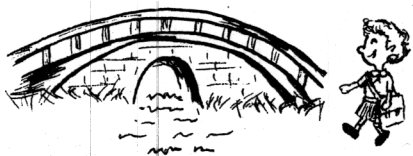


Bridging English

across

Primary and Secondary Education



English Unit
Curriculum Development Institute
Education Department
1996

FOREWORD

Following the Education Commission's recommendation in its Report No. 4 for a bridge programme for the group of Secondary 1 students transferring to the English medium of instruction, the Education Department has given serious consideration to the concept of bridging. Publishers have been invited to produce bridge programmes for these students. And the former Institute of Language in Education, now part of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, conducted in-service training courses for teachers.

On taking over the task when the Institute of Language in Education left the Education Department, the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has further developed the concept of bridging. The English Unit of the CDI has prepared this booklet with full recognition of the problems of bridging the gap of English between primary and secondary education.

The first issue of this booklet in April 1995 was popular and successful. The booklet was reviewed and revised in early 1996 to correct typographical and editorial errors. The revised edition maintains ALL the approach, concept, strategies, information and examples of the first edition. Suggestions and comments on this booklet should be sent to

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In the writing of this booklet, some expressions are used in the following way:

English Language = the subject of English Language
English = use of English in all other areas

EMI = using English as the medium of instruction
EMI subjects = subjects other than English Language
using English as the medium of
instruction

P5-6 = Primary 5 to 6
P6 = Primary 6

S1 = Secondary 1
S1-3 = Secondary 1 to 3

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Introduction

When students enter S1, they encounter many changes. One of the major changes is the use of English. English at the primary level is usually confined to the English Language lessons and taught in a relatively simple and straightforward manner.

English at the secondary level is extended in communication and use. In secondary schools where the medium of instruction is Chinese, the English gap exists only in the subject of English Language and relevant extra-curricular activities. In secondary schools where English is used for studying other subjects, this gap occurs across the curriculum.

Teachers of the subject of English Language at P6 and S1 have an important role in helping to bridge this gap of English proficiency. Teachers of other levels and other subjects, especially those *using English in the other subjects at S1*, should also be aware of the urgency of the issue and help to overcome the problems.

This booklet is concerned with helping schools and teachers of

- (1) students weak in English moving to S1 in the Chinese medium and requiring extra help in the subject of English Language, and
- (2) students from Chinese-medium primary schools transferring to the English medium in S1, who may be good in English or good in all areas of learning but weak in English.

For easy reading, the contents of this booklet are presented in *question and answer format*. The questions are answered in a simple and straightforward way, often supported with examples.

Part I identifies the problems and points out a general direction for solution.

Part II suggests ways of planning and organising language teaching at late primary as well as early secondary levels with a view to preparing students for secondary education.

Part III describes the basic skills that students need in order to learn and use English effectively in the secondary school.

Part IV suggests ways for teachers to handle some of the common issues related to the use of English.

Part V explains the concept of curriculum tailoring, how language learning can be extended or trimmed across subjects to enable a smooth transition for the students.

It must be emphasised that the suggestions given in this booklet will be *most effective only when teachers collaborate* to address the issue.

The suggestions in this booklet are *by no means mandatory or exhaustive*. Schools and teachers may need to devise other strategies according to the particular circumstances of their schools.

PART I

approaching the problem of the English gap

Q1. What is the problem of the English gap?

When students move from primary to secondary school, they have to handle new relationships, new buildings and places, new social climate, new learning methods, new school systems, and new expectations from both school and parents.

Students need to be prepared and well-equipped to handle these new demands in S1. When they fail to handle these new demands and make efforts in vain, they feel frustrated and discouraged. *Many disciplinary problems are caused by the failure to handle the new demands satisfactorily.*

One of the greatest academic demands made of the S1 students is English proficiency. With few exceptions, the primary schools in Hong Kong use Chinese as the medium of instruction and teach the subject of English Language strictly according to the syllabus. The amount of English taught and used in these primary schools is very much less than that in a secondary school using English as the medium of instruction.

In secondary schools where the medium of instruction is mainly Chinese, the problem of English proficiency only occurs among the students weak in the subject of English Language. *In*

secondary schools where the medium of instruction is largely English, the problem of English inadequacy can be severe and occurs during most of the school time both inside and outside the classroom.

Q2. What are the causes of the problem of English gap at S1?

Many issues have been related to the problem, and they are generally considered as follows:

a gap between the primary and secondary curricula -

This is not a valid cause of the problem because *the secondary curriculum is a continuation and development of the primary curriculum*. A summary of the two curricula is in Appendix 1. The subject syllabuses at the two levels are closely connected, e.g. the primary and secondary English syllabuses are really two parts of a whole; the primary Social Studies syllabus contains topics of History, Geography, and EPA; and the primary Science syllabus lays the foundation for the secondary Science syllabus. There is no curricular gap between the primary and secondary curricula themselves.

