

Medium of instruction policy and social development in Hong Kong: A case study of two universities

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1. Introduction	1
1.1 Definitions	1
1.2 Languages in China	2
1.3 Relevant social and historical background of Hong Kong	3
1.4 Overview of MOI policies in higher education of Hong Kong	4
2. Research Methods	7
2.1 Research goal	7
2.2 Research methods and procedures	8
2.3 Research limitations	9
3. Literature Review	9
3.1 MOI policy in the Chinese University of Hong Kong	11
3.2 MOI policy in the University of Hong Kong (HKU)	13
4. Discussion	18
4.1 MOI policy of higher education in colonial era	18
4.2 MOI policy of higher education in post-colonial era	19
4.3 MOI policy of higher education in coexisted localization and globalization era	21
5. Conclusion	22
6. References	25
7. Appendix	27

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1. Introduction

Medium of instruction (MOI) policy is always an important and sensitive part of the whole education policy. Due to globalization, MOI policy is becoming an arguable issue in higher education in many countries. In Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, MOI policy has undergone many changes because of the region's special social background and history. As a specific and interesting case, a brief history of Hong Kong and the development of MOI policies in higher education there will be introduced in order to explore further the relationship between MOI in higher education and social development.

1.1 Definitions

(1) Social development. Cleveland and Jacobs (1999) argue that “social development or social change refers to an alteration in the social status of a society” (p.959). Social development as a basic term which needs to be defined in specific context reveals changes and movement in the political environment, economical status, cultural status and social relations or values of a society. Actually, social development is a concept of great complexity. It brings out the notion of social progress or socio-cultural evolution which means that society moves forward by dialectical or evolutionary means according to Hegel's comprehensive philosophical framework or “system” and Marxism. In this manuscript, social development or social change is mainly expressed with regard to changes in the political environment, economical status, and cultural status.

(2) Medium of instruction (MOI). Poon (2004) states that “Medium of instruction is a species of language-in-education policy, which deals specifically with the instructional medium in class” (p.54). From this view, MOI policy is a number of language policies interacting with social development. Wacquant (as cited in Chan, 2002) said that “Language, culture and education are the major means through which existing social relations are reproduced, and linguistic relations are always relations of power” (p.272). According to the Report of the Committee on Bilingualism of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, published in 2007, the language of instruction should be understood in the context of different teaching and learning activities. “It refers not only to the language used at lectures, but also to the language employed in reading and reference materials; discussions at tutorials; projects or class presentations; laboratory, practicum and clinical sessions; assignments and examinations; and individual supervision” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007).

(3) Liangwen Sanyu (两文三语). “Biliteracy and trilingualism”. Liangwen (“two written languages”) denotes written Chinese and written English, and Sanyu (“three spoken codes”) refers to spoken Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English.

(4) Usual language. The language that people speak mostly in daily life.

1.2 Languages in China

Simplified Chinese, which is derived from Classical Chinese, has become the written standard in China. Putonghua, which is based on modified Mandarin, is the official national language in The People’s Republic of China. There are hundreds of dialects in China. Cantonese is one of these , and was the most commonly used dialect at home in 2006 for 91% of the population aged 5 and over in Hong Kong (The 2006 Population By-census, by the Census and Statistics Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR).

1.3 Relevant social and historical background of Hong Kong

Hong Kong is situated on China's south coast as a deep natural harbor, and is one of the most densely populated areas in the world with a land mass of 1,104 km² and a population of around seven million at the end of 2009 (by the Census and Statistics Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR).

Hong Kong became a bilingual society gradually under the colonial rule of the British Empire, when English was adopted as the official language. Hong Kong developed its economy mainly through international finance and trade because it lacks natural resources. English was not only used as the communication language of business, but also the working language of government. However, the native citizens of Hong Kong all spoke Cantonese at home. These factors led to a bilingual society in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong was a colony of the British Empire for more than 150 years after First Opium War in 1842 (Tsui, 2004). After negotiation with the British, which had begun in 1984, in 1997 "China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong, and on 1st of July, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China" (Tsui, 2004, p.197).

Language policy in Hong Kong has focused on the influences of its special history with different dominant political, economic and cultural factors. Bacon-Shone and Bolton (1998) reviewed "census and language survey data" and presented "a comprehensive, longitudinal survey of the complex pattern of multilingualism and language diversity in Hong Kong over the twentieth century" (p.57). The details are described in following Table 1.1 (Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998, p.57).

