging students at KS2 to read and write more non-fiction texts, and teaching different information and procedural texts explicitly. Case 5.11 shows that in order to help students at KS2 develop the key language skills needed to succeed at KS3, it is necessary for them to learn not only isolated language skills well but also integrated language skills in a systematic and progressive manner to build a firm language foundation.

Developing a broad knowledge base and critical thinking at KS3 to prepare students for KS4

The transition from KS3 to KS4 is very challenging for junior form students since a broad knowledge base and critical thinking skills are needed for them to handle different complex language tasks at KS4. Leaving it until KS4 to introduce such knowledge and skills would be too late. It is advisable for teachers to increase junior form students' exposure to a greater variety of authentic texts and widen their knowledge about the world through extensive reading. Encouraging KS3 students to read more critically and justifying their opinions with reasons and evidence will also help them develop the knowledge and critical thinking required to tackle sophisticated language tasks at KS4. Case 5.12 shows how teachers have made use of newspapers and magazines to broaden S2 students' knowledge of the world, help them lay a strong foundation for studying the Social Issues elective module and Liberal Studies at KS4, and develop their critical reading skills. Case 5.13 illustrates how teachers have introduced some key knowledge and skills of the elective modules at KS3 in a progressive manner to support a smooth interface between KS3 and KS4.

Making effective use of data to identify students' learning gaps

Narrowing the learning gap of the relatively weaker students and stretching the more able students are teachers' key concerns. Relevant data such as students' results in the Territory-wide System Assessment, internal assessments and their performance in class can help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses and work out appropriate support measures. Tools such as the Learning Progression Framework and Basic Competency Descriptors enable teachers to set reasonable expectations for students with different language abilities and strengths and weaknesses identified. Case 5.10 shows how teachers have made use of pre- and post-tests to monitor students' progress and use formative assessments to help students to make improvement in writing non-fiction texts.

To be able to support students to progress smoothly across different KS, panel heads and coordinators should be well acquainted with the linguistic and cognitive demands on students in learning English and using English to learn and fully understand the diverse needs of their students. In planning the school-based curriculum, they need to go beyond focusing on the learning objectives and targets of the level and the class they teach, and look into what students are expected to learn across years and in different Key Learning Areas.

Last but not least, it is crucial that schools adopt a whole-school approach to facilitating transition across key stages. Devising a clear school-based language policy to promote and improve progression across key stages is a pivotal task for curriculum leaders. If curriculum leaders can take a broader perspective about the school curriculum and student learning, the transition between key stages is likely to be smoother.



Promoting the teaching of non-fiction texts in KS2 so as to help students meet the challenge in secondary education

Background

The curriculum at secondary level presents a great challenge to many primary students both cognitively and linguistically. In learning English and using English to learn different content subjects, students will have to comprehend, analyse and synthesise an enormous amount of information on a variety of topics, presented in different formats. They will also have to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge through writing. Yet, in practice, there is a great gap in the school-based English curriculum in many primary schools, as much emphasis has been placed on the teaching of fiction texts which are mostly in the form of stories.

To help their students achieve a smooth transition to study at secondary level, teachers at Shun Tak Fraternal Association Ho Yat Tung Primary School and Toi Shan Association Primary School conducted a research and development project to explore how their P4 students could be better supported to read and write non-fiction texts for academic purposes.

Level

P4

Strategies used

1. Selecting developmentally appropriate non-fiction texts

Different non-fiction texts were chosen from the textbook units and they were planned and taught explicitly to students. Students were guided to gather relevant information from the texts so that they could proceed to respond to them by writing. Students were taught to write letters, procedural texts and brochures/leaflets to respond to the texts they read, as P4 students should be able to handle the writing of these common text types.

2. Providing the necessary scaffolding to help students cope with the linguistic and cognitive demands of the texts

In dealing with all the non-fiction texts in different units, teachers emphasised the following in the teaching process:

- helping students recognise text types
- teaching vocabulary building skills explicitly
- engaging students to do reading worksheets to help them learn and apply reading skills in the while-reading stage
- helping students learn the text structure and text features of a text type
- providing opportunities for students to put the language and vocabulary learned to use by writing non-fiction texts in response to the texts they had read

3. Building in different types of assessment to monitor students' learning progress

(i) Pre- and post-tests on reading

A pre-test and a post-test were used to keep track of students' learning progress in reading non-fiction texts. At the beginning of the school year, students were asked to read four non-fiction texts: a content page, a poster, a letter and a leaflet. The questions were set to test students' knowledge of text types, vocabulary, text structures and reading skills. At the end of the school year, a post-test was administered which was identical to the pre-test.

(ii) Formative writing assessment

Students' writing was assessed formatively. Students were taught to write three selected text types which were:

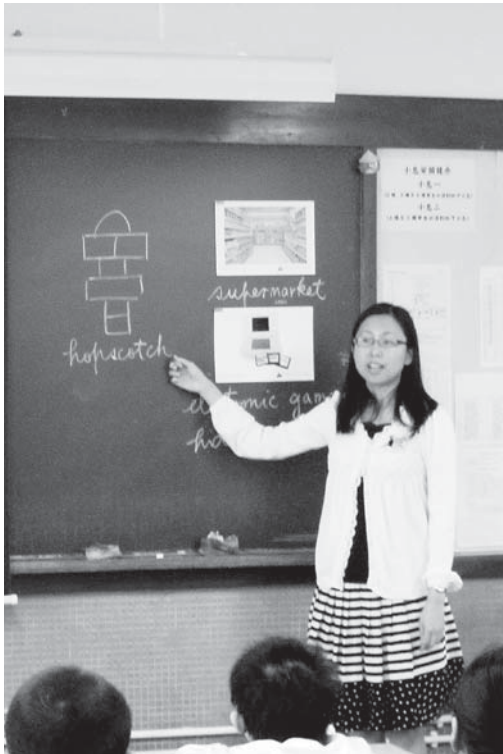
- (a) informal letter
- (b) procedural text
- (c) leaflet/brochure

Students' writing was marked with a standardised marking scheme which allowed teachers to have more detailed information about how students performed in the areas of content, language and organisation. Nine pieces of work: three from the higher ability group (3H), three from the average group (3M), and three from the lower ability group (3L), were selected from each class for data analysis.


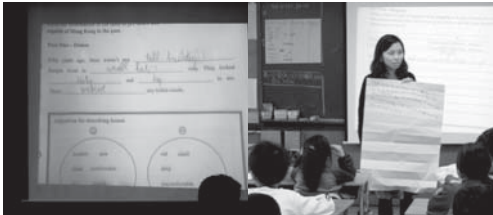
What happened

Case 1

The following example shows how the textbook unit "Old Hong Kong" was planned and taught in Shun Tak Fraternal Association Ho Yat Tung Primary School. Students were taught to read a blog and other non-fiction texts for collecting information about old Hong Kong. They then wrote a reply letter to share the information with a friend.


Task	Teaching in action	Objective
<p>1. Introduce target vocabulary about different aspects of old Hong Kong using pictures</p>		<p>Provide sufficient vocabulary input for students and encourage them to use the target vocabulary items when they do the writing</p>