However, a curricular gap (in contents as well as language) sometimes does occur between the textbooks used in the primary schools and the textbooks used in the secondary schools. The gap is increased when the language in the primary textbooks is easy (and in Chinese) and the language in the secondary textbooks is difficult (and in English). In such case, efforts have to be made to bridge the gap between the

textbooks.

the S1 textbooks are too difficult -

The textbooks for *S1 English Language* are usually of the right level of difficulty. If they are not, the schools using them should consider changing the textbooks, or the teachers can simplify the early units and allow more time for teaching the first part of the textbooks in order to ensure a smooth transition for their students.

With regard to the *textbooks of the other subjects*, it is true that some of them are written in English too difficult for the average S1 students. The writers of these textbooks may not be aware that, other than the subject of English Language, English is seldom taught and used in primary schools. There is a genuine need for these textbook writers to deliberately and systematically control the level of English at S1 and to gradually raise this language level across the school years. *If possible, schools should use these difficult textbooks only with the very best students and avoid using them with the average and less able students; or failing this, teachers can simplify and tailor the textbooks* until their students have mastered sufficient English for studying them effectively. Appendix 2 provides some examples of simplifying the S1 text materials. Appendix 3 provides some examples of tailoring the S1 curriculum in different subjects.

teachers expect too much from students at S1

Many S1 teachers know their students well and sincerely plan to orientate them to secondary education. They adjust their use of language according to the ability of their students. And they almost always succeed to help their students to bridge the English gap.

Some S1 teachers, however, either because of tradition, beliefs or want of personal proficiency, expect the S1 students to be able to understand their difficult language automatically without support and assistance. In doing so, they pose unwarily immense difficulties for their students. To change this practice, they should try to *modify their expectation according to their students' abilities*. Suggestions are given in this booklet to help teachers adjust their English language use for their S1 students.

While teachers adjust their language use according to students' abilities, they have to be aware that the abilities of their S1 groups vary from year to year, and their expectation also needs to be modified from year to year.

Q3. What is the student's major problem at S1 in regard to the use of English as the medium of learning?

It has often been claimed that, for the average student, the major problem is how to meet the teachers' expectation in making immediate switch from Chinese-medium learning to English-medium learning. *To solve this problem, students must be clearly and positively helped to adjust to the secondary school mode of learning. Teachers should teach sufficient*

learning skills and classroom language, and also modify and reduce their expectations at S1, with a view to making full expectations only after a period of time.

The length of this bridging period of time depends on the school tradition, orientation plans, resources, teaching needs and students' abilities. Every teacher should be allowed discretion regarding their particular groups of students. Haste will only lead to further problems.

Q4. What is the teacher's major problem at S1 in regard to the use of English as the medium of teaching?

Observation of classroom situations has shown that, other than the *want of basic language proficiency* (suggestions of helping the teachers who are weak in English are given in Appendix 4), teachers' major problem in regard to EMI appears to be related to the selective use of English: *simplification, selection, organisation and use of English for teaching and learning purposes*. Even when they recognise the need of using English selectively in teaching at S1, they may not know how to do so unless they are also English Language teachers.

This problem can be addressed by means of a consensus on a language plan and modification of the teaching strategies and materials across the EMI subjects.

A bigger problem arises when the teacher of *English Language intends to go slowly and steadily* according to students' abilities, while the teachers of *the other subjects want to use more difficult English*. This incompatibility causes great difficulties

for teaching as well as learning.

It is important for secondary school principals and panel chairpersons of all the EMI subjects to take up the responsibility of *co-ordinating language use across the EMI subjects at S1-3. They must collaborate and agree to a gradual increase of English in their teaching plans initially based on the primary curriculum.* The answer to Q7 below and Appendix 5 provide suggestions for developing this language plan. Appendices 2-3 provide examples of how the teaching contents of the other subjects can be adjusted in line with this language plan.

Q5. Is there a quick solution to the problem of English inadequacy in early secondary education?

There is *no one simple instant solution* to the problem. There can only be *a general direction to handle this problem* so that it is gradually diminished. The general direction is to help S1 students

- acquire sufficient classroom language, language skills and study skills
- become brave enough to speak up in English in class
- develop confidence in learning through English
- feel comfortable using English among themselves
- get interested in English
- get interested in the English extra-curricular activities

This direction is

based on appropriate school policy regarding the medium of

instruction and the choice of teaching materials (including textbooks), and teachers' determination to pave the way for students to develop English adequately for successful secondary education;

facilitated through co-ordinating language use for English at S1-3 in all relevant subjects and anticipating and controlling the language demands in S1; helping students acquire the basic skills for language development; providing input of language in appropriate context and at a suitable pace; and ensuring that students receive adequate support, assistance and challenge all the way through; and

driven by a sense of trust among teachers and between teachers and students. Students' confidence and motivation can be sustained through constant encouragement, understanding and support.

PART II

planning and organisation

Q6. What can be expected from primary education, students themselves and their parents in respect of English proficiency?