The 2006 Population By-census, carried out by the Census and Statistics Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR, shows that "the Hong Kong resident population in mid-July 2006 was 6 864 346 with about 95% of the population of Chinese ethnicity. Cantonese was the most commonly used language at home in 2006 for 91% of the population aged 5 and over. The proportion of population who

Table 1.1 Percentages of Speakers of “Usual Language” Classified by Census Results

Language /dialect	1911	1961	1966 By-census	1971	1991
Cantonese	81%	79%	81.2%	88.1%	88.7%
English	-	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%	2.2%
Mandarin (Putong hua)	-	0.9%	-	-	1.1%
<i>Hakka</i>	15.1%	4.9%	3.3%	2.7%	1.6%
<i>Hoklo(i.e.,Chiu Chau Fukien)</i>	1.9%	6.3%	8.1%	4.2%	-
<i>Chiu Chau</i>	-	-	-	-	1.4%
<i>Fukien</i>	-	-	-	-	1.9%
<i>Sze Yap</i>	-	4.4%	-	1.2%	0.4%
<i>Schang hainese</i>	-	2.6%	-	-	0.7%
Filipino	-	-	-	-	0.1%
Japanese	-	-	-	-	0.2%
Others/missing	2.0%	0.75%	3.3%	2.8%	0.2%
Total	100.0%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: ***Bold italics***: home dialects in Hong Kong.

could speak English either as the “usual language” or as another language increased from 38% in 1996 to 43% in 2001 and further to 45% in 2006. The proportion of the population who could speak Putonghua also increased significantly from 25% in 1996 to 40% in 2006”. These data show the population of Hong Kong, which mostly consists of Cantonese speaking Chinese, has increased its familiarity with English and, in recent years, Putonghua. Actually Hong Kong has gradually become a bilingual or multilingual society mainly for two reasons. One is political factors including the history of colonial rule and the more recent reversion to Chinese rule, and the other is its central position with respect to international finance and trade in the world.

1.4 Overview of MOI policies in higher education of Hong Kong

Hong Kong has 13 degree-awarding higher education institutions, including eight institutions funded by the public through the University Grants Committee, namely City University of Hong Kong (CityU), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), Lingnan University (LU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), The Hong

Kong Institute of Education (HKIED), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), and The University of Hong Kong (HKU), and four self-financing institutions, namely The Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Hang Seng Management College and The publicly-funded Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (the Education Bureau, The Government of the Hong Kong SAR).

Higher education in Hong Kong is renowned for its quality. According to QS World University Rankings 2010-top universities, HKU is ranked 23rd, HKUST is ranked 40th, and CUHK is ranked 42nd respectively (Cited from the World University Rankings 2010).

MOI policy of tertiary education in Hong Kong is dynamic and complicated due to the region's special background. Since this thesis focuses on MOI policy in higher education of Hong Kong, I have selected the two of the best universities in the region, HKU and CUHK for MOI policy study, to connect MOI policy with social change.

HKU was established in 1912, initiating higher education in Hong Kong. As a British colony, Hong Kong followed the British system of higher education and emphasized elite education, with English as the only official language of instruction. Choi (2010) points out that “the medium of instruction at HKU has never been an issue: English was (and still is) the only official language of instruction there, and, for decades, it has been producing a small body of English-speaking Chinese elites: bureaucrats, businesspeople, and professionals” (p.239). HKU has the longest history of any university in Hong Kong, and always takes English as MOI, excepting Chinese faculty.

In the 1960s, English was one of the tools used by the ruling class for management of Hong Kong and was the functional language of communication for international trade, while ordinary people spoke Cantonese and wrote in traditional Chinese in their daily lives. In this background, CUHK was established in 1963.

According to the Report of the Committee on Bilingualism (2007), “in the 1950s, demand for more school places in Hong Kong was caused not only by the increase of population but also by the fact that among the incoming refugees, there was a large number of students ranging from primary to university levels who wanted to continue their education in Hong Kong” This social change led to the student population expanding greatly in Chinese middle schools. Due to the pressure from the mass of high school students who wanted to be well educated, the Hong Kong government had to establish a university adopting Chinese as the language of instruction. Therefore, Chinese was adopted as one of the languages of instruction from the beginning at CUHK, which aimed at cultivating highly competitive students with excellent English ability to maintain Hong Kong’s position as an international trade and financial centre. English was taken as the other language of instruction. Thereafter, CUHK “has been steadfast in upholding the bilingual policy of *liangwen sanyu* (“two written languages and three spoken codes”) for more than four decades. The use of *liangwen sanyu* in teaching has been a distinctive characteristic and strength of the University” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007).

HKU and CUHK stand for different attitudes concerning MOI in higher education of Hong Kong. MOI policy of tertiary education in Hong Kong is a dynamic and complicated situation since its special social background. Lia, Leung and Kember (2001) point out that “The medium of instruction, and its impact on teaching and learning, is amongst the most contentious and most widely discussed educational issues in Hong Kong. Debate has encompassed all levels of education from pre-primary to universities” (p.293).