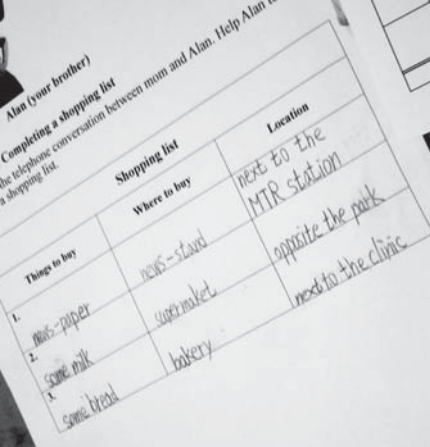


Task	Teaching in action	Objective																									
<p>2. Introduce the writing topic to students and help them identify:</p> <p>(i) what text type they need to write</p> <p>(ii) why they need to write the text</p> <p>(iii) who the readers are</p>	<p>Task: Your friend, John, has sent you a letter. He is asking for information about Hong Kong in the past. Write a reply letter to him telling him about the homes, shops, games and transportation in the past.</p> <p>Reading - Read the letter below.</p> <p>11 September 2012.</p> <p>Dear Mary,</p> <p>How are you? I have to do a project on 'Hong Kong in the past'. Can you find some information for me on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes, • Shops, • Games, • Transportation. <p>Thanks for your help!</p> <p>Love,</p> <p>John.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable students to see the purpose of learning the key vocabulary and sentence patterns • Make known to students what end product is expected from them at the end of a unit • Encourage students to gather and use information collected from reading, listening and other sources to complete the task 																									
<p>3. Teach students how to read a blog</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students identify the text features and text structure of a blog • Engage students in finding specific information and locating key words about old Hong Kong from the blog • Sum up main ideas from the blog using a mind map 																									
<p>4. (i) Incorporate a listening task into the unit so as to enable students to find relevant information for their writing from other sources</p> <p>(ii) Recommend books and websites for students to do extensive reading on the same topic</p> <p>(iii) Encourage students to interview other people to gather more information about the topic</p>	<p>Pre-task 3 What was people's life like in the past? Fill in the table below using the information that you got from textbook p.39-40 and Pre-task 2.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="528 1653 1449 2072"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Pre-task 1 (Reading)</th> <th>Pre-task 2 (Listening)</th> <th colspan="2">Others (e.g., researching information from the library, the Web and doing interviews, etc.)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Homes</td> <td>1. lived in small hut 2. the toilet was outside</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shopping</td> <td>3. at the market</td> <td>6. at the market 7. at the supermarket</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Games</td> <td>4. hopscotch 5. hide-and-seek</td> <td>8. computer games 9. electronic games</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation</td> <td></td> <td>10. trams 11. the Peak Tram 12. trains</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Pre-task 1 (Reading)	Pre-task 2 (Listening)	Others (e.g., researching information from the library, the Web and doing interviews, etc.)		Homes	1. lived in small hut 2. the toilet was outside				Shopping	3. at the market	6. at the market 7. at the supermarket			Games	4. hopscotch 5. hide-and-seek	8. computer games 9. electronic games			Transportation		10. trams 11. the Peak Tram 12. trains			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable students to get more information about the topic from different sources so as to help them enrich their ideas for writing
	Pre-task 1 (Reading)	Pre-task 2 (Listening)	Others (e.g., researching information from the library, the Web and doing interviews, etc.)																								
Homes	1. lived in small hut 2. the toilet was outside																										
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Task	Teaching in action	Objective
<p>5. Do shared writing in class so that students can see how to construct the first paragraph of the letter using information collected in the pre-tasks</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise students' awareness of text features and text structures so that they can use appropriate formats, conventions and language features in writing • Encourage students to decide the sequence of the content and present information using target vocabulary and language structures • Build up students' confidence in doing group writing or individual writing
<p>6. Conduct error analysis, peer editing and self-assessment</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students improve the content, language and organisation of their writing

Case 2

Toi Shan Association Primary School contributed another example of teaching non-fiction. Teachers designed a task-based thematic unit learning booklet (the booklet) to enable students to take charge of their own learning so as to promote independent learning. Materials from the booklet and textbook were used as teaching and learning resources for helping students write non-fiction texts. Teachers made use of the booklet as a tool to support students' language development in a progressive manner. Internal sharing was done to share the experience with all English panel members. The table on the next page shows one of the units, "Finding Your Way Around", that teachers worked on this year:

Task	Teaching in Action	Objective
<p>1. Vocabulary building</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lead in, teachers introduced the topic and went through the vocabulary about different places/shops and directions with pictures Students were asked to make sentences using the vocabulary learned in the booklet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students learn the spelling of new words more efficiently through using a spelling practice called “Look, Spell and Think, Cover, Write, Check” from the booklet for every unit Encourage students not only to remember new vocabulary items in isolation and retain them as passive vocabulary, but also to put them to use by including them in familiar sentence patterns
<p>2. Reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers gave students a map to read and asked them to do while- and post- reading exercises in order to apply the vocabulary about places and giving directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support students to read non-fiction texts (maps) Highlight the text features of a map
<p>3. Language Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepositions to talk about position Asking and giving directions Using sequencing words to give directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers explicitly taught language items in context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Using prepositions to talk about position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. The bank is next to the post office. (ii) Asking and giving directions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g 1. Where can I find a bakery? e.g 2. Go out of the hotel, and turn right. (iii) Using sequencing words to give directions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g. First, next, then... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give students language support to write non-fiction texts Provide students with many concrete and precise examples of how to use the language items Enable students to revisit material taught in the lesson after class using the grammar notes section in the booklet. These notes were presented in a simple and clear way Increase students’ sense of learning ownership and help foster independent learning Provide immediate practice after each language focus to consolidate students’ learning

Task	Teaching in action	Objective
<p>4. Integrated task:</p> <p>Pre-task 1 Listening to a dialogue between a son and a mother and completing a shopping list</p>  <p>Pre-task 2: Drawing a shopping route</p>  <p>Main task: Writing a description of the shopping route</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated task was designed to allow students to apply all knowledge learned from the previous lessons. • In Pre-task 1, students were asked to listen to a conversation between a son and a mother. Then, they had to complete a shopping list. • In Pre-task 2, students were asked to draw a route for the shopping trip with the information from Pre-task 1. • Students had to use sequencing words to give directions, e.g. first, next, then. They also had to use the vocabulary about different places/shops as well as the things to buy. • They needed to combine and organise all the information from Pre-tasks 1 and 2 to complete this writing task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with a platform to apply integrated skills • Expose students to one more non-fiction text type: shopping list • Enable students to apply all the items learned in the unit when completing the task • Enable students to apply more than one language skill at a time in each pre-task • Train students to become more advanced language users by doing an integrated task • Help students develop the ability to understand, analyse and synthesise information from texts, which they will need in the study of both English and content subjects at secondary level

Impact

On students

1. Reading performance

Students' knowledge of vocabulary building skills, text type recognition, knowledge structures and target reading skills was tested in the reading pre- and post-tests. They were also tested on whether they could obtain relevant information from multiple texts. 189 students from the two schools participated in the tests and the findings were as follows:

(a) Vocabulary building skills

Students showed improvement in all the vocabulary building skills tested. Students made the most significant improvement in using compounding, followed by antonyms. Students' understanding of lexical sets was also improved. With explicit teaching of vocabulary building skills, students learned the concept of word formation and word association skills. They also learned some strategies to tackle unfamiliar words.

(b) Reading skills

Students showed improvement in text type recognition. They recognised letters best. The results indicated that students were more aware of the features of different text types. They could also master various reading skills such as locating specific information, making inferences, identifying key words and skimming for the gist better. When students were required to comprehend two different texts simultaneously, they found it more difficult to do it independently. They needed guidance and assistance to do such a task.

As shown in the post-test analysis, students successfully demonstrated various reading skills related to non-fiction materials. They were becoming more familiar with text types other than stories. They were able to read as well as write the selected non-fiction texts which they will come across again in KS3. The project prepared them for coping with more complicated non-fiction texts in their secondary education.

(c) Knowledge structures

In terms of the knowledge structures learned, students could locate a "cause and effect" relationship from the text. They could also sequence ideas in the texts.

2. Writing performance

The P4 students produced three non-fiction text types: letters, procedural texts and brochures. 63 pieces of student work from two schools were selected for data analysis. Students were able to obtain a score of 3 out of 4 for all target non-fiction text types in terms of content. The results indicated that students could include relevant ideas with sufficient supporting details, and their ideas were clear and coherent.

In terms of language, the results showed that most students could use a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and verb forms fairly appropriately with some or few grammatical and spelling mistakes. In terms of organisation, students did better in writing procedural texts and brochures than in letter writing. The results indicated that students need to know more about how to use connectives to link ideas and organise them in paragraphs at text level. Students were also able to learn text features effectively and they were able to apply them in writing different non-fiction text types.

On teachers

1. Teachers' awareness of the teaching of non-fiction text types was heightened. They were more motivated to plan and design teaching materials to widen students' exposure to different text types.
2. In planning the school-based curriculum, teachers have realised the importance of incorporating more non-fiction texts into the KS2 curriculum so that students can be better prepared for their secondary learning. Holistic curriculum planning will be done to ensure a balanced coverage of text types across different levels.

Facilitating factors

1. Awareness of students' learning gap between KS2 and KS3

With a better understanding of the demands at secondary level, teachers were willing to do more to help bridge the gap between KS2 and KS3 so that students could have a smoother transition from primary to secondary. Hence, more emphasis was put on teaching non-fiction texts in KS2 so that students could be better prepared to read them in both English and content subjects at secondary level.