S1 teachers can expect *primary education to have laid the foundation for secondary education* (the two levels are within the same framework, under slightly different aims and objectives), but not to have prepared their students for transfer to the English medium. Other than some exceptional cases, English is not used as the general medium of instruction in the primary schools in Hong Kong. In an ordinary aided or government primary school, *students need to be prepared deliberately to learn or carry out activities in English other than those in the subject of English Language* if they are to be prepared for secondary education in the English medium.

Most S1 students are *willing and eager before they are deterred by failures and frustrations, but they are not always confident, mature and able to handle new demands independently*. In other words, most S1 students are fresh and open, dependent on the assistance and direction of teachers, until they are adequately prepared to tackle issues on their own.

Teachers can expect their *S1 students to gradually strengthen their English proficiency, at various stages of the teaching plan and according to individual circumstances*, but not that the students have already acquired English proficiency to study

through the English medium in S1

Teachers can expect their students' *parents to share the anxiety* for the students to adapt well to the secondary school mode of learning (which is more independent, and requires more thinking and student's own initiative), but not that the parents are able to teach the language required for studying in the English medium.

Q7. How can S1-3 teachers plan the curriculum for bridging purposes?

A cross-curricular involvement is necessary in general planning especially at the beginning of S1 first term. *Principals, panel chairpersons and teachers* of the EMI subjects should prepare the teaching plans together. They can take the following steps:

- (i) *Find out*
the English standards of their students and how big their ability range is; for example, roughly how many students can carry out daily classroom instructions in English, how many can ask questions in English, how many can use the simplified dictionary, etc; and on the other hand, how many cannot even tell their personal details in English, how many cannot read simple English sentences, how many cannot understand a single word during lessons conducted in English, etc.
- (ii) *Decide*
how to group the students (streaming, remedial classes, and other grouping arrangements),

how much extra time and effort to give to each group to help them catch up (the weaker groups will obviously need additional time and assistance),
how the better groups can advance without being affected by the weaker groups (the extra topics, details, examples and exercises to be completed by the better students are not to be taught to the weaker groups).

Decide

what areas, topics and objectives to teach to each group within a period of time (both in terms of quantity and depth, such as the number of topics, language items, examples and exercises to be covered in a month, a school term or a year),

what parts of textbook to cover for the weaker groups and the better groups. Teachers can advise principals and panel chairpersons as to the most essential parts and the time required for teaching them. Principals and panel chairpersons can advise teachers on how to ensure compatibility among the groups by the end of a certain period of time, and

what topics and to what extent in terms of both coverage and depth should these topics be assessed for the different ability groups. The examination paper at the end of a school term should contain largely what has been taught to the weaker groups. For suggestions on examination, please see Appendix 6.

Plan

a schedule for additional learning opportunities outside the classroom such as "big sister/brother" schemes, extra assignments and homework, tutorial and interest groups, extra-curricular activities led by senior students to help

the weaker groups, etc. Such additional learning opportunities can be provided for all student groups, subject to students' needs and the resources available.

Q8. What can be achieved for bridging purposes by the English Language teachers at P5-6 and S1-3?

P5-6

Firstly, teachers of P5-6 should help students acquire some of the *classroom language and study skills described in Part III* of this booklet.

Then, they can try to anticipate the language required in S1 and give *vacation assignments* that help to develop reading and listening skills. For the students who will probably use English as the medium of learning in S1, such vacation assignments can include the basic vocabulary and grammatical items frequently used in the various subjects. For the other students, teachers can give assignments that practise enquiry and language learning skills, such as asking for names and explanation, looking up a simple dictionary, etc.

S1-3

In secondary schools where the medium of instruction is Chinese, the English Language teachers can allow an orientation period for their S1 students to develop the language and study skills listed in Part III below.

In secondary schools where the medium of instruction is

English, the English Language teachers should help the teachers of all the subjects using English in drawing up a plan for English (Appendix 5) at S1-3.

Teachers should

- (i) *agree on the classroom language* to be used (see Part III below),
- (ii) review the textbooks of the EMI subjects and *compare the language used in these textbooks* (identifying the differences and similarities),
- (iii) *agree on the range, types and levels of reading and writing skills* to be practised by students in each school term, or most ideally, in each week (see Appendix 7),
- (iv) *decide what language items to teach and what not to teach*, what language items to cover in English Language lessons, and what language items to cover in the lessons of the other subjects,
- (v) *modify the contents of the textbooks* if necessary (see Part V on curriculum tailoring), and perhaps also provide alternative materials, and
- (vi) *agree on the methods and coverage for examination* at the end of the school term (see Appendix 6 on examinations).

Teachers of English Language can also help the teachers of the other subjects to *find and use simple language to replace the more difficult language*; for example, use a short phrase or a simple synonymous word for a difficult word, break a long paragraph into a few short simple paragraphs, and use short simple sentences instead of long complex sentences.