Actually, MOI policy in higher education and social development interact in Hong Kong. On the one hand, it is necessary to adapt MOI policy in higher education to meet the requirement of social development. More precisely, the form of MOI policy is deeply influenced by social development. Nunan (2003) concludes that “Hong Kong is a major international trading, business, banking, and communications

center, and English is seen as a key to maintain its position in these areas” (p.597). The Curriculum Development Council (as cited in Nunan, 2003) points out that “one reason why English Language Education seeks to provide a curriculum framework that contributes to enhancing the language proficiency of young people is to enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong so that it will be able to maintain its position as an international business centre and a knowledge-based economy, capable of rising to the challenges of global competition” (p.598).

On the other hand, MOI policy of higher education impacts on the social development of Hong Kong. An international MOI policy is not only benefit for recruiting outstanding talents including students, teachers and researchers, but also for the promotion of academic and teaching capabilities of specific universities and institutes in the present era of globalization. Such multiple MOI policies in higher education could not only develop local cultural resources and promote Chinese culture but also help integrate local research into international academia.

2. Research Methods

This section is an introduction to the overall research design. The first part presents the research goal and determines problems that need to be solved. In order to deal with specific problems, the second part illustrates the methodological scheme specifically based on the study of precedents. The methodological scheme consists of a comparative research method and some other reasonable approaches. In the end, several limitations and suggestions in this study will be pointed out.

2.1 Research goal

According to stated research motivation, this study aims to:

- (1) explore the state of MOI policy of higher education and its context historically;
- (2) determine the relationship between social change and MOI policy of higher education.

In this case study, I select two universities with long history in Hong Kong, CUHK and HKU for MOI policy study to connect MOI policy with social change in Hong Kong.

2.2 Research methods and procedures

This is a case study. “A case study has a different meaning and purpose, and is usually understood as a means of conducting a small-scale investigation (literally, a study of a special case) in order to explore a theory or research question” (Willan, 2008, p.46).

A comparative research method was adopted in this case study. A lot of scholars and educationists put forward notions of comparative research in education and some other social sciences. Bereday (1964) raised a “four steps” comparative research method in education which consists of “description, interpretation, juxtaposition and comparison”. For comparative education, Bereday (1964) suggests the mechanics of analysis and presents the steps leading to a full-scale comparative treatment: “(1) description, collection of pedagogical facts, (2) interpretation, the analysis of the fact by the methods of different social science, (3) juxtaposition, the preliminary comparison of facts, (4) comparison, the final fusion of the facts with similarly data from other countries for the purpose of comparison” (p.11).

Furthermore, Collier (1993) argued that “comparison is a fundamental tool of analysis. It sharpens our power of description, and plays a central role in concept-formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases. Comparison is routinely used in testing hypotheses, and it can contribute to the inductive discovery of new hypotheses and to theory-building” (p.105).

This study formulated the methodology based on above statements and adopted some specific methods and procedures as following:

(1) Topics for study: this study tries to determine the relationship between MOI policy in higher education and social development in Hong Kong.

(2) Research cases: HKU and CUHK were selected as two research cases for study.

(3) Data collections and screenings: the information concerning MOI policies of CUHK and HKU was collected and screened by websites, research reports, books and journals. And useful information concerning social development was selected from the websites and literature resources for further study after analysis.

(4) Descriptions and explanations: After data collections, this study proceeds to describe and explain MOI policies in HKU and CUHK. Specifically, the MOI policies in HKU and CUHK are described in detail through the foundation, historical development and present state in social context.

(5) Discussion: The differences and similarities are determined between MOI policies of CUHK and HKU. Specifically, the MOI policies of CUHK and HKU are pointed out and discussed with regard to historical factors, economical factors and political factors.

(6) Conclusions: some viewpoints are proposed for the relations between MOI policy in higher education and social development in Hong Kong by analysis and comparison.

2.3 Research limitations

There are some limitations and deficiencies in this study due to the following restrictions:

(1) The information concerning higher education and social development in Hong Kong was only derived from websites of the universities and government in Hong Kong, some academic books, reports and journals since firsthand feedback from local people and students was not available.

(2) MOI policy was studied only at two universities in detail meaning that the study of the relationship between MOI policy and social development in Hong Kong is to some extent insufficient.

3. Literature Review

MOI policy changes in higher education of Hong Kong are summarized in this section through two universities, CUHK and HKU. To discuss the data on MOI policy in higher education of Hong Kong, it was found out that the term of “Liangwen Sanyu” or “biliteracy and trilingual” is most appropriate to describe the framework. “The liangwen part of the university’s liangwen sanyu bilingual policy refers to written Chinese, Zhongwen and written English, Yingwen, while the sanyu part refers to spoken Cantonese, YueYu, Mandarin Chinese, Putonghua, and spoken English, Yingyu” (McNaught and Curtis, 2009, p.97).

