

**REPORT OF THE CHINESE
LANGUAGE CURRICULUM
AND PEDAGOGY REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

1. In February 2004, Ministry of Education (MOE) formed the Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee to conduct a comprehensive review of the teaching and learning of the Chinese Language (CL) in our schools. The composition of the Committee is in **Annex A**. The Committee's terms of reference were to articulate the objectives and target groups of the various CL syllabuses, and to review the structure, curriculum content, pedagogy, and assessment methods used in CL teaching and learning.

2. In its review, the Committee consulted many stakeholders in CL teaching and learning through 32 focus group discussions, dialogue sessions and school visits. The Committee also received feedback and numerous suggestions from individuals and organisations. This qualitative feedback was complemented by a comprehensive survey commissioned by MOE, involving about 10,000 participants¹. The survey (MOE Survey, 2004) was conducted by Forbes Research. At the invitation of MOE, a team of five overseas consultants from China and Hong Kong also conducted a study of the CL curriculum. See **Annex B** for composition of the team.

BILINGUALISM – A MUST FOR SINGAPORE

3. Bilingualism in the English Language (EL) and the Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) is an imperative for Singapore.

4. As the common language or *lingua franca*, EL facilitates inter-ethnic communication. EL will also remain the language of global business, commerce and technology in the foreseeable future. Competence in EL will be a source of competitive advantage for Singapore.

5. Knowing our Mother Tongue Languages gives us confidence in our culture, roots and identity as a people. We have to stay an Asian society. A command of the MTLs will also help Singaporeans ride the wave of growth in Asia, the fastest-expanding region in the world. In particular, the usefulness of learning CL will increase with China's growing global influence.

6. For these reasons, the learning of MTLs will remain a key feature of our school system. We want our children to study their MTL for as long as possible, and to as high a level as they are capable of with reasonable effort.

7. Singaporeans recognise the importance of learning MTL. The MOE Survey (2004) showed that most parents want their children to learn CL, for cultural as well as pragmatic or economic reasons. Even among parents of predominantly EL-speaking homes, 92% feel it is important to learn CL. This strong base of interest in learning CL is an asset.

¹ 4500 students, 4600 parents, 1000 CL teachers, and 320 principals were surveyed. A summary of the survey findings is found in **Annex F**.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

8. The way we teach MTLs in our schools must respond to and anticipate changes in the environment. There is a clear generational shift in language use at home. More of our younger students come from English-speaking homes whereas Chinese is the more widely used language in the homes of older students. The number of Chinese students entering Primary 1 (P1) who speak predominantly EL at home has risen from 36% in 1994 to 50% in 2004². In particular, parents with higher education are more likely to use EL at home with their children³. This trend of P1 children having little exposure to CL in the home will continue. It is also reflected in the declining use of CL of younger students when they speak with their siblings and friends or classmates⁴.

9. It is not possible to expect most of our students to be equally competent in both EL and MTL. International studies show that while some individuals can achieve equal fluency in two languages, the norm is for individuals to be dominant in one language. One reason is that language competence is shaped by actual use of a language. High levels of exposure to two languages in all major areas of life (home, school, work, social circles) and, for each language, in all the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), are rare for most individuals.

10. There is a natural progression in language acquisition, beginning with developing the ability to converse in the language. Oral fluency is aided by the early acquisition of the sounds and tones of a language. Reading and writing skills are in turn aided by the ability to listen and speak the language.

11. Understanding how languages are most effectively learnt, and recognising changes in the social environment now and in the future, have significant implications for the teaching and learning of CL. Our aim should be to stimulate an interest in the language in all CL students and motivate them to use it long after they leave school. To do this, we need a differentiated approach from the outset, to customise CL learning for students entering school with different home language backgrounds and aptitudes. We also need to focus, first and foremost, on building up students' competency in listening, speaking and reading in the language early. Those with the background or ability to learn CL faster will be encouraged and supported in developing competency in all four language skills.

12. Ideally, we would want our CL students to be fluent in all four language skills. However, in adult life, most Singaporeans will more often hear and speak Chinese than read Chinese, and more often read than write Chinese. Therefore, our objectives should be to develop a broad base of Chinese Singaporeans with a

² Based on MOE's annual survey of parents at Primary 1 registration, among those reporting dominant use of EL at home, many also spoke CL at home. The MOE Survey (2004) found that among parents of Primary 2 (P2) children, 26% spoke EL with their children, 33% spoke both EL and CL, while 37% spoke CL. The proportion of parents speaking either EL or both EL and CL with their children is much higher for earlier cohorts of students. For example, among parents of Secondary 4 (S4) students, 18% spoke EL, 20% spoke both, while 59% spoke CL with their children.

³ Among parents of P2 children who were university educated, 51% spoke EL, 32% spoke EL & CL, and 17% spoke CL with their children.

⁴ MOE Survey, 2004.

foundation and interest in the language to enable them to communicate using CL in their daily lives and to read articles of interest.

13. CL learning should also reflect and take advantage of advances in technology. We must prepare our students to use CL in a future where technology tools in CL will be ubiquitous. Commercially-available software assists CL users in writing for example, through *hanyu pinyin* input, handwriting recognition and voice-to-text functions. In China, there is a growing use of *hanyu pinyin*-based software for writing.

DIFFERENTIATED OBJECTIVES

14. Our current CL syllabuses have two objectives, namely, to develop students' linguistic skills, in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing; and to transmit Chinese traditional culture and values through the study of CL. The Higher CL syllabuses aim to achieve similar objectives, but at higher levels of linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge.

15. The Committee proposes a differentiated approach to engage and motivate students. A practical set of objectives for CL teaching and learning would be as follows:

a. For all CL students, the common denominator should be to enthuse them in learning CL, so that they develop an abiding interest in the language and culture well after leaving school;

b. For the majority, the emphasis should be on effective oral communication and reading. However, as the four language skills tend to reinforce each other, judicious attention to writing is also essential to strengthen these language skills;

c. For students with the ability and interest, especially Higher CL students⁵, to retain the objective of developing fluency in all the four language skills and good understanding of Chinese history and culture. This can be further enhanced in the SAP school environment; and

d. For a core group of students in each cohort, the aim is to achieve both high proficiency in the four language skills and a confident and intuitive understanding of history, culture and contemporary developments in China. This can be done through the Language Elective Programme (Chinese) and the recently-launched Bicultural Studies Programme (Chinese).

16. The broad objective of using the teaching of CL to transmit traditional culture and values is still relevant for the majority of students. However, it should be achieved in a flexible and natural way that students find interesting and relevant. Cultural content can include both traditional and contemporary elements. With an emphasis on being able to read early, students would be able to access stories and books covering a range of topics sufficiently wide to appeal to their imagination. The reading of CL stories, many of which are rich in cultural content, would in turn engender a love for the language and culture. Indeed, the MOE Survey (2004)

⁵ Currently, 23% of primary and 16% of secondary students study Higher CL.

indicated that students at all levels had a strong interest in learning Chinese stories and fables.

UNDERSTANDING OUR LEARNERS

17. We must understand our learners to shape specific teaching and learning strategies that will kindle and sustain interest in the language. Our students, across the spectrum of home language backgrounds, are keen to learn CL well. On average, 87% of students think it is important to study CL.