Q9. What can be achieved for bridging purposes by the teachers of the EMI subjects?

Panel chairpersons of the EMI subjects should ask their S1-3 teachers to review and plan English language use for teaching in collaboration with the teachers of English Language, as described in the answer to Q7.

Furthermore, they should

- (i) *find out what have been taught in the primary school* and what need to be revised,
- (ii) *orientate their students* to the required mode of learning slowly and steadily,
- (iii) *allow students sufficient time* to gain confidence and the skills of studying in English,
- (iv) *reduce the content* of their syllabuses or textbooks, if necessary, out of consideration of their students' language abilities, especially in the early months of S1,
- (v) *use very simple English* in class and ask students to carry out tasks involving the use of English, such as reading and discussion,
- (vi) *explain and demonstrate* clearly the ways of completing exercises and give extra assistance where and when necessary,
- (vii) *ensure* that the major language items to be used for teaching are *already covered in English lessons*,
- (viii) with the assistance of the teachers of English Language if necessary, *use simple English* to replace the difficult English used in textbooks, and
- (ix) *compile supplementary teaching/learning materials* if necessary.

Q10. What can be planned and achieved for bridging purposes in the extra-curricular activities for developing English at P5-6 and S1-3 levels?

To encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities using English, teachers should deliberately plan activities that are *attractive, pleasant, challenging and sustainable* so that students leave each activity with interest and the intention of coming back.

P5-6

reading club or reading sessions in which the teacher leads students in various activities such as recital practices, big book programmes, shared-reading, library reading schemes, book report competitions, etc. The materials should cover as broad a range of topics as possible.

writing competitions in which students are encouraged to write (with or without a model) picture books, comic strips and short stories, diaries with pictures, rhymes, playlets, etc.

video or film shows in which appropriate videos and films on a range of topics are shown in English, to be preceded or followed by simple discussions led by the teacher. A popular theme, like the dinosaur, can initiate curiosity, exploration and further reading of materials that will help develop students' interest and study skills for History and Science in the secondary school.

S1-3

English oral sessions at recess and lunch time specially arranged

for S1-3 students to provide them with extra opportunities of speaking English. These sessions can be led by teachers or senior students who are fluent in English, and can cover all areas such as pronunciation, recitation, reading, discussion and quizzes, etc.

English club and related activities in which S1-3 students can take part under the leadership of senior students, such as speech and drama activities, spelling games, reading and writing contests, debates, film reviews, preparation of newsletters and magazines, etc. Some schools set up different clubs for these activities; some schools organise them all under the English club.

When genuinely carried out in English, these activities are very valuable because they provide students with opportunities to be familiarised with language use in authentic and practical situations, with the ways and methods of carrying out these activities, with other S1-3 students and senior students, and with the secondary school environment.

Where suitable, the clubs of other subjects can also conduct activities involving the use of English, such as preparation and report of a field visit or experiment, comparison of news reports on different media, a scrap-book on musical instruments or the life of a composer, study of a social or historical issue, etc.

PART III

basic skills

Q11. What classroom language should be taught to students at P5-6, early S1, and the rest of junior secondary education?

Classroom language is suggested below and the specific items are listed in Appendix 8. It must be emphasised that teachers should select the items according to the needs of their students

Teachers must distinguish between the language items they want students only *to understand* and those they want students to be able *to produce in speech*. There is no hard and fast rule as to which items are to be taught before the other items, except that the simple ones and the urgently required ones should be taught first. *The suggested list in Appendix 8 serves only reference purposes and is by no means exhaustive.*

In secondary schools where the medium of instruction is English, the teachers of English Language should agree with the teachers of the EMI subjects as to which items to introduce in each school term or school year. These language items can be included in a language plan (Appendix 5).

P5-6

Simple greetings

- Classroom instructions (only to be understood by students, not to be produced)

- Instructions and explanations about exercise books/homework (only to be understood by students, not to be produced)
- Students' questions and responses
- Apologies and excuses

early S1

Teachers should first help students at S1 revise the classroom language they have learnt at P5-6 to ensure that they can use it confidently. Then, teachers can start teaching the more difficult items:

- Greetings
- Classroom instructions (only to be understood by students, not to be produced)
- Instructions and explanations about exercise books/homework (to be understood and repeated by students for the benefit of their classmates)
- Students' responses to more complex issues
- Students' questions requiring further explanation, repetition, etc.
- Apologies and excuses of a slightly more complex nature

S1-3

Most of the basic classroom language should have been covered during S1. At S1-3, teachers may need to give more complicated classroom instructions for the more complex tasks. The more difficult language can be introduced gradually according to students' abilities and subject needs. But there should be agreement among teachers as to the common instructions to be used across EMI subjects.

Q12. How can classroom language be taught when students' ability is very low?

Teachers should teach the items step by step. The emphasis must always be on the spoken form rather than the written form. Teachers can ask students to repeat after them and request students to use these expressions whenever possible. Lapses and repetition in use should be accepted and not regarded as failure to communicate.