Actually, English has gained an upper hand in Hong Kong society, and this situation was reflected in MOI policy in higher education as well. Most Hong Kong universities emphasize English in their MOI policy. CUHK and HKU are both renowned universities but take different attitudes towards MOI policy. So it’s reasonable to use CUHK and HKU as research samples. This is a novel attempt to clarify the objective regulations and complex connections between MOI policy and social development through tracing and analyzing the changes in MOI policy in universities as well as social change.

“In 2005, vice chancellor of CUHK appointed the Committee on Bilingualism to review CUHK’s language policies and make recommendations on how CUHK should uphold its long-cherished policy of bilingualism and formulate long-term plans to enhance bilingual education to meet the challenges facing the University” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007). This report was completed by the Committee on Bilingualism which was composed of teachers from each Faculty and the School of Law, undergraduates, postgraduates, alumni, non-staff Council members, and so on and presented to the Senate of CUHK in 2007. According to the Report of the Committee on Bilingualism of CUHK published in 2007, the language of instruction should be understood in the context of different teaching and learning activities. “It refers not only to the language used at lectures, but also to the language employed in reading and reference materials; discussions at tutorials; projects or class

presentations; laboratory, practicum and clinical sessions; assignments and examinations; and individual supervision” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007). Noticeably, the Language of Instruction part of this report points out “There can be variation among Department in the proportion of the use of Cantonese, Putonghua and English” (McNaught and Curtis, 2009, p.97).

3.1 MOI policy in the Chinese University of Hong Kong

MOI policy at CUHK is “biliteracy and trilingualism”. Based on the Report of the Committee on Bilingualism (2007), it’s easy to understand why CUHK develops this kind of bilingual education and formulates its MOI policy in such a way. Hence, we only have to focus on social and historical context of CUHK to figure out how socio-political and socio-economic processes play an overwhelming function in the form of MOI policy.

Today, as a top university in Hong Kong and world, CUHK aims to nurture students to serve both the local and international communities. To cope with the challenges of globalization, a current trend all over the world, CUHK must enhance its bilingual education to promote cross-cultural communication and enable students to extend their knowledge about the world. “Such efforts are crucial not only for the intellectual growth of the students, but also for the future of the University and its competitiveness in the international arena” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007). CUHK tried to cultivate talents of bilingual and bicultural character and bring together Chinese and Western cultures since its inception. Indeed, “the CUHK, following tradition, wants to be acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally as a first-class comprehensive research university whose bilingual and multicultural dimensions of student education, scholarly output and contribution to the community consistently meet standards of excellence” (Website, CUHK).

For instance, in order to carry on attracting students from all over the world, CUHK tried to move towards a more diversified and more vibrant campus to benefit from more international students. CUHK adjusted part of its MOI policy based on

bilingual education policy in 2005. And some supplementary principles had been adopted since then as outlined here: (Office of Registry Services, CUHK, 6 February 2005)

“(1) First and foremost, CUHK maintains a bilingual policy, and the intake of non-local undergraduate students is planned within that framework.

(2) Every department/programme should choose on its own whether to accept non-local students.

(3) Only those departments/programmes that choose to accept non-local students need to satisfy certain conditions on the language of instruction (those which choose not to accept non-local students need not follow the following requirements):

(a) All lectures in required courses must have at least one section taught in English.

(b) For required courses, at least one section of every tutorial, exercise or laboratory is conducted principally in English.

(c) Sufficient (but not necessarily all) elective courses are offered in English, to enable students to fulfil the programme requirements.

(d) All examinations for courses taught in English must have an English version”.

The stated policy changes show that MOI policy of CUHK is developing along with social change. “As society evolves, the function of liangwen sanyu will change, and the relative weight of each language as a medium of instruction will also need to be adjusted accordingly” (McNaught and Curtis, 2009, p.100).

CUHK always emphasizes the importance of bilingualism in its instruction policy. In the British colonial era, the foundation and development of CUHK helped meet the needs of Chinese to be well educated. Furthermore, educational development facilitates social development and stabilizes the social state of Hong Kong by providing Chinese students equal chance of admission to universities and consequently cultivates more skilled natives.

At present, it is necessary for Hong Kong to enhance competitiveness as well as

other capabilities globally through higher education development because of the needs of internationalization and regional development. MOI policy changes during different periods also indicate that after its return to China, English in Hong Kong still acts as the dominant international language. As Kirkpatrick (2010) states, “The goal of Hong Kong’s language education policy is thus to produce biliterate and trilingual citizens. Parental demand for English remains strong, and the government is keen to maintain proficiency in English as it promotes Hong Kong as ‘Asia’s world city’” (p.162).