2. Advanced planning

All the teachers in the project had a common goal of exposing their students to a wider range of text types. Hence, advanced planning was done to select common non-fiction text types. Teachers were able to select appropriate reading texts and analyse the sample texts to help students better understand the structures and features.

3. Use of different forms of assessment

The different forms of assessment enabled teachers to have a better understanding of students' progress in reading non-fiction texts. The results could inform the next stage of planning and teaching.

Way forward

In order to have a smooth transition to secondary school, primary students need to be exposed to more non-fiction texts. English teachers can consider collaborating with content subject teachers to identify non-fiction books for students to read. As a result, what students have learned in the content subjects can be consolidated by reading English books on the same topics. In addition, the purpose of exposing students to more non-fiction texts can be achieved. In order to develop their ability to synthesise material from different sources, teachers can ask students to read more than one non-fiction text on a topic so that more information can be collected for accomplishing a particular task. By increasing the complexity of the tasks in this way, teachers can help students better prepare for the more challenging tasks at secondary level.

Reference

The Curriculum Development Council. (2004). English Language Education KLA: English Language Curriculum Guide (P1-P6). HKSAR: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

Shun Tak Fraternal Association Ho Yat Tung Primary School
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Toi Shan Association Primary School
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Widening the choice of texts and developing the integrative use of skills among senior primary students

Background

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Guide (2007), the six-year primary curriculum focuses on laying the foundation of English Language development while the secondary curriculum emphasises the application of English for various everyday learning and developmental purposes. For example, the text types that students need to comprehend and produce at secondary level will be more complex, and cover a wider range of subjects. They are also expected to exercise the integrated use of skills for authentic communication. To prepare primary students to study in secondary schools, it is necessary for teachers to widen their exposure to a broad range of text types, and give them the opportunity to use different skills in an integrated manner, as well as to develop their ability to organise and synthesise various sources of information critically (Nunan, 1989; Arslan, 2008; English Language Curriculum Guide, 2004).

With this in mind, the teachers of Salesian Yip Hon Primary School took part in a three-year project in order to build a strong interface between the senior primary and the junior secondary curricula. By teaching more text types such as non-fiction texts explicitly and developing students' ability to have integrative use of language and generic skills, teachers enabled students to read and write non-fiction texts more effectively, which could greatly ease their learning of content subjects, and also help them to tackle language tasks at secondary level.

Levels

P4-6

Strategies used

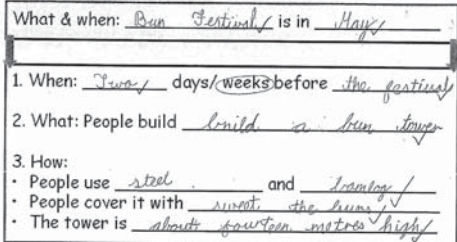
Level	Strategy used	Rationale for using the strategy
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introducing exchanges (e.g. emails)• Teaching of simple knowledge structures (e.g. description)• Use of text analysis and process writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build students' confidence to read simple non-fiction texts• To help students understand how a text is structured and written with appropriate text type features
P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introducing information and procedural texts (e.g. news articles)• Teaching of more complex knowledge structures (e.g. compare and contrast, sequence)• Use of the strategy "IDEA" Investigating the text Deconstructing the text Exploring knowledge structures Applying learned knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To broaden students' exposure to a wider range of non-fiction texts• To help students analyse and construct a more complex text using knowledge structures

<p>P6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing explanatory and persuasive texts (e.g. expositions) • Teaching of other types of knowledge structures (e.g. problem and solution, cause and effect) • Use of the strategy “USEFUL”: Understanding the task requirements Seeking information in texts in the General English Programme Enriching information through the Reading Workshops Finding ways to link and present information Using text analysis to familiarise students with text type features Linking and presenting all synthesised details using appropriate text type features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To further expose students to other types of non-fiction texts • To develop students’ ability to have integrative use of language and generic skills when tackling language tasks
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What happened

The following tables show how teachers used different strategies at senior primary level (Tables 1 and 2) to strengthen students’ language skills so as to prepare them for the secondary curriculum. Table 1 shows how teachers adopted the **“IDEA”** approach to teach students to read and write non-fiction texts. Table 2 illustrates how the **“USEFUL”** approach was used to develop students’ integrated skills.

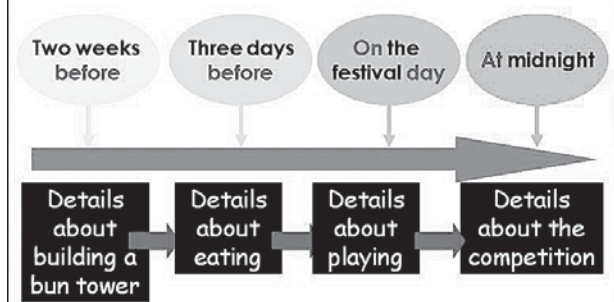
Table 1

<p>Level: P4-5</p>	
<p>Objective: To strengthen students’ reading and writing skills to tackle non-fiction texts using the strategy “IDEA”</p>	
<p>Procedure for students</p>	
<p>Step 1: Investigate the text (I)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making predictions by looking at visual clues • Skimming the first and the last lines of each paragraph • Making use of prior knowledge and set purposes using “KWL” “K” stands for what I <u>k</u>now, “W” stands for what I <u>w</u>ant to know, and “L” stands for what I have <u>l</u>earned from the text) 	
<p>Step 2: Deconstructing the text (D)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking 5W and 1H questions • Identifying details of each paragraph • Identifying the main ideas of the text • Recognising features and structures of the text using graphic organisers 	<p>Article: Bun Festival Paragraph 1: About building a tower</p> 

Step 3: Exploring knowledge structures (E)

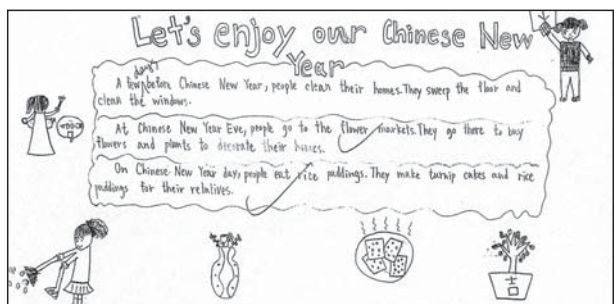
- Learning the functions of different knowledge structures
- Identifying meanings and relevant signal words in a text
- Working out the order of ideas using graphic organisers

Sequence (timeline & events):



Step 4: Applying acquired knowledge (A)

- Identifying features and knowledge structures of target text types
- Recognising writing purpose and audience
- Generating, organising and constructing the text with graphics
- Revising and editing the text for publication



Teachers used the framework below (Chart 1) to design tasks for students to apply different skills. As shown, all the tasks are thematically linked and each task focuses on developing one or two language skills. Students identified and collated details from the previous tasks, then transferred, integrated and presented the details with appropriate text type features to complete the main task.

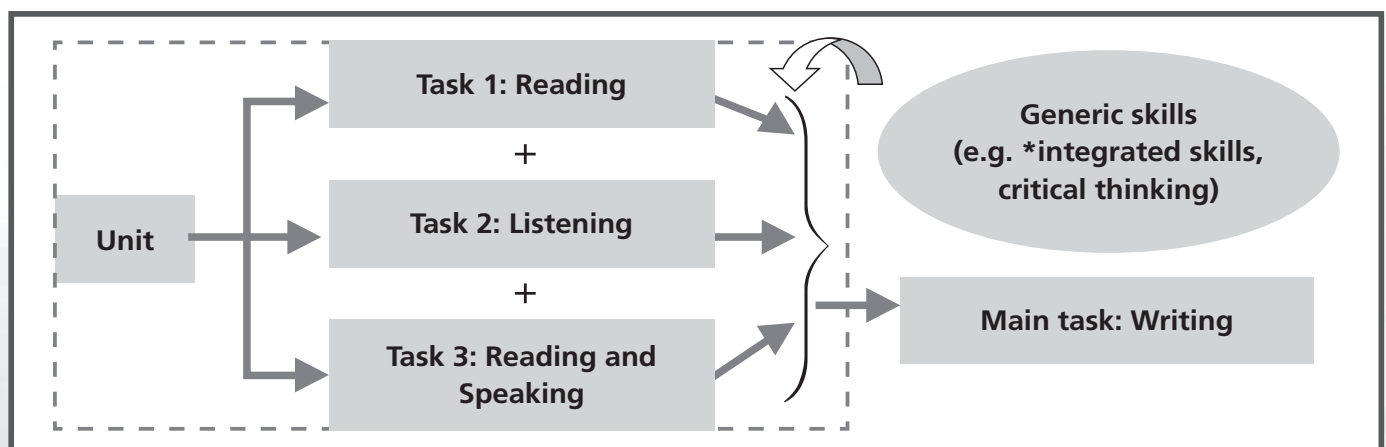


Chart 1 Integrated task framework

**Integrated skills (e.g. understanding and following instructions in texts; listening for, locating, transferring, integrating and synthesising information obtained from spoken and written texts; presenting information using varied sentence structures, cohesive devices, paragraphing and appropriate text type features)*