If students do not have enough confidence, teachers should give them as much practice as possible and encourage frequent use despite the errors. Everyone makes mistakes and mistakes are part of a natural learning process.

If students have made an effort and expressed themselves accurately, teachers should praise them. Various means such as awarding students scores if they have made a good number of successful communications can be used to reinforce students' motivation.

Teachers are easily tempted to give up when students keep failing to understand and avoid English in the classroom, but they must not give up. It is important to remember that *if teachers use English in the classroom consistently and with perseverance, students will eventually develop the same habit and consequently use the language, which is essential for the development of language skills.*

Q13. What study skills should be taught to students to help them get along in class, to enable them to study independently after school, and to increase their confidence in themselves?

To prepare for long-term development, students must learn the methods of acquiring knowledge and developing confidence. There is no rule for identifying items for specific levels. The major study skills are as follows:

working in class

- asking others for help concerning learning problems
- working with others to complete a task
- offering help to others in learning situations when appropriate
- cooperating with others and listening to different opinions

studying independently after school

- extracting important points and making notes when reading
- gathering and extracting information and ideas from texts and various sources
- classifying information and ideas meaningfully and making reference to them whenever necessary
- organising materials, information and ideas systematically
- planning a timetable for study and revision
- evaluating one's own progress and noting one's strengths and weaknesses
- using the dictionary as well as the library to look for explanation and information

- developing thinking skills : deducing, inducing, reasoning, conceptualising, generalising, etc

In addition to the above study skills, it is important for students to develop the following **attitudes and skills to maintain confidence** :

- overcoming shyness and inertia by deliberately urging oneself to face challenges
- understanding that everybody has some weaknesses and not being afraid to expose one's weaknesses
- participating in tasks despite the possibility of making mistakes
- practising as much as possible by taking every opportunity to practise and perhaps even trying to look out for or create these opportunities
- making positive statements to oneself for self-encouragement, e.g. "I can do it." "I need only try." "I haven't worked hard enough. If I work hard, I shall be able to do it."
- taking brief record of one's successes (using single word notes, short diaries, simple charts and tables, etc)

Q14. What reading and writing skills should be covered at P5-6 and S1-3?

P5-6

The teaching of reading and writing skills at P5-6 is essentially the duty of the English Language teachers. The teaching of reading skills depends very much on the types of texts involved,

and at P5-6 depends very much on the range of texts available in the P5-6 English Language textbooks and other learning materials. The teaching of writing skills depends on the range of text-types teachers want to teach. P5-6 teachers very rarely want their students to be able to produce complete texts, unless based on models and possibly supported with a lot of pictures. Teachers should use their discretion as to which skills to teach. If the students are very bright and if the teachers want to help prepare these students for the English medium in S1, teachers can find out from the S1 curriculum the reading and writing skills required in the various subjects, and give extra guidance and assignments to develop these skills.

S1-3

At S1-3 levels, teachers of English Language as well as the teachers of the EMI subjects have to teach the reading and writing skills required for studying. *The decision about these skills depends very much on the texts used for the various subjects.* Where possible, the teachers of English Language can try to teach the major reading and writing skills as best they can through the English Language materials before these skills are taught or used in the other subjects.

Reading skills can include the following:

- the basic phonic system (e.g. bad, bag, bat; bunny, funny, sunny), without having to know the meaning and use of the words, but trying to read aloud texts in order to become familiar with the English sound system
- reading silently for ideas and information; the emphasis being to spot the key words for ideas and information

and being able to establish their meaning

- understanding the use of punctuation marks (e.g. the full-stop for an ending tone, the comma for a pause, the question mark for a rising tone)
- identifying the key word in a sentence, the key sentence in a paragraph and the key paragraph in a passage, so that meaning can be established and ideas related

the other skills of

- deducing meaning of words and phrases
- identifying linking words or phrases to understand the connection between ideas
- inferring writer's intention, attitude and feelings
- skimming a text to get its gist
- scanning a text to locate specific information such as names and figures
- recognising indicators in discourse (e.g. first, then, therefore, however, finally)
- distinguishing fact from opinion
- understanding both explicit and implicit meanings

Writing skills can include the following

- interpreting the purposes of writing
- preparing for writing, such as enquiring for ideas, information and the necessary language
- recognising text-types and using them appropriately
- identifying the main ideas and supporting details to be presented
- constructing meaningful phrases and sentences
- using punctuation marks meaningfully

- using indicators for a logical presentation
- drafting, self-correcting and revising for improvement

More detail suggestions of reading and writing skills for S1-3 are provided in Appendix 7.

Q15. What dictionary skills should be covered?

At all levels, students should be familiarised with dictionary skills. Dictionary work is boring and meaningless when there is no purpose; but it can be fun and challenging when students use the dictionary skilfully to find answers and solve problems

Students should be expected to develop dictionary skills as they acquire language learning skills, starting as early as possible with the simple ones and progressing to the difficult ones only when they are ready to do so.