18. However, many students face difficulty learning the language. About 77% of Primary 6 students from EL-speaking homes find learning CL difficult. This compares with 50% of those who speak some CL at home, and 36% of those who speak mostly CL at home, having difficulty learning CL⁶. A much higher percentage of students from EL-speaking homes also have Chinese tuition (72% at P6) compared to those from CL or bilingual home backgrounds (31%-41%).

19. Among students who indicated that they liked to learn CL, the most frequently cited reason was that they feel comfortable speaking CL. Among those who indicated that they did not like to learn CL, the most frequently cited reason was having to memorise many Chinese words. This was particularly so for the older students. For younger students, not doing well in exams was also an important factor⁷.

20. These observations are confirmed by MOE's survey of CL teachers⁸. A slight majority of teachers feel that students are interested in learning CL⁹. A primary reason cited by teachers for why a significant proportion of students do not like to learn CL was that they find the subject difficult (84% of primary, 71% of secondary, and 61% of junior college CL teachers).

21. From the Committee's survey of teachers, parents and students, and the consultation process, several key issues arose. These should be addressed so that we can maximise students' motivation to learn CL and give our teachers the room to adopt new strategies to enliven their students' learning of the language:

- a. Over-emphasis on character stroke memorisation;
- b. Students are disinclined to read in Chinese, especially outside the curriculum;
- c. Decline in interest in topics taught in CL lessons, as students progress to the secondary level;
- d. The current examination format limits teachers' scope for delivering engaging and interesting lessons; and

⁶ MOE Survey, 2004.

⁷ Performance in MTL in primary schools is a key component of the PSLE T-score, which is used for student placement in secondary schools.

⁸ MOE Survey, 2004.

⁹ 53% at primary, 57% at secondary and 63% at junior college levels.

e. Although many do reasonably well in CL examinations, there is inadequate interest to continue learning and using the language after they leave school.

KEY CHANGES

22. The following are key changes proposed to CL curriculum and pedagogy.

Modular Approach from Primary One

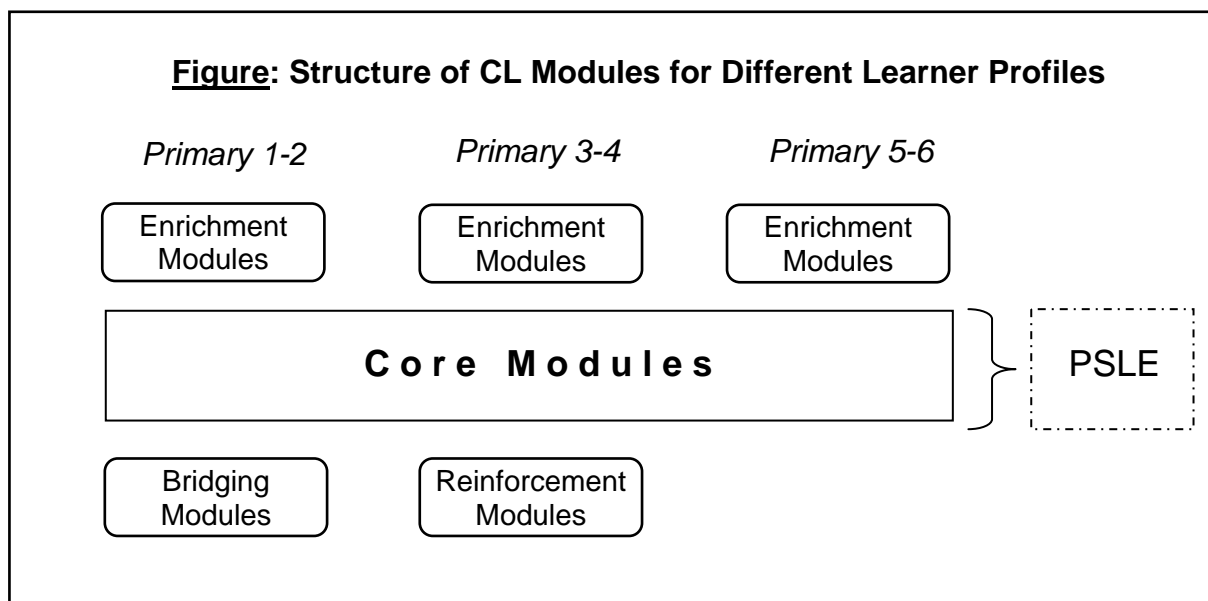
23. The Committee recommends a modular approach at the primary level, which will introduce greater customisation and flexibility into CL teaching and learning from Primary 1 (P1). This approach takes into consideration the sequence by which languages are naturally learnt, and recognises that a significant proportion of students entering P1 increasingly come from predominantly EL-speaking homes. The approach also accords with the feedback received from CL teachers surveyed, 94% of whom indicated that a different method should be used to teach students from EL-speaking homes.

24. With the modular approach (see **Figure**), all students will take Core modules from Primary 1 to Primary 6. The core curriculum will be designed to occupy 70-80% of CL curriculum time. The modular approach will give students who enter school with little exposure to CL additional support in the early primary years to help them catch up. It will also allow those with the background or ability in CL to go further.

25. Students who start off with little exposure to CL can take Bridging modules at Primary 1 (P1) and Primary 2 (P2). These will focus on building students' listening and speaking skills, giving them a friendly start to CL and helping them to cope well with the core curriculum. At Primary 3 (P3) and Primary 4 (P4), students who need additional support can take Reinforcement modules.

26. Those with the ability and interest to go further will be encouraged to take Enrichment modules from P1-P4. These Enrichment modules are similar to today's practice of providing a P1-P4 Higher CL syllabus for schools' reference. SAP schools have implemented this.

27. Teachers should be trained on how to identify students who could benefit from Bridging or Reinforcement modules, and advise parents accordingly, early on in the school year. MOE should also make available simple diagnostic tools that teachers can use where necessary, to help in the identification process.



28. For Primary 5 (P5) and Primary 6 (P6), the current differentiation between CL and Higher CL (HCL) courses will remain. Within each of these courses, a modular structure of Core and Enrichment modules should apply. The core HCL curriculum will focus on all four language skills. Further, HCL students with an advanced ability and interest in CL can take HCL Enrichment modules.

29. The Basic Chinese course from P5-P6, which serves the needs of academically weak students, should be maintained.

30. The flexibility of the modular approach will enable teachers to customise the curriculum more effectively to cater to the diverse needs of students from different home language backgrounds. A significant minority will take Bridging and Reinforcement modules. Another group who have the interest and ability in CL will be encouraged to learn the language at a higher level through Enrichment modules.

31. At the same time, adopting a core set of modules would ensure that a baseline CL standard can be determined. The regular CL PSLE examination should be pitched at the standard of the Core modules. Students taking HCL would continue today's practice of taking both CL and HCL examinations.

32. At the secondary level, there are currently five CL syllabuses that serve the needs of a range of CL learners¹⁰. For example, a student in the Express stream may offer CL, HCL, or the CL 'B' syllabus. This level of differentiation is adequate and should be maintained.

Learning Outcomes: More Emphasis on Practical Use of CL

33. In line with the objectives set out in para 15, the majority of students should focus on developing fluency and confidence in oral communication and early proficiency in character recognition and reading. A greater emphasis on these

¹⁰ These are Basic CL, CL 'B', CL Normal (Academic), CL, and HCL syllabuses.

practical skills will allow students to use CL more frequently, and thereby sustain their interest in the language.