**Critical thinking skills (e.g. extracting, classifying, organising and synthesising information from various sources; identifying and expressing main ideas, problems and central issues; making sensible predictions, making inferences and drawing conclusions; distinguishing between causes and effects, facts and opinions, sources and evidence)*

**Creativity (e.g. responding and giving expression to experiences and issues; strengthening creative abilities and developing sensitivity in critical appreciation of texts through exposure to print and non-print materials; exploring alternatives to resolve problems)*

Table 2

Level: P6	
Objective: To strengthen the integrative use of skills to tackle language tasks using the strategy "USEFUL"	
An example of an integrated task: Write an email to an overweight boy, Tim, to explain to him the causes and effects of his bad habits, and then give him some advice on how to improve his lifestyle.	
Procedure for students:	
<p>Step 1: Understanding the task requirements (U)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing an awareness of the task requirements: Students read the instructions and circled key words. They shared their views with peers. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Task: You are Dr. Tam. You will write an email to Tim about his eating problems. You will also give him advice on how to be healthy. All the details can be obtained from the following parts.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying target content and text type: Students predicted the possible content (e.g. Tim's bad habits and advice for improvement), and the tone of the email (e.g. a friendly tone) by highlighting key words. 	<p>Generic and integrated skills developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated skills Understanding the task requirements and following the instructions Critical thinking skills Identifying the content and preparing to extract details
<p>Step 2: Seeking information in texts (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting focuses before engaging with spoken and written texts: Based on their prediction of the content, students set specific focuses of each task. In Task 1, students had to find out the problems of the boy, Tim. In Task 2, students identified details about Tim's bad habits. In Task 3, students gave comments on Tim's habits, explained the causes and effects of an unhealthy lifestyle, and suggested ways for improvement. Developing target language skills in tackling tasks: <p>Task 1: Reading a news article to find out Tim's problems</p> <p>Students skimmed and scanned a text by looking at contextual and textual clues. Using this information, students could infer Tim's problems (i.e. Tim is too fat probably because he eats too much). Features of a news article were also highlighted.</p> <p>Task 2: Listening to a radio programme to find out Tim's bad habits</p> <p>Some pre-listening activities such as predicting Tim's eating habits and previewing questions were done to set listening purposes.</p>	<p>Generic and integrated skills developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical thinking skills Identifying the problem Integrated skills Listening for, locating and extracting relevant details from written and spoken texts

7. What does Tim likes and doesn't like doing? Write the key words.

Habits	Likes	Does not like
Eating / drinking	chips, rice, sweets, chocolate, juice	vegetables, fruits
Things to do when free	playing computer games, sleeping, watching TV	doing exercise

Simple note-taking skills were also taught. Through drawing students' attention to Tim's likes and dislikes, and also his tone, teachers helped students notice what bad habits Tim had, and how he felt about being fat. The concept of healthy eating, and the necessary vocabulary and structures were taught in context in the General English Programme.

(b) Read textbook p.29 to find out the types and functions of food. You may need to think of some examples.

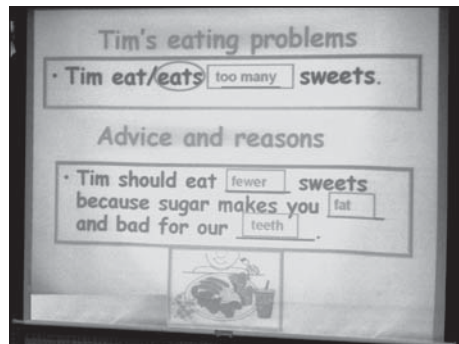
Food groups	Types of food	Functions of food
e.g. Fat, oil & sugar	■ Not a food group	■ Do not have a lot of nutrients
(a) Milk & meat	Milk, yogurt, cheese	• Give us a lot of nutrients • Help us grow
(b) Vegetable & fruit	Carrot, beans, potatoes, carrots	• Give us vitamins and minerals • Help us stay healthy
(c) Grain	rice, (starches), bread	• Give us energy

Step 3: Enriching content through reading (E)

- Extending knowledge from other sources and developing target language skills:

Task 3: Reading texts for information needed to comment, explain and suggest a healthy lifestyle

Students got further details on ways to improve Tim's eating habits (e.g. eating the right amount and kinds of food), and possible reasons for Tim not doing exercise through the discussion of the reader and a magazine article introduced in the Reading Workshops.



Generic and integrated skills developed

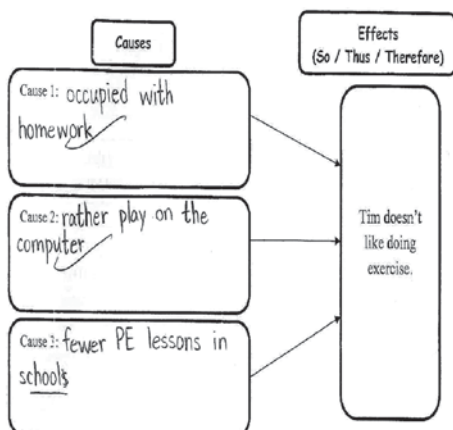
- **Creativity**
Responding to experiences
- **Critical thinking skills**
Classifying relevant details and making inferences

Step 4: Finding ways to synthesise and present information (F)

- Classifying, modifying and connecting the information gathered and developing target language skills:

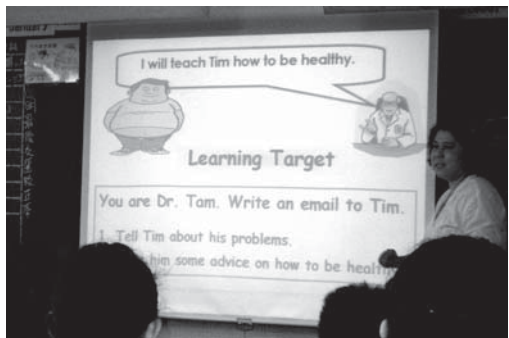
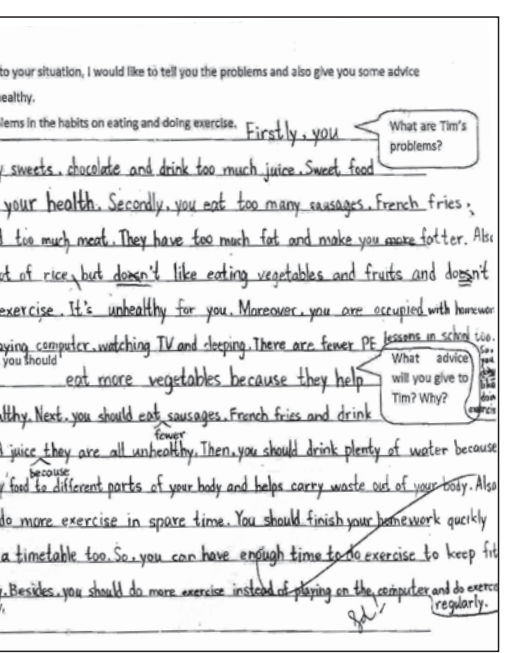
Task 4: Making suggestions and developing supporting arguments

Students tried to convince Tim to change his behaviour by explaining the causes and effects of an unhealthy lifestyle, and suggested ways for improvement. They organised and presented all the information gathered using cohesive devices and the target structures, and practised persuading their peers to accept their plans. This activity helped build students' speaking confidence and develop their elaboration skills.