Nevertheless, the overall position of English was weakened because its political role changed, while the Chinese language position was strengthened.

3.2 MOI policy in the University of Hong Kong (HKU)

English was (and still is) the only official language of instruction in HKU. It seems that MOI policy of HKU doesn’t change along with social change of Hong Kong. As matter of fact, it is the other way around.

As Bacon-Shone and Bolton point out, knowledge of English in Hong Kong continues to grow (1998) See **Figure 3.1**, next page. The data presented in Figure 3.1 lead to a further observation. HKU was founded in 1912 and is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. But as Figure 3.1 shows, English was not a “usual language” for Hong Kong people at that time. Pan (2000) points out that “In fact, prior to the colonial rule, Hong Kong had basically been regarded as a monolingual society where Chinese had been the only medium of instruction at schools for centuries” (p.2). Hu (2007) states that “In the early British colonial period, there was no statutory provision for what constituted the official language of Hong

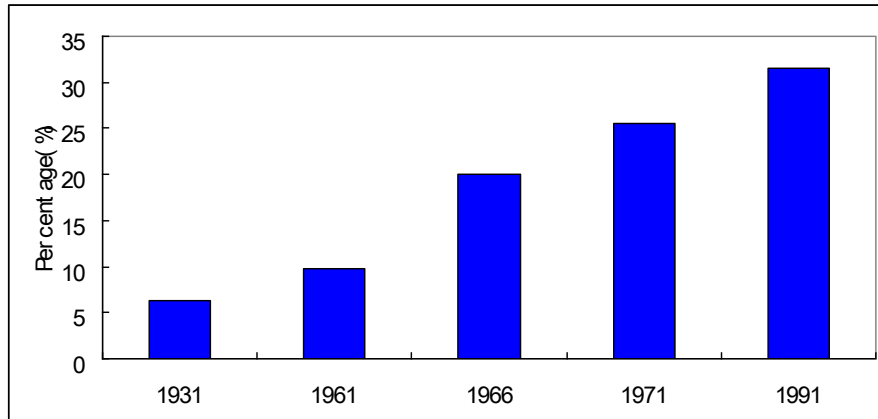


Figure 3.1 Census Reports of Knowledge of English 1931-1991

Kong” (p.86). In the Treaty of Tientsin (named as Tianjin, actually) of 1842, articles 50 and 51 of the Treaty revealed the establishment of the “diglossic” situation in Hong Kong (See Appendix). As Hu further points out “English was by practice the sole language used in executive, judicial and legislative branches of government during 1842 through 1974. In this period, to establish English dominance, the new colonial government was confronted with an immediate need to teach English to the Chinese speaking population” (p.86). Pope Hennessy (Hong Kong’s Governor in 1860s) once said (as cited in Pan, 2000), “I should like to see no Government school whatever in this Colony in which the children are not taught English, and no government help given to any school in which the aim of the teachers should not be that the children on leaving that school should be able to speak English. We must, as practical men, have here an English-speaking Chinese Community” (p.2). Lai et al., and Schjerve (2003) (as cited in Hu, 2007) state that “Language-in-education policy itself is a bunch of language policies and English-based colonial education must subvert indigenous populations through a process of cultural alienation. In other words, in the case of British colonial Hong Kong, to strengthen the diglossic status of English as the high language is part of a purpose to produce colonial cultural assimilations to facilitate colonial governance” (p.87).

In addition, from a practical perspective, the foundation of HKU was partly due

to the education needs of the British government staff and business men in Hong Kong who mostly spoke English.. In short, EMI policy of HKU is the inevitable consequence of British colonial rule and cultural colonialism, and EMI policy is a symbol of colonial education brought about by Great Britain historically.

In the 1970s, the Hong Kong government started to determine both Chinese and English as the language of instruction due to pressure from local students who wanted to get better opportunity to be well educated and the demands of the masses of natives. Specifically, “in 1974, Chinese was granted equal status as English. Since then, Hong Kong has been identified as a bilingual society” (Lu, 2002, p.2). On 4th April 1990, the Basic law of Hong Kong SAR granted by National People’s Congress of the P. R. China also mentioned that Chinese language was regarded as the official language as well as English. Therefore, Hong Kong is the only place or region in China where English and Chinese are both set as the official language. In this social background, HKU still adopted English as the language of instruction. The EMI policy was determined by historical and economical position of Hong Kong, preference and demands of local people and dominant position of English all over the world.