Both teachers of English Language at P5-6 and S1-3 and the teachers of other subjects can help students to acquire dictionary skills.

The easy dictionary skills refer to

- finding words according to alphabetical order
- checking the spelling of words
- understanding the explanations of words in a simple dictionary

The more difficult dictionary skills refer to

- knowing the phonetic system and symbols used for pronunciation

- knowing how to choose the appropriate explanation
- understanding the examples provided to help explain meaning and use
- checking one's own language use against the explanation and example in the dictionary

Q16. What library skills should be covered?

At all levels and for all subjects, students should be familiarised with the library setting, how books are arranged on shelves according to type and nature, how magazines and newspapers are freely available for reading but not to be taken away, how silence and discipline must always be maintained, etc.

Both the teachers of English Language and the teachers of the other subjects can help students to acquire library skills.

At P5-6, students should have already developed the habit of borrowing books (probably only story books) from the library (class library or the public library), and following the procedure of library loans and returns. They can also learn how to use the library for collecting information for various purposes.

At S1-3, students should learn to use

- the catalogues and writers' name search
- the different parts of a publication to obtain information, e.g. book cover, title, table of contents
- scanning skills when looking for books or articles
- the magazines and journals on display and search for information by looking through the contents page
- reference books, encyclopedia or children's encyclopedia

Q17. What enquiry skills should be covered?

At all levels, students should be encouraged to develop enquiry skills which are essential for independent learning. *The types and complexity of enquiry skills increase according to students' progress, not only in English Language, but in all aspects of learning.*

Both the teachers of English Language and the teachers of the other subjects can help students develop enquiry skills.

The easy enquiry skills include

- asking for information and explanation
- repeating questions and seeking clarification
- using appropriate opening remarks and formulaic expressions (e.g. Excuse me ...)

The more complex enquiry skills include

- requesting explanation when there is misunderstanding or query
- understanding the use of different tones
- asking follow-up questions
- knowing where to look for information
- writing simple letters to ask for information and materials

Q18. How can students be trained to become independent learners?

Learner independence refers to a learner's ability to learn with reduced teacher support and little supervision. *It is essential for the effective development of language abilities and must be encouraged to replace spoonfeeding.*

All teachers should help their students to develop learner independence through

- trial and error
- development of study skills
- self-evaluation and reflection (e.g. keeping personal records and portfolios, using checklists to review one's work, and discussing with peers and teachers about progress)
- learning activities such as process writing and project work, in which students are encouraged to experiment with ideas through revision and re-drafting

PART IV

classroom interaction

Q19. What can be done during English Language lessons to help students gain confidence and interest, get involved, and be prepared for the EMI subjects?

Other than the teaching of the language and skills described in Part III above, teachers of English Language should *provide ample opportunities of English language use* and encourage students to use English freely. Interesting tasks and personal involvement can *motivate students'* interest and participation effectively.

In these activities, there is *no need to criticise or correct all students' mistakes*. Some errors can be tolerated or corrected simply by pointing out and teaching the right version. Overt criticism and correction only inhibit confidence and motivation. The teacher can correct a few errors at a time and allow some errors to remain until the students are ready for more correction.

P5-6

Students should be encouraged to take *an active role in group work, try to complete tasks and solve problems independently*.

As an additional assignment, students can try to go through the first chapter of an S1 textbook and identify the words that they

know and the words that they do not know. Students can be encouraged to find out the pronunciation, meaning and use of some of these words from a simple dictionary independently. This activity helps students to assume some responsibility for their learning and also anticipate the language use in S1. There is no need for the teacher to teach or explain the new words unless asked to.

S1-3

Assignments that extend outside the classroom into daily life concerns can be given to students at regular intervals, such as asking students to (a) note and record the use of English in the environment, (b) note the English used in songs and commercials, (c) plan for a report on a special event (e.g. a picnic or a visit), (d) repeat what certain people or characters say on a TV or video programme, (e) list the difficult words and sentences encountered in the other subjects, and (f) take down some of the things said by the school principal and other teachers during assembly or similar occasions.

Students should be encouraged to help each other in all activities, because, through helping each other, the better ones can further internalise their knowledge and skills, and the weaker students can benefit from the experience of their peers without interference from teachers. However, in doing so, teachers should ensure that

- (i) students know that *everybody has different strengths and weaknesses*, and that the strengths and weaknesses change at different periods of their lifetime,
- (ii) students know that *everybody has the potential of*

improving himself/herself, and that everybody can improve when there is sufficient and well-directed effort and input, and

students' work is *checked by the teacher asking questions on how they arrive at the results and commenting on the process* instead of the product. Students should be led to understand that simply copying the results is of no use. They must improve on their methods and independence.

Q20. What can be done by the English Language teacher to help students learn effectively in the EMI subjects?