Generic and integrated skills developed

- **Creativity**
Exploring alternatives to resolve the problem
- **Critical thinking skills**
Identifying cause and effect
- **Integrated skills**
Transferring and integrating information

<p>Step 5: Understanding the text type (U)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing target content and analysing text type features: Students reviewed the task requirements by recalling details of the target content and analysing features of the target text type. 		<p>Generic and integrated skills developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated skills Recognising target text type features
<p>Step 6: Linking and presenting the synthesised material (L)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and organising details using graphic organisers and presenting them with appropriate text features: <p>Main task: Writing an email to persuade a friend to adopt a healthy lifestyle</p> <p>Students organised the information collected using graphic organisers. These graphics enabled students to visualise how information could be connected and synthesised. Students finally presented the synthesised information in an email, using the appropriate text type features.</p>		<p>Generic and integrated skills developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated skills Synthesising information using varied sentence structures, cohesive devices and appropriate text type features

Impact

On students

- Confidence and skills to comprehend and construct non-fiction texts**

Students have greater confidence and competence in tackling a wider range of texts and using different language and thinking skills in an integrated manner. Improvement can be found in their ability to comprehend and construct non-fiction texts such as news reports, expositions and information reports. The widened exposure to different text types has enriched students' knowledge base for further study.

- Knowledge and ability to use different skills in an integrated manner**

Students can follow instructions to critically identify, strategically integrate and appropriately present relevant information obtained from various sources. The ability to select information from a variety of sources and apply different language skills to a task helps students complete various language tasks confidently and independently.



On teachers

- **Awareness of planning a balanced literacy curriculum at KS2**

After the project, the teachers have realised the importance of exposing students to a broader range of text types, and developing their ability to use their language skills integratively. Teachers are more able to plan the KS2 curriculum with consideration of the knowledge and skills required in KS3.

- **Enhanced capacity in teaching integrated language skills**

Having gained experience in planning and teaching different types of non-fiction texts and integrated skills through the use of the strategies **“IDEA”** and **“USEFUL”** in this project, teachers have become more confident and more able to help their senior primary students to prepare for their study in secondary schools.

Facilitating factors

- The school management was supportive in allowing teachers to carry out curriculum adaptation.
- Teachers were very receptive to changes and were eager to explore different strategies to help their senior primary students learn effectively at secondary level.
- Teachers were knowledgeable and had a thorough understanding of language knowledge and skills required in both KS2 and KS3.

Suggestions

To better prepare senior primary students to study at secondary level, teachers are advised to note the following areas:

- **Planning:** It is important that teachers plan a balanced literacy curriculum that covers both fiction and non-fiction texts, and design meaningful tasks which allow students to access a wide range of text types, and use language and generic skills in an integrated manner.
- **Implementation:** It is recommended that teachers adopt strategies such as **“IDEA”** and **“USEFUL”** strategically, and infuse target skills progressively so that students are better able to acquire and apply them in their learning.
- **Evaluation:** It is essential that teachers keep track of students’ learning frequently through different assessment modes, and adjust their teaching pace and strategies appropriately to cater for their students’ needs and concerns.

Way forward

To equip senior primary students with the language knowledge and skills necessary for use and study at secondary level, teachers’ awareness and skills in planning the curriculum systematically and progressively have to be raised. Teachers are encouraged to make effective use of language tasks to develop students’ generic skills, promote independent learning and cultivate positive values and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning.



References

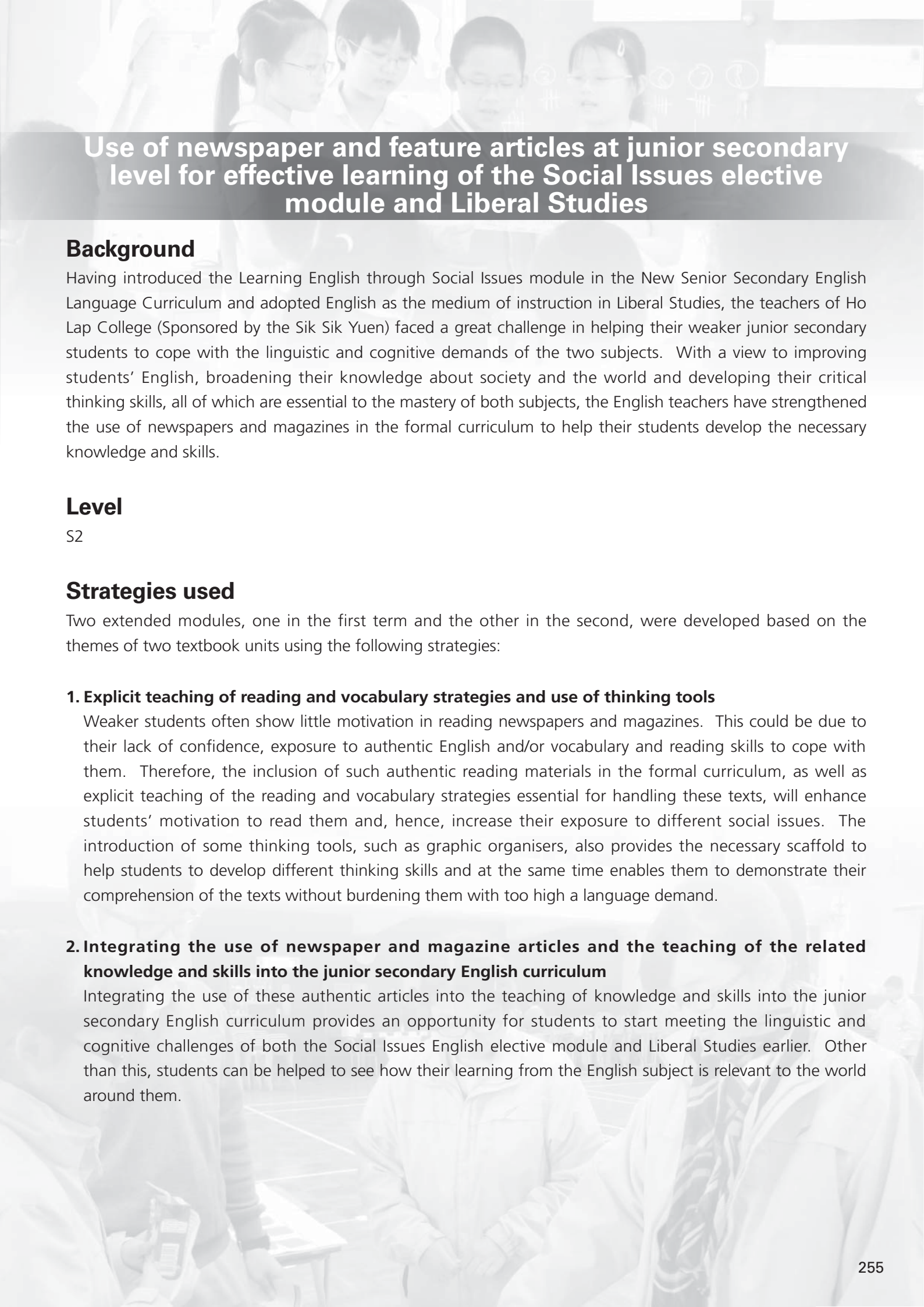
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Salesian Yip Hon Primary School
Stephanie LO (Language Support Officer)

A background image showing a group of students in a classroom. Some are looking at a screen or board, while others are engaged in discussion. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

Use of newspaper and feature articles at junior secondary level for effective learning of the Social Issues elective module and Liberal Studies

Background

Having introduced the Learning English through Social Issues module in the New Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum and adopted English as the medium of instruction in Liberal Studies, the teachers of Ho Lap College (Sponsored by the Sik Sik Yuen) faced a great challenge in helping their weaker junior secondary students to cope with the linguistic and cognitive demands of the two subjects. With a view to improving students' English, broadening their knowledge about society and the world and developing their critical thinking skills, all of which are essential to the mastery of both subjects, the English teachers have strengthened the use of newspapers and magazines in the formal curriculum to help their students develop the necessary knowledge and skills.

Level

S2

Strategies used

Two extended modules, one in the first term and the other in the second, were developed based on the themes of two textbook units using the following strategies:

1. Explicit teaching of reading and vocabulary strategies and use of thinking tools

Weaker students often show little motivation in reading newspapers and magazines. This could be due to their lack of confidence, exposure to authentic English and/or vocabulary and reading skills to cope with them. Therefore, the inclusion of such authentic reading materials in the formal curriculum, as well as explicit teaching of the reading and vocabulary strategies essential for handling these texts, will enhance students' motivation to read them and, hence, increase their exposure to different social issues. The introduction of some thinking tools, such as graphic organisers, also provides the necessary scaffold to help students to develop different thinking skills and at the same time enables them to demonstrate their comprehension of the texts without burdening them with too high a language demand.