As a consequence of British colonial governance for about one century and a half, English has been the official language of Hong Kong for a long time. Nowadays English is still dominant in Hong Kong though Chinese has also been regarded as the official language. The one main reason for English position in Hong Kong is the historical inherence. Although both Chinese and English were the legislated official languages of the government, it was English which enjoyed more prestige. As Peng (2005) points out, “It was also known to all that English was the sole language used in the law courts. Only after the establishment of a bilingual drafting team in the Legal Department in 1986 and a Bilingual Laws Advisory Committee in 1998 was Chinese accorded its official status in the law courts (The first case heard in Chinese in the regional court was late in 1995)” (p.2).

The other main reason for English position in Hong Kong is the dominant

position of English language internationally. Most people in Hong Kong see English not as the language of colonization but as the language of international commerce. In other words, English is seen as a commodity that everyone desires. As Tsui (2004) concluded “The business tycoons see it as an important means of maintaining competitive edge of the city’s business status, and parents see it as the golden passport to successful future for their children” (p.110).

Meanwhile, on the background of globalization, English has been regarded as the sole dominant medium language for academic communication and collaboration such as international conferences and manuscript publication. And HKU benefits a lot from its MOI policy which adopts English as the medium of instruction. This MOI policy helps HKU to be regarded as top-class universities in Asia and even all over the world. What’s more, Basic Law of Hong Kong SAR determined the principal of bilingual education policy in Hong Kong but universities still have the right to formulate and adjust the specific policies based on bilingual education. In this case, HKU has determined English as the dominant language of instruction so far based on pragmatism though regarded Chinese as another language of instruction at the same time. The stated illustrations show all kinds of social factors are involved to influence the specific MOI policy in HKU.

Moreover, formation of specific MOI policy is also related to the management system of HKU. As Li (2008) pointed out “Although almost entirely financed by the government, each university had its own governing bodies, a board and senate, responsible for the institution’s own governance and quality control. Universities in Hong Kong had always been able to chart their own course and determine their output and standard, just like their counterparts in the free West” (p.63). HKU follows international practice in regularly reviewing its governance as well as management structure. To help check the rationality for purpose of its management and governance structures in HKU, “A Guide and Code of Practice for Members of the Council has also been published to help enhance the transparency and accountability of the

governing body and conform to the highest standard of corporate governance” (Website of HKU).

HKU is such a university adopting a modern international system. Modern universities are neither businesses nor state institutions. The basic values and characteristics for modern universities such as HKU are as follows: firstly, university autonomy, which means universities have the right to manage all matters based on the national constitution and laws; secondly, they enjoy academic freedom which means that the freedom of study and research by faculty members and students is essential to the mission of the academy, and scholars and researchers should have freedom to communicate or teach facts or ideas without political repression and official obstruction; thirdly, faculty governance which means that self-management is carried out by groups of scholars and researchers in teaching and research. So the management system as well as the whole university system determines the formation of MOI policy of HKU.

In turn, the MOI policy of HKU also influences social development in Hong Kong. From historical perspective, the foundation of HKU promoted colonial culture of Britain in Hong Kong, hindered natives from moving and emphasized British values so that British government could ensure colonial governance in Hong Kong.

Johnson (2005) points out, “In order to meet the requirements of society, it was a common practice that the universities set the proficiency of English as one of the yardsticks of enrollment. In universities, nearly 80% of the courses used English textbooks. Behind EMI, there was the need for universities to remain highly competitive in this laissez faire market” (as cited in Peng, 2005, p.2).

For secondary schools, good English helps students get access to the universities. Johnson (2005) also states that “In order to let their children have more chance either professionally or academically in the future, most parents would send their children to EMI schools. This was the main reason why Chinese-medium education could not come into effect” (as cited in Peng, 2005, p.2).

4. Discussion

Hong Kong's uniqueness of education is a result of its diverse history. Before its current status as a SAR of China, Hong Kong was a British colony for around 150 years. The colorful history includes the political and social developments of Hong Kong, showing the complex interplay between the British and Chinese cultures. Currently, tertiary education plays a very important role in the education system in Hong Kong with eight universities and some other colleges and tertiary institutions. Although social development or social change is a complicated and abstract concept, it really reflects in diverse aspects of the society, such as sovereignty alterations, economic growth, population with its composition and global and regional environments. In my view, the MOI policy in higher education interacted with the various aspects underlying social development. In this thesis the MOI policies of CUHK and HKU have been discussed and compared in detail in specific social contexts. And three different eras, namely the colonial era, the post-colonial era and coexisted localization and globalization era, were clarified for Hong Kong to make the comparison between MOI policies of CUHK and HKU and social development. HKU and CUHK were established in the colonial era and post-colonial era respectively. Therefore, the MOI policies of HKU and CUHK were somehow distinguishing at their foundation due to different social context.