Teachers of English Language can help students study the other subjects in the English medium by

- (i) ensuring that
 - the names and terminologies are *pronounced in the same way* (and correctly) across subjects, and the same range of language patterns is used (e.g. when to start using the complex sentence or the adverbial clause of time)
 - everybody concerned uses the *same source of reference* (the same dictionary, the same grammar book, etc)

observing closely the development of the students, and keeping all relevant teachers *informed as to the pace of students' progress*: when certain language items need to be taught, when certain errors need to be corrected,

when certain new language patterns can be introduced, when teaching can proceed more slowly or quickly, etc. A language plan can be very useful to facilitate a common understanding about each class (Appendix 5).

re-arranging the contents of the English Language textbooks so that the urgently required language items can be taught or revised in the English Language lessons before (and not after) they have to be used in the other subjects. For example, the present perfect tense can be revised in the third or fourth week of S1 before it is heavily used in Social Studies and History; questioning and answering skills for discussion purposes can be taught in the second term of S1 before it is used in Social Studies. (Please see Part V on curriculum tailoring.)

using materials of the EMI subjects as content for English Language oral work, discussion, composition, listening and reading practice. For example, students can be asked to take notes of a documentary they watch for any other subject (History, Geography, Science) *as study skills development*, to write a report of a science experiment *as a composition assignment*, to read some materials for Social Studies and report the findings to the class *as oral work*, to collect information on the environment of Hong Kong and prepare a scrap book on how to protect the environment *as project work*.

Q21. What can the teachers of the EMI subjects do to help their students at S1-3?

Other than the measures described in Q9, the teachers of the EMI subjects in S1 should

- (i) *confine their language use* to the level of the students' abilities;
- (ii) allow time for students to get through the language barrier, by going through the topics/textbook more *slowly*, using *the dictionary* when necessary, *repeating* the difficult parts, using pictures and other *teaching aids* frequently, using group arrangement whereby *more assistance can be given to the weaker groups*, helping the very weak students to *take notes*, and asking *senior students to lend help* to the weaker students after lessons;
- (iii) always *appreciate the efforts and improvements* made by students, in all aspects of learning as well as English, and never criticise or deny the value of students' efforts;
- (iv) help students *practise the classroom language* taught in the English Language lessons;
- (v) help students learn and *practise study skills and language development skills* when the opportunities arise;
- (vi) keep themselves informed through *discussion with the English Language teachers* regarding the students' progress; and
- (vii) arrange *extra-curricular activities* that require the use of English.

PART V

curriculum tailoring

Q22. What is curriculum tailoring for bridging purposes?

Curriculum tailoring is cutting-down, extending or adapting the curriculum (syllabus or textbook) according to students' needs. Every school may find a different need for curriculum tailoring and school-based curriculum tailoring is the most effective form of curriculum development. Civic education, and religious and ethical education, for example, are often tailored according to school policy, teacher preference, resource materials, social climate and parental expectation.

For the **better students** using English as the medium of learning, the English Language curriculum has to be extended to support the curriculum of the EMI subjects. For example, more classroom language, more language skills, more study skills and especially the vocabulary of the EMI subjects have to be taught. This is *extending the English Language curriculum to support the study of the other subjects*.

For the **average students** using English as the medium of learning, time has to be allowed for acquiring sufficient language to study the EMI subjects. These students often find the language presenting the contents of the EMI subjects too difficult. So both the language and contents of the EMI subjects may have to be reduced in order to enable students to start off. This is *reducing the curricula of the other subjects in*

order to allow time for students to be prepared for studying them in the English medium.

Frequently, there is no compatibility between the pace of learning English in the subject of English Language and the EMI subjects. For example, the past perfect tense and long complex/compound sentences are taught very late in the English Language curriculum but used very early in History and Science. In such cases, the English Language curriculum has to be adjusted to provide students with the language necessary for the EMI subjects, and at the same time the contents of the EMI subjects have to be rearranged to avoid the use of overtly difficult language. The adjustment of English Language has to be matched with the rearrangement of the other subjects. This is *adapting the curriculum according to students' learning needs in English Language and the other subjects.*

For examples of simplifying the language in the textbooks of the various subjects, please refer to Appendix 2.

For examples of curriculum or textbooks tailoring, please refer to Appendix 3.

Q23. How should secondary schools choose textbooks for bridging purposes? Is it necessary to use special textbooks at S1?

Secondary schools using Chinese as the medium of instruction do not have to use any special textbooks for bridging. Careful choice, pacing and use of the English Language textbooks is sufficient to help S1 students bridge the English gap.