34. The Committee recommends the systematic teaching of oral and listening skills through a variety of strategies. At the lower primary, a word list (词表) for oral communication should be developed as a guide to teachers. There should also be more extensive use of songs, verse/choral reading, recitation and other oral activities at this level. At higher levels, activities to develop oral fluency and confidence in speaking should be incorporated into teachers' guides and resources.

35. It is important to develop students' reading ability early in order to create and sustain interest in the language. Being able to read at an early age will give students access to stories and books that would appeal to their interest. To enable students to read earlier, they need to learn how to recognise more characters at an early age.

36. To do this, the Committee proposes that MOE study the feasibility of the "Recognise First, Write Later" pedagogical principle. This entails placing more emphasis on character recognition and reading strategies while reducing emphasis on character writing in the early years. Teaching approaches founded on this principle have been successfully implemented in certain experimental schools in China.

37. Singapore's language learning context differs from that in China. Therefore, MOE should conduct a pilot study at a few schools to teach students to recognise enough Chinese characters for them to read age-appropriate children's literature on their own in the lower primary years. This will be made possible through a reduced emphasis on script-writing (抄写).

38. Across all levels, the current emphasis on writing, and in particular, character stroke memorisation for examinations, needs to change. MOE should remove less frequently occurring characters from its character list. It should not be necessary for students to be able to reproduce from memory the character strokes of all the characters they can read. Further, with technology tools that facilitate character writing, it will no longer be necessary for users to both recognise and write all the characters they learn.

39. Students must learn and practise basic character strokes and character formation. However, instead of focusing on repeated practice and memorising of a large number of characters, script-writing should be used to develop an appreciation of Chinese characters and complement aspects of vocabulary instruction.

40. Learning to converse in and read CL at an early age will help students build their vocabulary and improve proficiency in the language through use. When students can read children's literature and stories on their own, they will be further motivated and enthused to learn CL. With a foundation built through oral communication and reading, students will be able to use CL confidently, and are more likely to retain their language skills well after they leave school. See **Annex C** for the proposed learning outcomes.

Engaging and Relevant Instructional Materials

41. MOE would need to revise its instructional materials according to the new curriculum objectives and teaching approaches adopted. To create more time and space for students to converse and participate in interactive activities, the number of textbook passages should be reduced by up to 20%.

42. Interesting textbooks and topics strongly influence our students' attitudes to reading. While MOE has given textbook writers useful guidelines as to the length, number, and themes of passages, this must be balanced with flexibility – to allow writers to produce texts that capture our students' imagination and make them want to read more. Specifically, our writers should:

a. *Have flexibility in using the character list.* Allowing writers to use characters outside of the stipulated block for each level will constrain their writing less. In the longer term, MOE should review the purpose of the character list for use in the production of instructional materials, teaching and assessment;

b. *Come up with original themes and topics.* Textbook writers should be given more freedom when choosing content and themes for passages. There is no need for every passage to cover one of the five themes that MOE currently stipulates¹¹. While these themes are important, they need not be stressed in every chapter, as this becomes predictable and monotonous; and

c. *Vary the number and length of passages.* However, the upper limit on passage length for each level should be maintained.

43. To inculcate a love for reading in our students, MOE should collaborate with local and overseas publishers to develop high quality supplementary materials of various genres and topics that appeal to our students, including fables and stories (e.g. Journey to the West). Students also suggested using Chinese comics and joke books to make reading in CL more interesting.

Enhancing CL Learning through IT

44. We must recognise that our students have grown up using mobile phones, writing with computers, playing computer games and surfing the Internet. They enter the classroom expecting to use technology in their learning. The rapid expansion of China's economy has led to the development of a wide range of affordable tools and software.

45. The use of IT must be focused to achieve the revised CL curriculum objectives. Specifically, the Committee proposes using:

a. *Media rich interactive content to engage students' interest.* MOE should develop resources that support the pedagogical approach of "Recognise First,

¹¹ These are 以人为本 "Recognition and Development of Oneself"; 家庭为根 "Family as Foundation"; 社会为先 "Society Comes First"; 胸怀祖国 "Rooted to the Nation"; 放眼天下 "Take a Broader View of the World".

Write Later". MOE should collaborate with local and foreign Chinese educational organisations, such as experimental schools in China, to identify and develop other suitable web-based portals and interesting IT packages (e.g., games, animation, video clips);

b. *Tools to facilitate character writing.* The Committee recommends that schools capitalise on freely available IT tools, e.g., Windows XP Chinese Package, and allow students to use these for writing. Useful commercially-available packages can also be installed on school and home computers. The Committee further recommends that MOE capitalise on affordable technology available today and collaborate with industry to equip every student with a handheld electronic device allowing, for example, conversion of *hanyu pinyin* input to characters, by the end of 2005;

c. *Adaptive technologies for independent learning and assessment.* Adaptive technologies that provide dynamic feedback to the learner can be used to increase the opportunities for independent learning. MOE and NIE should collaborate with schools to experiment with using text-to-speech and voice recognition software to enhance learning and assessment of oral communication skills; and

d. *Communication tools to increase opportunities to use CL.* The Committee recommends that schools explore creative ways of using familiar technologies to encourage students to use CL to communicate through authentic, real-time situations, for example, through SMS and Instant Messaging.

Examination Format

46. The format of high-stakes examinations such as the PSLE has a powerful influence on the behaviour of both students and teachers. The current examination format encourages memorisation and rote-learning as efficient ways to do well. However, memorisation does not improve a student's ability to use the language effectively. It also takes the joy out of learning a language.

47. The Committee recommends moving from a structural approach, where random, individual words and phrases are tested (e.g. 填写汉字). This would reduce the need for and unnecessary burden of memorising words to do well. Instead, we should adopt a more integrative and communicative approach where students' ability to use CL in context is assessed. This is likely to improve a student's ability to retain the language and use it effectively.

48. The Committee recognises that school-based assessment is an effective mode of testing language use in context. While there are significant resource implications and issues of comparability to address in using school-based assessment, MOE should nevertheless work towards incorporating school-based assessment as a component of national examinations to assess oral communication skills in the longer term. This could be done using, for example, a Project Work format involving an oral presentation in CL.

49. Teachers must be given sufficient time and support to understand and embrace the changes in examination format proposed. However, our examination formats must be changed in order to shape CL teaching and learning in our classrooms. For that reason, an interim examination format should be designed and implemented as soon as practicable. Under the interim format, the regular CL examination should start to shift in emphasis towards oral and reading skills. The interim format will act as a “bridge” to the significant changes in the examination format which will be implemented together with the revised curriculum.

CL Teachers and Specialists

50. CL teachers are key to the successful implementation of the proposals of this review. Good CL teachers are fundamental to instilling students’ interest in the subject, modelling good CL usage, as well as translating the proposed curriculum and assessment changes into an effective instructional programme.

51. The demands of the revised curriculum and examination formats must be met through systematic training in CL content and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers must also have sufficient time and space to plan, design and reflect on their lessons, as well as share ideas.