4.1 MOI policy of higher education in colonial era

Carroll (2007) states that “Hong Kong was indeed founded primarily as an imperial outpost rather than to civilize or Christianize its Chinese residents” (p.12). After Hong Kong became the British colony in 1842, the education policy changed along with the social context, but mainly depended on the political and commercial needs of the British. From 1911 to 1951, the population of Hong Kong increased from around 0.46 million to 2.01 million and Cantonese-speaking residents were dominant (81%) in

Hong Kong during this colonial era while English-speaking residents were negligible (Pennington, 1998, p.57). English was taken as the sole official language since the beginning of colony mainly due to political force. Meanwhile, the Chinese language was underestimated and suppressed officially

As the first university in Hong Kong, HKU was established by the British government to maintain and extend its impact on Asia and China. To cultivate enough elites in service of ruling class, the government provided most financial funding for students in English schools rather than Chinese schools. “On March 11, 1912, the University launched its official opening with its founding Faculty of Medicine which had evolved from the Hong Kong College of Medicine, founded in 1887. The Faculties of Engineering and Arts were established within a year of the official opening. In December 1916, the University held its first congregation, with just 23 graduates” (Website of HKU). HKU was the first tertiary institute which could award academic degrees for students in Hong Kong. At the beginning, students who studied in HKU mostly came from rich families and the upper class and could get a decent job after graduation. The foundation of HKU reflected the emphasis on elite education by the government and consequently, English language was dominant in higher education. Fishman & Fishman (as cited in Tsui, 2004) states that “Medium of instruction is the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalizing a language and a culture; it is also the most important form of intergenerational transmission” (p.2). In this colonial situation, the MOI policy of HKU had to adopt EMI policy.

In short, English as MOI was the outcome of colonial rule at that time and symbolized as a combination of British colonial culture and education. Due to the special social context, the foundation of HKU was marked with colonialism at the beginning.

4.2 MOI policy of higher education in post-colonial era

After World War II, the international environment changed a lot as well as the international status of the UK.

The decolonization movement followed World War II as colonized peoples agitated for independence and colonial powers withdrew their administrators in Asia, Africa and South America. Colonialism and imperialism were doomed. From the 1950s to the 1960s, more than 30 countries in Africa regained independence. In Asia, India became an independent republic from British rule in 1950 and Singapore officially gained sovereignty from Britain in 1965. Most important of all, the new independent government of China was founded in 1949 after civil war. Hong Kong is well-known as one of the Asian Four Dragons, which were the first newly industrialized economies known for their high growth rates and rapid development from the early 1960s to the 1990s. From 1960s, the rapid growth of population along with the economical growth led to great increasing demands of Chinese education. The English education policy was out of date and a lot of Chinese started to fight for the rights of being well educated legally. And this specific context made Chinese education (especially in higher education) possible. In 1970s, students and people from within the education field asked for the official language position of Chinese and this movement was supported by more and more ordinary people. Under the pressure from general public, the colonial government started to adjust its education policy and promote Chinese education. As the Report of the Committee on Bilingualism (2007) points out, “in the 1960’s, Hong Kong was a British colony where English was the only official language. Although the majority of people in Hong Kong spoke Cantonese and wrote *Zhongwen* 中文 (“Chinese”) in their daily communication, education in English was often regarded as superior to that in Chinese, and English proficiency was considered an essential prerequisite for career success”.

Before the foundation of CUHK, there was only one university (HKU) in Hong Kong which followed the tradition of universities in British colonies, using English as its language of instruction. “When CUHK was established in 1963, it adopted both

Chinese and English as the languages of instruction, ushering in a new phase in university education in Hong Kong” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007).

In the post-colonial era, HKU and CUHK have had distinct MOI policies. From 1951 to 1997, Hong Kong’s population increased from 2.01 million to 6.46 million (Census and Statistics Department, the Government of Hong Kong). In general, education policy in HKU still upheld its British heritage, mainly following the British cultures and colonial cultures. But before the foundation of CUHK, the possibility to open the door to Chinese-speaking students was emerging in HKU.

CUHK was founded in the post-colonial era, and as the consequence of that the government tried to fill the gap between the University and the Chinese middle schools and pay attention to the importance of Chinese education in a Chinese society. In a bilingual society, the foundation and development of CUHK partly met the education demands of Chinese from ordinary people. Obviously, the MOI policies of HKU and CUHK are rooted in specific social context and developed under limitations of university orientations and social development.