However, secondary schools using EMI may have to use textbooks designed specifically to help students acquire sufficient English within a limited period of time in order to start studying the EMI subjects effectively. The features of textbooks suitable for bridging purposes are listed below in (i) to (iv). When teachers do not use such specifically designed textbooks for bridging purposes, they can tailor their own textbooks with a view to the same functions, by providing

- (i) *a clear language framework that*
 - *starts with simple language* similar to those in P5-6 and containing very simple teaching contents which are supported with good illustrations
 - *enables effective acquisition of vocabulary* necessary for studying the EMI subjects
 - uses language items (grammar, vocabulary, sentence patterns) that are *firstly exposed, then taught and finally used* by students (exposure, teaching and use may happen in the same textbook or across a few textbooks)
 - *leads to natural language use at the end of a reasonable period of time* when students are expected to have bridged the language gap successfully
 - *ensures* that all the essential language features of the EMI subjects (e.g. past tense for History and adverbial clauses of cause and effect for Science) are covered
- (ii) *ample opportunities and guidance for students to develop*
 - study skills
 - thinking and communication skills

- language development skills
- general independence in learning

These skills should be developed through guidance and practice, never through memorisation, drilling or copying. For details of these skills, please refer to Part III above.

- (iii) *guidance and opportunities to help students form concepts and learn the methods of study* rather than just providing facts and information, because facts and information will change in time and can be acquired when necessary. Concepts and methods will enable students to acquire and use the facts and information effectively.
- (iv) *tasks related to daily life and catering for students' interests and needs.* Like all learning materials, these S1 textbook materials should be morally and academically suitable. In addition, it is desirable that they include elements that encourage a *positive outlook in life, a positive value system and virtues* that help students meet new demands in their environment.

Q24. How can teachers tailor textbook materials for bridging purposes?

Referring to the steps of planning described in Q7 and the criteria listed in Q23, *teachers of the EMI subjects should collaborate with the teachers of English Language* in the following procedure :

- (i) check out the *difficult vocabulary items* and replace them with simple words and expressions whenever feasible,
- (ii) check out the *complex sentence structures* and break them into simple sentences,
- (iii) check out the topics, details, examples and exercises using *difficult tenses* (especially the past perfect, the past continuous, and the future perfect) and have these difficult tenses taught in English Language first,
- (iv) omit *winding passages and mechanical exercises* that do not facilitate the teaching of concepts,
- (v) build in the teaching of *classroom language and basic study skills* in daily classroom activities,
- (vi) agree with all the teachers concerned as to *when to introduce the difficult items* identified in (i) - (iii) above,
- (vii) check out all the common topics and *use an integrated approach* so that they need not be taught repetitively in different subjects, and
- (viii) agree among all teachers as to the *type of assignments*

(with consideration of text-type and language/study skills) to give (such as reading, note-taking, report writing) at different points of time.

Teachers should always remember that the number of pages covered in a textbook cannot indicate the successfulness of their teaching. *It is the amount of knowledge and skills gained by students that indicate the successfulness of teaching.* Some examples of curriculum/textbook tailoring are provided in Appendix 3.

List of the questions asked in this booklet

- Q1 What is the problem of the English gap? *pg. 3*
- Q2 What are the causes of the problem of English gap at S1? *pg. 4*
- Q3 What is the student's major problem at S1 in regard to the use of English as the medium of learning? *pg. 6*
- Q4 What is the teacher's major problem at S1 in regard to the use of English as the medium of teaching? *pg. 7*
- Q5 Is there a quick solution to the problem of English inadequacy in early secondary education? *pg. 8*
- Q6 What can be expected from primary education, students themselves and their parents in respect of English proficiency? *pg. 10*
- Q7 How can S1-3 teachers plan the curriculum for bridging purposes? *pg. 11*
- Q8 What can be achieved for bridging purposes by the English Language teachers at P5-6 and S1-3? *pg. 13*
- Q9 What can be achieved for bridging purposes by the teachers of the EMI subjects? *pg. 15*

- Q10 What can be planned and achieved for bridging purposes in the extra-curricular activities for developing English at P5-6 and S1-3 levels? *pg. 16*
- Q11 What classroom language should be taught to students at P5-6, early S1, and the rest of junior secondary education? *pg. 18*
- Q12 How can classroom language be taught when students' ability is very low? *pg. 20*
- Q13 What study skills should be taught to students to help them get along in class, to enable them to study independently after school, and to increase their confidence in themselves? *pg. 21*
- Q14 What reading and writing skills should be covered at P5-6 and S1-3? *pg. 22*
- Q15 What dictionary skills should be covered? *pg. 25*
- Q16 What library skills should be covered? *pg. 26*
- Q17 What enquiry skills should be covered? *pg. 27*
- Q18 How can students be trained to become independent learners? *pg. 28*
- Q19 What can be done during English Language lessons to help students gain confidence and interest, get involved, and be prepared for the EMI subjects? *pg. 29*

- Q20 What can be done by the English Language teacher to help students learn effectively in the EMI subjects?
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- Q21 What can the teachers of the EMI subjects do to help their students at S1-3? *pg. 33*
- Q22 What is curriculum tailoring for bridging purposes?
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- Q23 How should secondary schools choose textbooks for bridging purposes? Is it necessary to use special textbooks at S1? *pg. 35*
- Q24 How can teachers tailor textbook materials for bridging purposes? *pg. 38*