52. To build a competent CL teaching force, the Committee recommends strengthening the in-service training programme for CL teachers. The content of in-service courses should be reviewed so that teachers are able to deliver the proposed CL curriculum. MOE should also establish a more structured training roadmap for all CL teachers, particularly for new CL teachers within their first few years of teaching.

53. As the demand for CL teachers is likely to increase with the changes proposed, the Committee recommends that MOE continue its efforts to recruit more CL teachers, and boost both the quantity and quality of CL teachers. A two-pronged strategy is proposed:

a. *Augment recruitment.*

i. *From existing sources.* MOE will continue to step up recruitment from a variety of sources – the local graduate pool; foreign teachers; and former teachers who prefer to serve as adjunct teachers.

ii. *Polytechnics as potential source of CL teachers.* It is proposed that MOE identify one or two suitable polytechnics to start a Diploma course in Chinese Studies.

b. *Enhance the attractiveness of CL teaching as a career.*

i. *Nurture the talent pool in JCs.* More should be done to encourage students in the JCs offering Higher CL and CL to enter the teaching force or to take up teaching scholarships in CL. MOE should extend the Chinese Language Elective Programme (LEP) to another

suitable JC.¹² This will provide a bigger pool of students who may consider studying CL in university.

ii. *Allow able and interested CL teachers to teach another subject.* To attract more candidates to consider CL scholarships and teaching positions, MOE should give selected CL teachers the flexibility to teach a non-CL subject in addition to CL if they have the interest and the necessary competencies.

iii. *Highlight progression paths for CL teachers.* CL teachers must see potential in the progression paths available to them. MOE should leverage on awards given to CL teachers to highlight the opportunities available to CL teachers (e.g. as school leaders), and should create greater awareness of the Master and Senior Teacher, and the Senior Specialist tracks.

iv. *Develop greater awareness of postgraduate opportunities for CL teachers.* CL teachers with aptitude for postgraduate studies should be actively encouraged to take up the scholarships which MOE awards. MOE should continue to source appropriate postgraduate courses for CL teachers in overseas universities and create greater awareness of these courses to the CL teachers.

54. Finally, there is a need to groom a core group of CL curriculum designers and specialists who have the necessary skills and knowledge to develop engaging yet accessible materials for CL and CL-related subjects.

Opportunities to Use CL in Schools

55. Students must have opportunities to use what they have learnt in order for CL to be a living language. The Committee recommends the following strategies to create more situations in the school context for use of and exposure to CL:

a. *Flexibility in apportioning subject instructional time for CL and EL.* Some students who come from primarily EL-speaking homes enter school proficient in EL, and would continue to have a high level of exposure and strong home support in learning EL. They could benefit from more CL subject instructional time. Conversely, there will be students who need more EL support. We should therefore allow schools greater flexibility to apportion subject instructional time for the CL and EL subjects, according to the profile of their students.

b. *Flexibility in increasing total exposure time¹³ to CL in schools.* Schools should explore a variety of ways to increase exposure time to CL in the informal curriculum. For instance, school-wide reading programmes can stipulate specific periods for reading in EL and CL (and other MTLs).

¹² Currently, the Chinese LEP is offered at Hwa Chong JC, Temasek JC and Nanyang JC, and the students offer Higher CL at 'A' Level.

¹³ Language exposure time refers to time within the curriculum when CL is used as the medium of instruction. This is different from CL:EL *subject* instructional time, which is the curriculum time spent on CL and EL lessons.

c. *Experiment with “SAP-Plus” Programme.* SAP schools should continue to offer CCAs, programmes and activities in CL. A few among them can go further. If there is demand, SAP Primary schools should be allowed to provide greater exposure to CL for a few of their classes at the early primary level, by teaching more subjects in CL. Students in this programme could have up to 60% CL exposure in their total curriculum in Primary 1 and 2, compared to about 33% currently. Such a programme may appeal, for example, to parents from English-speaking homes who want early immersion in CL for their children. Most such parents are however likely to want their children to move into a regular English learning environment in the upper primary years.

d. *Offering more subjects in CL at Secondary level.* The Committee proposes that MOE introduce more subjects in CL that are of an accessible standard to a wide range of Secondary school students. Students should have the choice to study Literature in Chinese as a Combined Humanities Elective¹⁴. A new subject on Chinese Culture and Thought should also be introduced to focus on traditional and contemporary aspects of Chinese culture and the different schools of thought and associated historical developments in China. HCL students may choose to offer this as a Full Humanities subject, while both CL and HCL students may study this as a Combined Humanities Elective.

Community Involvement

56. Our students will find CL a living language only if they have occasion to hear, see and use CL beyond the school context. Community and media organisations have a key role to play in creating situations in society where it is natural to use and practise CL. This can range from multilingual signages in public places to age-appropriate CL television programmes and public broadcasts. In recent years, publications like *Zaobao* have played an active role in establishing platforms (e.g. 爆米花) and organising events that promote the use of CL among our students. The Committee feels more can be done to encourage our community and media organisations to promote the widespread use of CL among our students.

57. MOE should set up a committee to explore ways through which our Chinese community and media organisations can collaborate with our schools to achieve the curriculum objectives set out by this review.

58. MOE should also engage with pre-school service providers to encourage teaching and learning methods in the pre-primary years consistent with the revised objectives of the CL school curriculum.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

59. The Committee’s recommendations comprise fundamental shifts in curriculum, assessment, teaching approaches and learning strategies. Teachers in our schools and MOE specialists will require time to prepare for this.

¹⁴ All ‘O’-level students are required to offer Combined Humanities, which comprises a compulsory Social Studies component, and a second Humanities elective (currently, a choice of Literature in English, Geography or History).

60. The new, modular curriculum should be introduced progressively, starting with P1 and P4 in 2008. Accordingly, significant changes to the PSLE examination format should be introduced from 2010 onwards.

61. In the meantime, MOE should phase in an interim format for the PSLE and 'O'-levels which should reduce the burden of memorisation for examinations. This could be done as early as 2006. Students should be allowed to use their electronic handhelds for their examinations, starting in 2006. Concurrently, MOE should revise its character list to remove less frequently used characters, a change that can be reflected in teaching and interim examination coverage. These changes, coupled with the training of teachers, will encourage teachers to plan and introduce more engaging lessons in the interim.

CONCLUSION

62. The objective of this Review has been to set the broad direction for CL teaching and learning, by establishing a system flexible enough to allow children of different language backgrounds and abilities to achieve their fullest potential in CL, in a manner that enthuses them. We believe that the changes we propose, to differentiate learning through the modular approach, and to develop stronger competency in speaking, listening and reading, will go far in ensuring that CL remains a living language for Chinese Singaporeans.

63. Our most valuable asset is our multi-language abilities which enable us to connect with the region and the world. Our bilingual policy of English as our working language, while learning and using Chinese, Malay, Tamil or the other MTLs, is the practical way to safeguard our future.

64. We must remain flexible with our language strategies in future. We have to be prepared to adjust the way we implement the bilingual policy in schools, in response to the shifting dynamics of the global environment and Singapore's changing social landscape.