2. Integrating the use of newspaper and magazine articles and the teaching of the related knowledge and skills into the junior secondary English curriculum

Integrating the use of these authentic articles into the teaching of knowledge and skills into the junior secondary English curriculum provides an opportunity for students to start meeting the linguistic and cognitive challenges of both the Social Issues English elective module and Liberal Studies earlier. Other than this, students can be helped to see how their learning from the English subject is relevant to the world around them.

What happened

First term: Getting to know English newspapers and reading hard news articles

Theme of textbook unit: Animals in danger

Purpose	Activity and task
Getting acquainted with an English newspaper and becoming aware of the general writing purposes of the different sections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students conducted a discussion on the usual purposes people have for reading newspapers. 2. They scanned a newspaper in groups and had a competition to name the different sections in newspapers. 3. Students worked in groups to match newspaper texts from different sections with their writing purposes. 4. They worked in groups to prepare a presentation to introduce the newspaper section they found most interesting to the class with the help of the provided framework.
Getting familiar with the different sections in an English newspaper and sharing the section they found most interesting with peers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students did a group presentation about the newspaper section they found most interesting while their audience jotted notes about their presentation. 2. Students wrote a brief description of the newspaper section they found most interesting independently. <div data-bbox="584 1144 1259 1453" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>My favourite section in the newspaper is World. The articles are about what happen in other country like accident, explosion and other. The major purpose of the articles are to inform. I think it is most interesting to me because I can know more about the world.</p> </div>
Learning about the common types of texts in an English newspaper	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A few students were invited to give a brief presentation on the newspaper section they found most interesting. 2. Students were introduced to the common types of texts in English newspapers and then worked in groups to conduct a scavenger hunt to look for examples of these texts in the newspaper of the day.
Learning about the text structure of hard news articles and making use of such knowledge to identify key information and write summaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students were helped to discover the text structure of news stories after they worked in groups to read for and arrange key information of some news articles in their 5Ws Organisers. 2. Students read a news story and summarised its content using the 5Ws Organiser in groups.

Gaining confidence and skills to make sense of authentic news articles with unfamiliar words in them

1. Students worked in groups to infer the meaning of the unfamiliar words in an article using linguistic and contextual clues.
2. Some groups were invited to explain the meaning and pronunciation of an assigned new word to the class creatively (e.g. using a role play or drawing).

Read the article **"Prison for teenage cyber-bully"** again and guess the meaning of the following words in context. **Complete the first two columns first. After that, look up the meaning from a dictionary and write the definition in the last column.**

Words	Copy the relevant sentences & underline clues that help you to infer the meaning	I guess it means	It actually means
1. enemies (Paragraph 1)	Keeley Houghton and Emily Moore had been enemies since they were at school.	They are not friend and dislike the other.	opponent
2. illegal (Paragraph 3)	In Britain, any type of harassment, including harassment at school, in the street and online is illegal.	Violates the law	unlawful
3. ban from (Paragraph 4)	The judge also banned Keeley from contacting Emily for three years and banned her from using Facebook for six months.	Use something to hurt someone	inhibit
4. regret (Paragraph 4)	"I do feel bad for writing that. I would have been very upset if I had seen a comment like that about me. I regret everything I've done."	regret	be sorry

Developing their vocabulary for expressing how they feel about a news story

1. In pairs, students inferred meaning of adjectives for describing feelings towards a news report in context.

Expressing your reactions towards a news story

1. What do you think the adjectives in these sentences mean? Match the sentences with the correct definition and write the letters in the space provided.

Sentences	Answer	Definition
1. I was annoyed when they didn't take my complaints seriously.	C	A. made worried
2. I was amused by the news about the exploding whale. I think it was like something that happens in Mr. Bean's movies.	E	B. made sad

3. The public is **concerned** about the number of abuse cases.

4. I was **saddened** by the news about the who was ran over by a car and left or

5. I was **touched** by that news about the with his mother after 46 years.

6. With all these unexpected developments election, I am **Intrigued** to know who is the next Chief Executive of Hong Kong

How do you feel after reading the article "Man arrested for shooting kitten with air gun"? Give reason(s) to support your answer.

I was ^{was} **annoyed** by this article because the man shot the kitten to test an air gun. I think he can test in other way.

2. Students shared their feelings towards the hard news article on "Man shot kitten".

Second term: Reading feature articles critically

Theme of textbook unit: Teenage problem – Bullying

Purpose

Activity and task

Reviewing features of a hard news story and developing their awareness and understanding of the issue of bullying

1. Students participated in a competition to review knowledge and skills covered in the previous module.
2. Students used the 5Ws Organiser to summarise key information in the hard news article *"Bullied teen dies jumping in front of bus clutching suicide note"*.
3. They conducted a group discussion on the action taken by the victim in the news and shared what they knew about the theme "bullying".

Developing their skills and strategies for reading feature articles and dealing with more challenging texts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students identified the theme and located specific information of a feature article with their knowledge of its text type features. 2. Students worked in groups to infer the meaning of the unfamiliar words in the article.
Learning to read critically and identifying different aspects of a social issue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In groups, students identified the writer's intention and evaluated the credibility of the sources of information in the text. 2. Students synthesised information about the causes, effects and solutions to the problem of bullying from the articles covered in the module. 3. Each group conducted a presentation on one aspect of the issue.

Impact

Students developed the following knowledge, skills and attitudes after the project:

1. Confidence in using English news and feature articles as a source of information

In order to do well in both the Social Issues elective module and Liberal Studies, it is important that students keep themselves up to date on current issues through reading news and feature articles extensively.

<p>Two Things I Found Interesting in this Unit...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the organisation of a hard news article ◆ I know how to look for the news or kinds of information I need from an English newspaper.
<p>Two Things I Found Interesting in this Unit...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some information we can't see in home newspaper, but it can found in English newspaper. ◆ More about our society in this paper

Being able to perceive themselves as capable of making sense of these texts contributes to students' enhanced motivation in reading them and using them as a source to broaden their knowledge base. From the students' feedback, 95.3% of them expressed that they had a better understanding of the content in English newspapers and 90% of them believed that they knew how to look for the news or the kinds of information they needed from an English newspaper.

2. An ability to apply knowledge of text type features and organisation of English news and feature articles

A good understanding of text features and organisation of English news and feature articles enables students to identify the main ideas and topics in these texts more effectively and efficiently. During the lessons, it was observed that the majority of the students were able to locate key information from the articles with the help of the text features, such as the lead, headings and text boxes. This observation is supported by the students' feedback given in the questionnaires. 84% of them expressed that they could find the key information in an article more quickly with the knowledge of its text features than before. 80% and 89.5% of students agreed that they had learned how information was organised in hard news and feature articles respectively after the project.

3. Strategies and skills for reading more challenging texts

One of the challenges students may have when reading newspaper and magazine articles is the number of unfamiliar words in them. Because of this, students may easily be discouraged or distracted in their reading process. However, it was observed that the students were satisfied with their performance in achieving the reading and speaking tasks based on the authentic hard news and feature articles used in the project. 86% of the students agreed that they were more capable of using the text features to make predictions about the articles – a strategy which enables students to make connections, ask questions and verify hypotheses so as to gain a deeper understanding of the issues being discussed. 91.6% of the students agreed that they learned how to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words using contextual and linguistic clues and 89.5% of them felt more confident in reading because of this. Among the most useful things students believed they learned in the first part of the project, “guessing the meaning of difficult vocabulary using contextual cues” and “looking for main ideas/key information in an article effectively” were the top two items on the lists.

<p>Three Most Useful Things I Learned in this Unit ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Use 5w words to read a news.◆ Improved my understanding of the content of English newspapers.◆ Understanding how to find the news where I wanted to read.
<p>Two Things I Found Interesting in this Unit...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ learnt to guess the meaning of some new word.◆ Find the key information on a news article quickly.