4.3 MOI policy of higher education in coexisted localization and globalization era

As the Basic Law of Hong Kong states, under the principle of “one country, two systems”, the socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the Hong Kong SAR and Hong Kong’s previous capitalist system and life-style shall remain unchanged for 50 years officially since the handover ceremony of Hong Kong in 1997. Bilingual education is the choice for both HKU and CUHK in the new era, so-called coexisted localization and globalization era of Hong Kong. The Report of the Committee on Bilingualism (2007) states that, “the choice of language of instruction should be based upon the following factors: (1) the nature of individual academic subjects; (2) the language currently used as the predominant medium for academic expression and publication in the subjects concerned (e.g., the language used in teaching materials, academic journals and proceedings of international conferences);

(3) the requirements for professional qualifications and teaching and learning effectiveness; (4) the language habits, linguistic competence and cultural background of both students and teachers”. The second factor stated above, which mainly determined the position of English as MOI, became more and more important for the challenges of increasing globalization, a major trend in today’s world. Meanwhile, the fourth factor stated above, which determined the position of Chinese as MOI, became more and more necessary because of the growing Chinese community and increasing integration into China mainland. Hence, nowadays bilingual education (Liangwen sanyu) has been chosen.

5. Conclusion

Tollefson and Tsui (2004) point out that “Although decisions about medium of instruction are often justified with pedagogical rationales, medium-of-instruction policies are not formed in isolation, but rather emerge in the context of powerful social and political forces, including globalization, migration and demographic changes, political conflict, changes in government, shifts in the structure of local economies, and the elite competition”(p.283). Hong Kong is a typical multilingual and multicultural society, which merges Eastern and Western culture.

Hong Kong experienced a complicated change from British rule to becoming a SAR of China. In this context, MOI policy of higher education in Hong Kong presents a complicated situation. Thus, “it is always important to examine the underlying agenda of alternative medium-of-instruction policies. In order to do so, and to adequately understand the complex interplay of policies and pedagogy, researchers must incorporate a classroom (and playground) perspective as well as a broader historical-structure perspective” (Tollefson and Tsui, 2004, p.293).

This study has demonstrated the interactive connections between MOI policy and social change by situating MOI policies of CUHK and HKU respectively in their specific sociopolitical and historical background. The key trait of MOI policy in

CUHK is “biliterate trilingual” policy. During different times, biliterate or bilingual education presented different trends. CUHK emphasized CMI policy on some levels at the beginning. The clause (e) of the Preamble of The Chinese University of Hong Kong Ordinance states: “It is declared that The Chinese University of Hong Kong, in which the principal language of instruction shall be Chinese” (Report of the Committee on Bilingualism, 2007).

But in CUHK today, MOI policy makers emphasize the importance of EMI policy. Choi (2010) argues that “CUHK defended its policy in the name of “internationalization” and the need to stay ahead in the midst of severe competition at home and abroad” (p.233). These changes mirror the MOI policy of CUHK which is continually adjusting in the sociopolitical process, and is in fact practice-driven.

On the other hand, the main characteristic of MOI policy in HKU is to always use English as the official language of instruction. Originally, HKU was established by colonial government and this policy can be regarded as a consequence of colonial political considerations, although this policy has continued. Yang (as cited in Hu, 2007) points out, “Students and local teachers communicate in Cantonese on campus while switching to English immediately in the class room” (p.87). As is well known, Hong Kong is an important centre for international finance and trade. Intrinsically, I think the basis for EMI policy is different in different periods. Currently, EMI policy in HKU mainly depends on the needs of internationalization as it benefits greatly from international orientation.

Based on this study, I think MOI policy and social change are interactive. The adjustment or changes in MOI policy in CUHK reflected its adaptation to the social

development and gradually formulated the most suitable bilingual education policy. Tollefson and Tsui (2004) point out that “Choices made in the medium of instruction are not purely about educational efficacy but also about social, political, and economic participation, social equality, and human rights” (p.17). Accordingly, a reasonable MOI policy will help specific nations or regions advance in scientific knowledge and culture transmission as well as gain international positions and benefits.

6. References

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7. Appendix

Treaty of Tientsin of 1842

Article 50:

All official communications, addressed by the diplomat and consular agents of Her Majesty the Queen to the Chinese Authorities, shall, henceforth, be written in English. They will for the present be accompanied by a Chinese version, but it is understood that in the event of there being any difference of meaning between the English and Chinese texts the English government will hold the sense as expressed in the English text to be the correct sense. This provision is to apply to the treaty now negotiate, the Chinese text of which has been carefully corrected by the English original.

Article 51:

It is agreed, henceforward the character 'I' (barbarian) shall not be applied to the Government or subjects of Her Britannic Majesty in any Chinese official document issued by the Chinese authorities, either in the capital or in the provinces.