Chapter 1

Introduction

BILINGUALISM – AN IMPERATIVE

1. Bilingualism in the English Language (EL) and the Mother Tongue Languages (MTLs) is an imperative for Singapore.
2. As the common language or *lingua franca*, EL facilitates inter-ethnic communication. EL will also remain the language of global business, commerce and technology in the foreseeable future. Competence in EL will continue to be a source of competitive advantage for Singapore.
3. Knowing our Mother Tongue Languages gives us confidence in our culture, roots and identity as an Asian society. A command of the MTLs will also help Singaporeans ride the wave of growth in Asia, the fastest-expanding region in the world. In particular, the advantage of learning CL will increase with China's growing global influence.
4. For these reasons, the learning of MTLs will remain a key feature of our school system. We want our children to study their MTL for as long as possible, and to as high a level as they are capable of with reasonable effort.

CHINESE LANGUAGE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY REVIEW

5. The way we teach our MTLs in school must respond to and anticipate changes in the environment. In particular, the teaching and learning of CL in our schools must take into account the shifts in language use among our students, and the greater availability of technology tools in CL.
6. For these reasons, the Ministry of Education (MOE) set up the Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee (CLCPRC) in February 2004, to ensure that CL teaching and learning remains effective and relevant to students today. The full list of Committee members, as well as its Resource Panel is at **Annex A**.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

7. The terms of reference of the Committee were to:
 - a. Articulate the objectives and target groups of the different CL syllabuses;
 - b. Examine if the implementation of the various CL syllabuses in schools is aligned with the curriculum objectives and achievable with reasonable effort by the various target groups;
 - c. Review the effectiveness of the structure of the present CL curriculum, and teaching and assessment modes for their respective target groups;

- d. Recommend appropriate refinements to the structure and the different CL syllabuses to better achieve MOE's MTL policy objectives. In particular, to ascertain the:
- i. Appropriate way of structuring the curriculum to cater to the different linguistic ability and language background of students;
 - ii. Appropriate balance among the different language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), including an evaluation of the number of characters to be learnt by students at various stages;
 - iii. Correct balance between language competency and cultural content; and
 - iv. How the teaching and assessment of the different CL syllabuses can be improved to maximise the learning and interest of students across the spectrum of CL ability.
- e. Examine the feasibility of facilitating lateral transfers of students across the different CL syllabuses; and
- f. Advise on the effective implementation of the above.

REVIEW AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

8. The Committee examined the different CL syllabuses at the primary and secondary level. The Committee also studied trends in the way CL is used in the local and global contexts, which would impact the way we design the CL curriculum.

9. The Committee consulted widely. **Annex D** lists the feedback channels that the Committee used to reach out to a cross-section of stakeholders in CL teaching and learning. These included focus group discussions, school visits, dialogue sessions and public feedback. In all, the Committee conducted 19 focus group discussions and dialogue sessions, visited 13 schools, and received feedback and numerous suggestions from individuals and organisations. **Annex E** summarises the key findings obtained from this process.

10. MOE also commissioned a comprehensive survey of students, parents, teachers and principals, involving about 10,000 participants¹⁵ in total. The survey (MOE Survey, 2004) was conducted by Forbes Research. **Annex F** summarises the survey findings.

11. In addition, at the invitation of MOE, a team of five overseas consultants from China and Hong Kong (listed in **Annex B**) conducted a study of the current CL curriculum. Observations in **Annex E** include those of the overseas consultants.

12. The Committee has completed its review. Its findings and recommendations follow in the subsequent chapters.

¹⁵ 4500 students, 4600 parents, 1000 CL teachers, and 320 principals were surveyed.

Chapter 2

Bringing Bilingualism Forward

EVOLUTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CL

1. Over the last 40-50 years, the place of CL in the education system has undergone major changes. During the colonial period, CL teaching was primarily the preserve of the Chinese community. Gradually, CL became integrated into the national education system, first through the integration of language streams within the same school, and later with the introduction of the bilingual policy in 1966. Beginning in the mid-1950s, more parents began sending their children to English-medium schools, until nearly all students were in English-medium schools.
2. To preserve some of the Chinese school traditions in the best Chinese schools, nine secondary schools were chosen to be Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools in 1979. A tenth SAP school was designated in 2000. In 1984, four primary schools were chosen to be SAP Primary schools. The number of SAP Primary schools now stands at 15.
3. In 1999, the Chinese Language Review Committee chaired by then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made recommendations to improve the teaching and learning of CL in schools, in order to encourage more students to study CL at a higher level and achieve a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, while addressing the needs of students who faced exceptional difficulty coping with CL.
4. Today's CL teaching and learning has been guided by the direction and framework established by this review. We have moved towards greater customisation in the teaching of CL at the secondary and pre-university levels. The CL 'B' syllabus is offered from Secondary 1 to students who face exceptional difficulty in CL despite putting in reasonable effort. The number of students taking Higher CL (HCL) at Secondary level has increased from about 12% of each cohort in 1997 to 16% in 2004.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS

5. The way we teach MTLs in our schools must, however, respond to and anticipate the following changes in the environment:
 - a. the generational shift in language use at home; and
 - b. advances in technology

Generational Shift in Language Use at Home

6. More of our younger students come from English-speaking homes whereas Chinese is the more widely used language in the homes of older students. Based on MOE's annual survey of parents of entering P1 children, the number of Chinese students entering Primary 1 (P1) who speak predominantly EL at home has risen from 36% in 1994 to 50% in 2004.

7. According to MOE's Survey (2004), more parents of Primary 2 (P2) children speak EL, or EL and CL, to their children, compared to parents of Secondary 4 (S4) children (**Table 1** below). Parents with higher education are also more likely to use EL at home with their children¹⁶.

8. The trend of children entering school with little exposure to CL in the home will continue. It is also reflected in the declining use of CL among younger students when they speak to their siblings and friends or classmates. The MOE Survey (2004) found that 28% of P4 students converse with their friends and classmates in CL, compared to 40% amongst S4 students.

Table 1: Language spoken by parents to children at home

	Primary 2	Secondary 4
EL	26%	18%
EL and CL	33%	20%
CL	37%	59%

Source: MOE Survey, 2004

9. Notwithstanding this shift in languages used in the home and social environment, the vast majority of parents and students attach importance to the learning of CL. Most parents want their children to learn CL, for cultural as well as pragmatic or economic reasons. Even among parents of predominantly EL-speaking homes, 92% feel it is important to learn CL. On average, 80% of students from EL-speaking homes feel it is important to learn CL.¹⁷ This strong base of interest in learning CL is an asset.

Advances in Technology

10. CL learning should reflect and take advantage of advances in technology. We must prepare our students to use CL in a future where technology tools in CL will be ubiquitous. Commercially-available software assists CL users in writing, for example, through *hanyu pinyin* input, handwriting recognition and voice-to-text functions. In China, there is growing use of *hanyu pinyin*-based software for writing.

11. Assistive technology tools can facilitate the script-writing process for a student by reducing the necessity to memorise CL character strokes perfectly. However, to use these tools effectively, CL users must develop a strong foundation in listening and speaking, pronunciation, *hanyu pinyin*, character recognition, and some knowledge of reading and writing strategies.

IMPLICATIONS

12. Understanding how languages are most effectively learnt and recognising changes in the social environment now and in the future have significant implications

¹⁶ Among parents of P2 children who were university educated, 51% spoke EL, 32% spoke EL & CL, and 17% spoke CL with their children.