4. Application of critical thinking skills

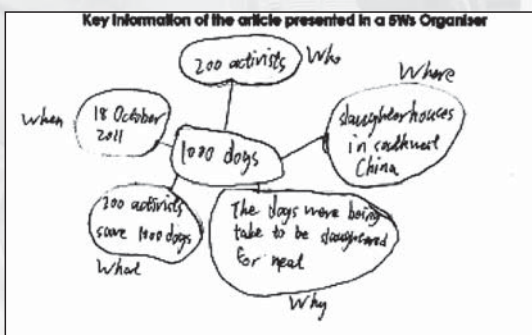
The ability to discern views, values and writing intentions stated or implied in different written texts is another area that students need to develop in preparation for their learning of the Social Issues elective module and Liberal Studies. In the lesson on the feature article about cyber-bullying, not only were most groups able to identify the writer’s intention and the target audience of the text, but they were also able to make use of this information to make judgment on the credibility of the information conveyed in the text. Also, in the questionnaire about the lessons on the feature articles, nearly 90% of them agreed that they had learned to read a text critically by asking questions about the target audience, purposes and reliability of the information in a text.

◆ When we read the news, we can know what the reporter think about.

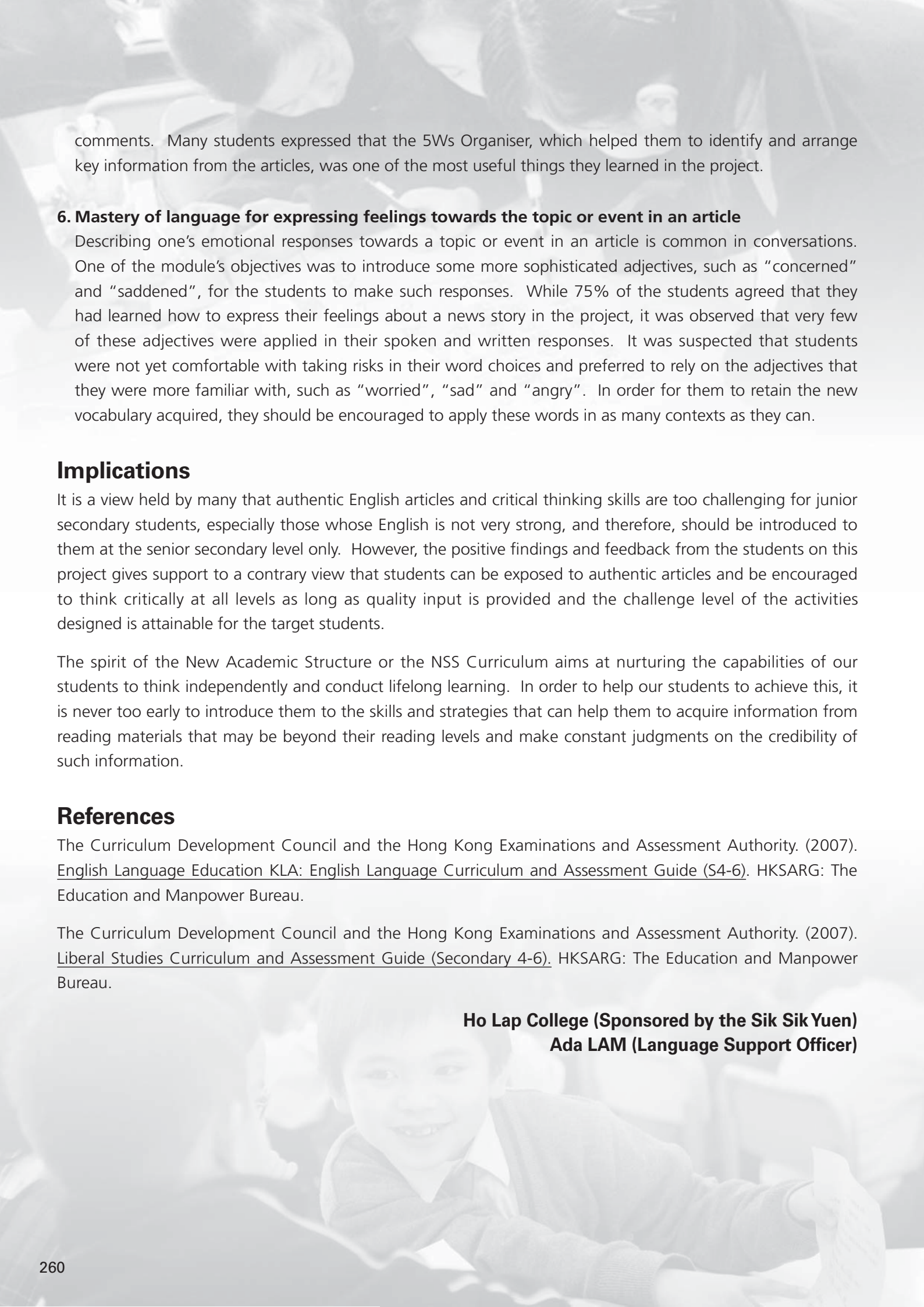
An entry a student made in his reflection log

5. Use of graphic organisers

There are many benefits for students from using graphic organisers. Not only can graphic organisers encourage students to formulate and reorganise the ideas from the text in a new framework, but they also lessen the language demand on students in demonstrating their comprehension of the texts. This



is especially helpful to students who are not too strong in expressing themselves in English. With a lower language barrier for these students, they can focus more on demonstrating their understanding about the topic of the text and focus less on feeling self-conscious about the accuracy of their answers. Hence, gradually, students’ motivation in reading and their sense of achievement will be enhanced. The popularity of the graphic organiser used in the project is reflected in students’



comments. Many students expressed that the 5Ws Organiser, which helped them to identify and arrange key information from the articles, was one of the most useful things they learned in the project.

6. Mastery of language for expressing feelings towards the topic or event in an article

Describing one's emotional responses towards a topic or event in an article is common in conversations. One of the module's objectives was to introduce some more sophisticated adjectives, such as "concerned" and "saddened", for the students to make such responses. While 75% of the students agreed that they had learned how to express their feelings about a news story in the project, it was observed that very few of these adjectives were applied in their spoken and written responses. It was suspected that students were not yet comfortable with taking risks in their word choices and preferred to rely on the adjectives that they were more familiar with, such as "worried", "sad" and "angry". In order for them to retain the new vocabulary acquired, they should be encouraged to apply these words in as many contexts as they can.

Implications

It is a view held by many that authentic English articles and critical thinking skills are too challenging for junior secondary students, especially those whose English is not very strong, and therefore, should be introduced to them at the senior secondary level only. However, the positive findings and feedback from the students on this project gives support to a contrary view that students can be exposed to authentic articles and be encouraged to think critically at all levels as long as quality input is provided and the challenge level of the activities designed is attainable for the target students.

The spirit of the New Academic Structure or the NSS Curriculum aims at nurturing the capabilities of our students to think independently and conduct lifelong learning. In order to help our students to achieve this, it is never too early to introduce them to the skills and strategies that can help them to acquire information from reading materials that may be beyond their reading levels and make constant judgments on the credibility of such information.

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**Ho Lap College (Sponsored by the Sik Sik Yuen)
Ada LAM (Language Support Officer)**

Planning progressively for interface in the NSS: Integrating material from the elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum

Background


The introduction of the elective modules in the senior secondary curriculum has resulted in a more varied and engaging learning experience for students. However, teachers have often found it difficult to include all the required material for the elective modules in the senior secondary school-based curriculum. For this reason, teachers at St Mary's Canossian College decided to introduce key skills and concepts from the elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum, to give students a better foundation for studying the modules in S4 to S6. A progressive approach was taken, matching the challenges and skills taught with the different levels of junior secondary.

Levels

S1 – S6

Strategies used

The following continuum was used to provide the basic principles of progression from junior to senior secondary in the context of the elective modules. It has proved a useful reference for teachers in selecting and preparing materials and planning schemes of work.

Junior Secondary		Senior Secondary
simplicity		complexity
breadth		depth
factual knowledge		application
grammar, vocabulary		themes, language use
understanding		evaluation and response
teacher guidance		independent work

What happened

Based on the principles above, a framework was devised for integrating material from three elective modules: Short Stories, Poems and Songs, and Social Issues into the junior secondary curriculum. The plan for Social Issues was integrated with the newspaper reading normally undertaken in each year group. The following tables give a brief outline of work done for each elective module and illustrate progression across year groups and from junior to senior secondary. The information for the Social Issues programme is given in more detail.