¹⁷ This compares against the 90% of students from bilingual homes and 92% from CL-speaking homes who feel it is important to learn CL.

for the teaching and learning of CL. Our aim should be to stimulate an interest in the language in all CL students and motivate them to use it long after they leave school. To do this, we need a differentiated approach from the outset, to customise CL learning for students entering school with different home language backgrounds and abilities.

13. It is not possible to expect most students to be equally competent in both EL and MTL. International studies show that while some individuals can achieve equal fluency in two languages¹⁸, the norm is for individuals to be dominant in one language. One reason is that language competence is shaped by actual use of a language. High levels of exposure and equal use of both languages in all major areas of life (home, school, work, social circles) are rare for most individuals. We also develop and retain a competence in each of the four skills in a language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to the extent required by our environment. It is rare that an identical level is needed for each skill.

14. There is a natural progression in language acquisition, beginning with developing the ability to converse in the language. Oral fluency is aided by the early acquisition of the sounds and tones of a language. Reading and writing skills are in turn aided by the ability to listen and speak the language.

15. Ideally, we want all our CL students to be fluent in all four language skills. However, in adult life, most Singaporeans will more often hear and speak Chinese than read Chinese, and more often read than write Chinese.

16. We should therefore focus, first and foremost, on building up students' competency in listening, speaking and reading in the language early. Writing skills will be taught, but with less emphasis on character stroke memorisation. Those with the background or ability to learn CL faster should be encouraged and supported in developing competency in all four language skills.

DIFFERENTIATED OBJECTIVES

17. Our current CL syllabuses have two objectives, namely, to develop students' linguistic skills, in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing; and to transmit Chinese traditional culture and values through the study of CL. The Higher CL syllabuses aim to achieve similar objectives, but at higher levels of linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge.

18. The Committee proposes a differentiated approach to engage and motivate students. A practical set of objectives for CL teaching and learning would be as follows:

- a. For all CL students, the common denominator should be to enthuse them in learning CL, so that they develop an abiding interest in the language and culture well after leaving school;

¹⁸ Bilinguals who achieve equal proficiency in two languages are called "balanced bilinguals" whereas those who are more proficient in one of their two languages are known as "dominant bilinguals" (Li, 2000).

b. For the majority, the emphasis should be on effective oral communication and reading. However, as the four language skills tend to reinforce each other, a judicious attention to writing is also essential to strengthen these language skills;

c. For students with the ability and interest, especially Higher CL students¹⁹, to retain the objective of developing fluency in all the four language skills and good understanding of Chinese history and culture. This can be further enhanced in the SAP school environment; and

d. For a core group of students in each cohort, the aim is to achieve both high proficiency in the four language skills and a confident and intuitive understanding of history, culture and contemporary developments in China. This can be done through the Language Elective Programme (Chinese) and the recently-launched Bicultural Studies Programme (Chinese).

19. The broad objective of using the teaching of CL to transmit traditional culture and values will be retained. However, it should be achieved in a flexible and natural way that students find interesting and relevant. Cultural content can include both traditional and contemporary elements. With an emphasis on being able to read early, students would be able to access stories and books covering a range of topics sufficiently wide to appeal to their imagination. The reading of CL stories, many of which are rich in cultural content, would in turn engender a love for the language and culture. Indeed, the MOE Survey (2004) indicated that students at all levels had a strong interest in learning Chinese stories and fables.

UNDERSTANDING OUR LEARNERS

20. We must understand our learners to shape specific teaching and learning strategies that will kindle and sustain interest in the language. Our students, across the spectrum of home language backgrounds, are keen to learn CL well. On average, 87% of students think it is important to study CL.

21. However, many students face difficulty learning the language, in particular those from EL-speaking backgrounds. About 77% of P6 students from EL-speaking homes find learning CL difficult, compared to 50% and 36% of those who speak some or mostly CL at home respectively²⁰. A much higher percentage of students from EL-speaking homes also have Chinese tuition (72% at P6) compared to those from CL or bilingual home backgrounds (31%-41%).

22. Among students who indicated that they liked to learn CL, the most frequently cited reason was that they feel comfortable speaking CL. Among those who indicated that they did not like to learn CL, the most frequently cited reason was having to memorise many Chinese words. This was particularly so for older students. For younger students, not doing well in exams was also an important factor²¹.

¹⁹ Currently, 23% of primary and 16% of secondary students study Higher CL.

²⁰ MOE Survey, 2004.

²¹ Performance in MTL in primary schools is a key component of the PSLE T-score, which is used for student placement in secondary schools.

23. These observations were confirmed by MOE's Survey (2004) of CL teachers. A slight majority of teachers feel that students are interested in learning CL²². A primary reason cited by teachers for why a significant proportion of students do not like to learn CL was that they find the subject difficult (84% of primary, 71% of secondary, and 61% of junior college CL teachers).

24. From the Committee's survey of teachers, parents and students, and the consultation process, several key observations arose:

a. *Over-emphasis on character memorisation.* The need to memorise many Chinese words emerged as a top reason for students not liking to learn CL, across all levels. This view was echoed during focus group discussions with students. To reflect norms of future CL usage, there should be less emphasis on memorising characters for script-writing. For instance, composition skills should be taught, but with the aid of computer tools. This will reduce the emphasis on spelling, dictation and memorisation of word lists.

b. *Students are disinclined to read in Chinese, especially outside the curriculum.* Students do not usually borrow books in Chinese either from school or public libraries. This was especially so for the secondary students with 52%-62% indicating that they did not borrow CL books at all, compared to 25%-33% among the primary students.

c. *Decline in interest in topics taught in CL lessons, as students progress to the secondary level.* Based on a cross-sectional analysis (i.e. different cohorts surveyed at P4, P6, S2 and S4²³), about 73% of P4 EL-background students found the topics taught in CL lessons interesting. At S4, this proportion was considerably smaller at 50%. Among those from bilingual homes, interest in CL topics was 74% among P4 students and 59% for S4 students. Among those from CL homes, interest in CL topics was 82% for P4 students and 57% for S4 students.

d. *The current examination format limits teachers' scope for delivering engaging and interesting lessons.* Feedback from teachers indicates that the current examination format and the need to "rush through" the syllabus constrains the way our CL teachers teach. Often, rote-learning and vocabulary drilling are the most efficient methods to help students master the CL needed for their examinations.

e. *Although many do reasonably well in CL examinations, there is inadequate interest to continue learning and using the language after they leave school.* The proportion of students who felt that they should stop learning CL after S4 increased as students proceeded to higher levels²⁴.

25. These issues should be addressed so that we can maximise students' motivation to learn CL and give our teachers the room to adopt new strategies to enliven their students' learning of the language.

²² 53% at primary, 57% at secondary and 63% at junior college levels.

²³ MOE Survey, 2004.

²⁴ MOE Survey, 2004.

Chapter 3

Customisation through Curriculum Structure

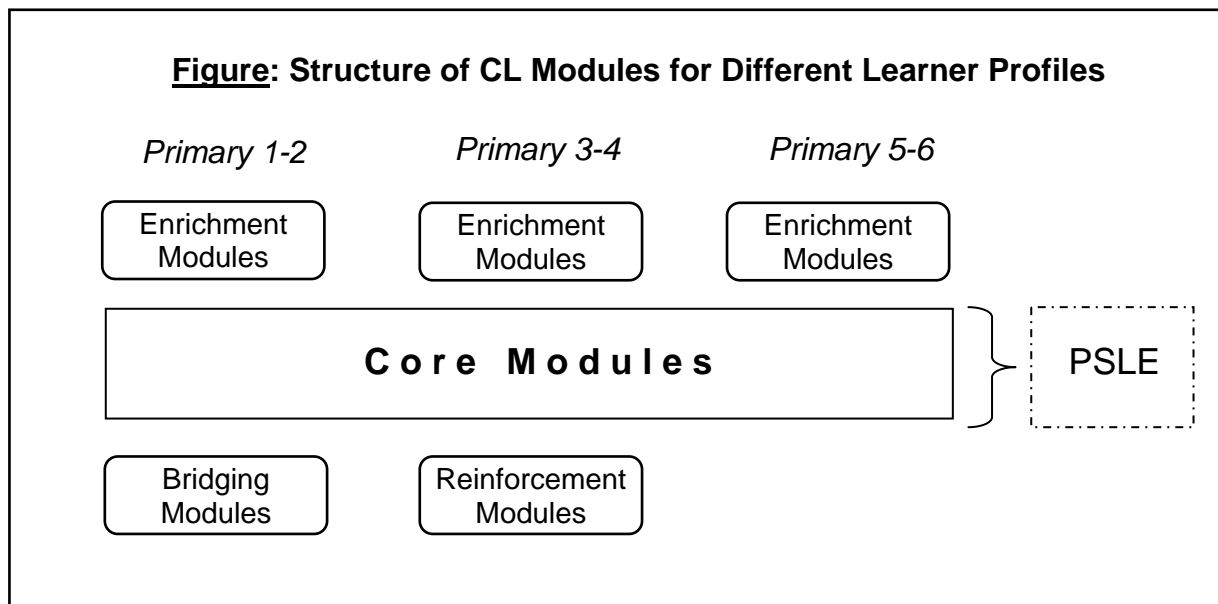
NEED FOR GREATER CUSTOMISATION

1. We need to vary the pace of learning for different students in CL, and not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Those who are able and interested should be encouraged and supported so that they can go as far as possible in the learning of CL, while allowing the majority of students to develop a solid foundation and interest in the language.
2. There is some degree of differentiation in the CL curriculum currently. At the secondary level, there are a number of differentiated syllabuses offered from Secondary 1 (i.e. Basic CL, CL 'B', CL Normal (Academic), CL, Higher CL). Recent changes have made these options less narrowly restricted to students in a specific stream. These differentiated syllabuses should be maintained.
3. At the primary level, EM3 students have the option to take the Basic CL syllabus from Primary 5 (P5) to Primary 6 (P6). Today, about 5% of each cohort take Basic CL. Feedback indicates that most EM3 students benefit from the Basic CL course, which is designed with both the CL and general abilities of these students in mind²⁵. The removal of the distinction between EM1 and EM2 has also allowed schools to structure their P5-P6 curriculum more flexibly. Schools can band their students according to individual subject strength/combination as well as general ability, and have the flexibility to decide which students can take CL at a higher level.
4. Nonetheless, more can be done at the primary school level to match the CL curriculum to students' home language background, ability and interests. However, we should also not underestimate the ability of young students, even those from English-speaking backgrounds, to master CL.

PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

5. The Committee recommends a modular approach at the primary level, which will introduce greater customisation and flexibility into CL teaching and learning from Primary 1 (P1). This approach takes into consideration the sequence by which languages are naturally learnt, and recognises that a significant proportion of students entering P1 increasingly come from predominantly EL-speaking homes. The approach also accords with the feedback received from CL teachers surveyed, 94% of whom indicated that a different method should be used to teach students from EL-speaking homes.
6. With the modular approach (see **Figure**), all students will take Core modules from P1 to P6. The core curriculum will be designed to occupy 70-80% of CL curriculum time.

²⁵ MOE has from 2004 allowed EM3 students with adequate CL abilities to take regular CL.



7. The modular approach will give students who enter school with little exposure to CL additional support in the early primary years to help them catch up. It will also allow those with the background or ability in CL to go further. It does not lock students into a fixed curriculum from the outset. This would too prematurely “stream” students into a particular CL course. Unlike the secondary level, where streaming is based on students’ performance record at primary school, it would be too early to do the same at the primary level.

Primary One to Four (P1-P4)

8. In P1-P2, students with little prior exposure to CL can take Bridging modules, designed to give students who start off without a CL background a friendly start to CL, and help them to catch up with their peers. Bridging modules should focus on building up a student’s listening and speaking skills before the Core modules are taught. From P3-P4, students who need additional support for the Core modules can take Reinforcement modules.

9. Students with the ability and interest to go beyond the core syllabus will be encouraged to take Enrichment modules at each stage. P1-P4 Enrichment modules would provide the foundation for more advanced CL modules at the upper primary stage, and can be offered at both SAP and non-SAP primary schools. These Enrichment modules are similar to today’s practice of providing a P1-P4 Higher CL (HCL) syllabus for schools’ reference. SAP schools and a few other schools have implemented this.

10. Teachers should be trained on how to identify students who could benefit from Bridging or Reinforcement modules, and advise parents accordingly, early on in the school year. MOE should also make available simple diagnostic tools that teachers can use where necessary, to help in the identification process.

Primary Five to Six (P5-P6)

11. For P5 and P6, the current differentiation between CL and HCL courses should remain. Within each of these courses, a modular structure of Core and Enrichment modules should apply. The core HCL curriculum will focus on all four language skills. Further, HCL students with an advanced ability and interest in CL can take HCL Enrichment modules.

12. Today, 71% of students take CL at P5-P6, and 23% take HCL. We recommend moving the HCL syllabus content away from the current “CL-plus” model.

13. De-linking the HCL syllabus from the CL syllabus will provide greater flexibility and customisation in the HCL curriculum. A greater distinction between CL and HCL is important because those taking HCL at the primary school level form the base from which we draw secondary HCL students, students in SAP secondary schools, and later on, students in the Language Elective (Chinese) and Bicultural Studies (Chinese) programmes. Today, more than half of those students who take HCL at the primary school level continue taking HCL at the secondary level. Two-thirds of those taking HCL in our primary SAP schools continue with HCL at the secondary level. The visiting overseas consultants also observed that our HCL students achieve a high standard of CL proficiency. Some of these students can be stretched further, especially in terms of exposure to Chinese history, culture and contemporary developments.

14. See **Annex G** for an illustration of the proposed modular curriculum structure.

PSLE Examinations

15. At the same time, adopting a core set of modules would ensure that a baseline CL standard can be determined. The regular CL PSLE examination should be pitched at the standard of the Core modules. Students taking HCL will continue today’s practice of taking both CL and HCL examinations.

16. In line with the curriculum objectives set out for regular CL learners, the CL PSLE examination should focus on testing fluency in oral communication, and reading, with less emphasis placed on discrete testing of individual words and phrases. The HCL examination will emphasise reading comprehension and written communication.