1. Short Stories

S1	S2	S3	S4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn story elements and plot features through traditional stories Evaluate characters and support opinions Write character descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how setting is presented and atmosphere is created through mystery and science fiction stories Evaluate and create story openings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how figurative language and dialogues are used Learn about features of endings, including twists Evaluate and create story endings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare and evaluate short stories in class Read and evaluate short stories selected independently Write short stories showing the features studied in junior forms

2. Poems and Songs

S1	S2	S3	S5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn some common poetic forms and devices, e.g. rhyme, limericks Understand meaning Make connections with their personal experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn some common poetic forms and devices, e.g. personification, narrative poems Interpret the writer's message Make connections with social issues and events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the use of figurative language. Study some classic poems Evaluate poems and songs Make connections with self, world and other texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the process of creating a poem or song Analyse and evaluate poems and songs based on knowledge of poetic forms and language Write poems and/or song lyrics and conduct peer evaluation

3. Social Issues

Skills and knowledge: From summarising events to discussing issues and opinions		
S1	S2	S3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarise events Identify long and short term causes Give own opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify causes and effects / impacts Support their opinions Comment on opinions of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify views of different parties Consider possible solutions Evaluate bias of texts

Issues: From issues relevant to them personally to issues of global relevance

School related, e.g.

- bullying
- relationships
- self-image

Hong Kong related, e.g.

- waste reduction
- heritage
- teen drugs

Global issues, e.g.

- environment
- conflict
- gender
- media

Sources: From simple, familiar texts to a wide choice of texts in different media

- HK Standard
- English Street
- Young Post

- HK Standard
- English Street
- Young Post
- SCMP

- HK Standard
- SCMP
- News websites
- TV documentaries

At the beginning of each term, teachers modelled newspaper reading and comment with specially designed worksheets. Graphic organisers and 5W + 1H were used to help students structure their comments. Group discussion was also used to help students generate ideas.

1. Look at the picture and the headline. What do you think the article is about? Is it about an event (something that happened) or does it give opinions and information about an important issue?
2. Read the article and underline the answers to the following questions:
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Where did it happen?
 - c. When did it happen?
 - d. Who was involved and what happened to them / what did they do?
 - e. Why is this event important?
 - f. Why did this event happen? (You may not always find the answer to this question.)

S1 sample focusing on events and facts

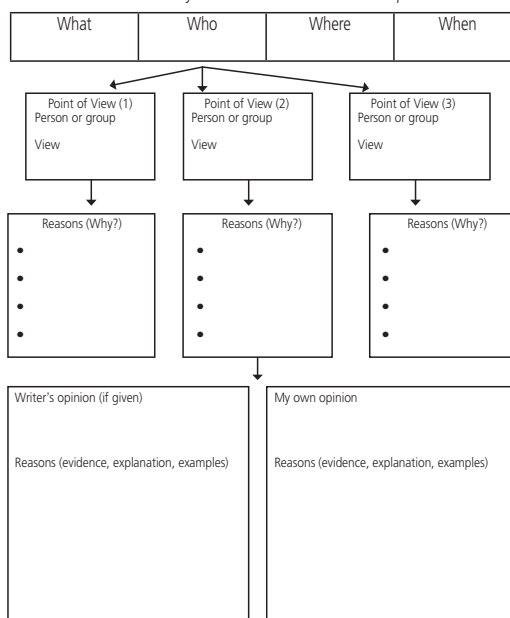
1. What kind of writing do you think this is? Is it a letter, weather forecast, article etc? How do you know?
2. Do you expect it to contain opinions? Mainly opinion, or just a little?

Now read the text again and underline the answers to the questions below

1. **What** happened? / What is the issue or problem?
2. **Who** did it happen to? / Who is affected?
3. **Where** did it happen? / Which places are affected?
4. **Why** did it happen? / What are the causes? (if you can)
5. **When** did it happen?
6. Is an **opinion** given? Whose is it? What does he/she think? What reasons does he/she give? How is the person's opinion introduced in the text?

S2 sample focusing on identifying opinions

2. Re-read the article carefully and use the information to complete the chart below



Discuss with a partner: What do you think of this issue? Do you agree with any of the opinions in the article? What are your reasons?

S3 sample focusing on views of different parties

The elective module “Learning English through Social Issues” is conducted in S6 and focuses on 4 or 5 tasks. These tasks require students to work independently and to synthesise information from a variety of sources. Some tasks are integrated with the textbook, while others require students to work mainly with materials they have collected themselves. A brief outline of the tasks is given below:

S6 Module on Learning English through Social Issues

Task	Skill and knowledge applied
<p>1. Identifying different ways of reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students collect news articles on the same topic. • They compare the viewpoints, language and structure of the writing. • They share their findings in class. • They write an article giving an opinion on a social issue of their choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of how opinions are expressed • Knowledge of formal and informal writing style and text conventions • Identifying and evaluating the author’s viewpoint
<p>2. Mock trial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students role-play a trial based on an article in the textbook. • They take up different roles in the trial and have to research and prepare their presentations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating behaviour and motivation • Supporting arguments with reasons
<p>3. Writing a news commentary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students research a topic of their choice independently. • They synthesise information from a variety of texts. • They draw conclusions concerning the issue chosen. • They report their findings with comments and reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesising information from different sources • Evaluating solutions to problems • Supporting one’s opinions
<p>4. News Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do independent research in groups on a topic chosen from a list provided by teachers. • They select and read a variety of texts and identify the viewpoints expressed. • They produce a news programme based on this topic, including causes, effects, people involved, problems, solutions and their advantages and drawbacks. • Interviews and other types of presentation are used. • They produce a written report, and a factsheet with selected vocabulary items which is given to their classmates as a study aid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesising information and presenting it in a different form • Understanding the conventions of non-print, news-related material

Impact

After three years of implementing the interface measures, teachers feel that students have adapted well to studying in the senior forms, and teachers have more space to focus on the more challenging aspects of the elective modules. In particular, they made the following observations:

1. Opportunities for independent work in senior forms

Teachers felt that the work done in junior forms made it possible for students to work on the elective modules more independently in the senior forms. For example, the work done on Social Issues in S1 to S3 meant that senior form students were already very familiar with concepts such as cause and effect, and could reflect on issues in these terms. Their News Forum activity gave them opportunities to demonstrate their understanding, using a variety of media (role-play, filmed interviews etc.) of a topic of their choice. They were able to work independently on this task and recent groups of students have produced work of high quality.

2. Developing students' ability to evaluate and reflect on their own and others' work

The development of students' ability to evaluate and reflect could be seen in the Short Stories module. Having worked in the junior forms on giving their opinions of characters and plot, senior form students were able to combine this with a deeper knowledge of the technical aspects of short story writing when responding to a text. They could also incorporate what they had learned in the writing of their own story. Students' performance in School-based Assessment has also benefitted from the work on short stories in junior and senior forms. Students were able to exercise good judgment when selecting material from texts to complete their reading journals and could use this information in formulating personal responses. They were able to relate the material to their personal experiences, to current events and to other texts.

Facilitating factors

1. Teachers' and students' familiarity with language arts

The school has always had a strong culture of promoting language arts, through the teaching of literature and fostering students' dramatic skills. The annual school production is a highlight of the school year and generates much enthusiasm for drama among students at all levels. There is also a drama and language arts programme for students in the junior forms, which ensures that students develop familiarity with language arts texts and related skills of writing and performance. This background makes it easier for both students and teachers to explore poems and short stories in the junior forms and study them in greater depth in the senior forms.

2. Communication with feeder primary schools

Regular meetings with English teachers from the two feeder primary schools provide a channel for sharing information on curriculum development and students' needs. This means that secondary school teachers can build on what has been taught in primary school in terms of the texts used for reading and the writing tasks given. Primary teachers can also know how best to prepare their students for their secondary level studies. This communication can help to promote a smooth interface at KS2 to KS3 level, and gives students a better foundation at KS3.



Way forward

1. Developing better alignment between Key Stages 3 and 4 in terms of core skills

Having worked extensively on integrating elements of the elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum, the school will focus on planning for progression in the language skills, in particular writing. The writing curriculum will be revised to ensure that there is development in the types of writing students undertake at each level.

2. Introducing elements of a wider range of elective modules

In the HKDSE Paper 2, students may answer a question on any elective module. Therefore it is prudent to give them wider exposure to different electives in the junior forms. For this reason, debating will be introduced in S3. This will provide students with knowledge of the conventions and terminology of debate, and also train their thinking skills in developing and answering different arguments.

References

The Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (2007). English Language Education KLA: English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (S4-6). HKSARG: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

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