17. In time to come, when the revised syllabus has been implemented, MOE should consider the feasibility of further customising the structure of the PSLE examinations, to ensure that students who have put in effort to progress beyond the core modules are sufficiently rewarded. With the greater distinction between CL and HCL syllabuses, MOE should also consider whether it would be more educationally appropriate for CL and HCL students to take different examinations that would each count towards their respective PSLE Composite T-scores.

18. The Committee has also proposed fundamental changes to the examination formats of both CL and HCL examinations. This will be covered in **Chapter 5**.

TRANSITIONING TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

19. There are currently five syllabuses in the secondary CL curriculum – Basic CL, CL ‘B’, CL Normal (Academic), CL, and HCL. The degree of differentiation in the secondary CL curriculum adequately caters to the different CL abilities of students. However, in view of the overall shift in emphasis towards oral/aural proficiency and reading at the primary level, the curriculum objectives at secondary school, as well as at JC level, will need to be refined, according to the curriculum objectives articulated in **Chapter 2**.

LATERAL TRANSFERS

20. Lateral transfers allow students to offer the course of study they are best suited for. However, this must be balanced by the need to give students adequate time to prepare for the examinations they will eventually sit for, and should not be disruptive to their learning. The Committee finds that the current structures that facilitate lateral transfers are sufficient, especially in light of recent changes in MOE’s policies.

21. At the primary level, with the MTL refinements announced by MOE in Jan 2004, EM3 students may take regular CL if they have the ability and interest to do so. With the proposed modular approach at the primary level, students will have the flexibility to take modules at different levels, even at P5-P6 where the distinction between CL and HCL remains.

22. At the secondary level, students have sufficient flexibility in their choice of CL course. For example, students in the Normal (Technical) and Normal (Academic) courses can now take CL at Normal (Academic) and ‘O’-levels respectively, if they are interested and able. They may make this transition during the course of their four years of study, as advised by their school. Likewise, students from Express and Normal (Academic) streams may also take up CL ‘B’ during the course of their secondary education.

IMPLEMENTATION

23. MOE must balance the need for adequate preparation time with expediency in introducing the proposed changes. The proposed primary level CL curriculum structure is a significant departure from our current approach. Teachers must be well-prepared. They need to understand the intent behind these changes, receive training in how to identify the appropriate modules for students and in how to deliver the new curriculum effectively. The design of the modular syllabus must also be carefully undertaken and planned, in order to realise the intended educational benefits and flexibility without compromising on academic rigour.

24. The Committee proposes that MOE implement the revised curriculum progressively, starting with the P1 and P4 levels. Initially, the curriculum can be piloted at a few primary schools, and later extended nationally. The system-wide implementation of the revised curriculum at P1 and P4 levels should take place by 2008.

Chapter 4

Curriculum Content & Pedagogy

SHIFT IN EMPHASIS

1. The current CL syllabus gives equal emphasis to listening, speaking, reading and writing. In reality, a considerable amount of time is spent on script-writing, including spelling and dictation, so that students will be able to reproduce from memory most of the characters they learn.
2. This approach is appropriate for native speakers because the learner is exposed to a great deal of spoken CL in the social environment. However, since an increasing number of students have limited exposure to CL at home, the CL curriculum needs to more systematically develop a student's listening and speaking skills. Children from English-speaking home environments, in particular, will require substantial support in listening and speaking when they start formal schooling in P1.
3. Developing an early proficiency in reading will help children acquire the vocabulary to express themselves better. Being able to read at an earlier age will also give students access to a wider range of stories and books that would appeal to their interests.
4. Therefore, an emphasis on developing fluency and confidence in oral communication and an early proficiency in character recognition and reading for the majority of students will equip students with skills to use CL more frequently and thereby sustain their interest in the language. The emphasis on the four language skills will remain largely unchanged for those with the ability and interest in CL. In general these are our HCL students.

ORAL PROFICIENCY

5. The Committee recommends more systematic development of oral and listening skills in the CL curriculum from an early stage. Research on language acquisition shows the importance of building up good listening and oral skills, especially phonological skills, early.²⁶ Studies show that there appears to be a period when children are particularly sensitive to the sounds and tones of a language. This period stretches from infancy to the early years of primary education²⁷.
6. Some studies have shown that at the primary level, a combination of verse/choral reading, singing and plain reading or recitation of Chinese poems significantly improved CL learning performance. The use of *hanyu pinyin* was also found to be effective as it helped to increase students' phonological awareness.²⁸

²⁶ Phonological skills refer to the ability to reflect on and analyse individual sounds in speech, e.g. through rhyming and word play. These skills develop naturally from oral language and can be enhanced by instruction. They are important correlates of Chinese language and literacy achievement (e.g., Hu & Catts, 1998; Jiang & Peng, 1999).

²⁷ Harley & Wang, 1997; Bialystok, 2001.

²⁸ Neuroscience and Education: Research on the Teaching of Chinese and English (2003). p14.

7. The Committee also recommends that a word list be developed to guide teachers as there is currently no word list for oral language development. It is proposed that the word list be implemented for the Bridging modules at the lower primary level, to help students without prior CL exposure.

8. At both primary and secondary levels, methods and activities to develop confidence in listening and speaking should be incorporated in teachers' guides and resources. The suggested learning outcomes for oral-aural skills in CL are illustrated in **Table 2** below:

Table 2: Proposed CL Learning Outcomes for Oral-aural Skills (Examples)

	Skills	Proposed Learning Outcomes
P6	Oral-aural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand daily conversations, stories on radio, TV serials and simple local news reports related to daily life ▪ Able to hold a conversation on topics related to daily life
S4	Oral-aural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand local news reports, as well as lectures and talks on topics of interest ▪ Able to hold a spontaneous discussion expressing opinions on topics of interest ▪ Deliver, with prior preparation, coherent views on local news reports, and other topics of interest in front of an audience

EMPHASIS ON EARLY READING PROFICIENCY

9. The Committee recommends that MOE study new approaches to the teaching and learning of CL that take into account the unique characteristics of the Chinese writing system and latest developments in teaching character recognition and reading strategies.

The Chinese Writing System

10. CL uses a logographic²⁹ writing system, where each character maps onto a unit of language. A logographic system of writing is fundamentally different from an alphabetic system. In an alphabetic system, each letter represents a unit of sound (phoneme), but in a logographic system (e.g. Chinese and Chinese-derived Kanji) each graph or character represents a unit of meaning (morpheme) as well as a unit of sound (syllable). CL character writing is, therefore, a morphosyllabic system.

11. Although the logographic writing system has its advantages, it poses a challenge to teaching and learning as students have to learn a significant number of characters before they can read meaningfully.

Recognise First, Write Later

12. The CL curriculum currently adopts the approach which evenly spreads out the learning of Chinese characters over 10 years (P1 – S4). Students learn new

²⁹ From Greek *logos* ("word") and *graphe* ("writing").

characters as they appear in prescribed reading passages. There are many schools in China that adopt this teaching approach.

13. The “Recognise First, Write Later” pedagogical principle, on the other hand, advocates that students be taught strategies to recognise a larger number of characters initially. They would thus be able to read meaningfully at a younger age. Script-writing of characters may be delayed to make space for learning to recognise the characters. This pedagogical principle is premised on the following:

- a. Younger children memorise new characters better; and
- b. Students are able to read simple books after acquiring a certain number of the most frequently used characters.

14. If students are able to recognise and understand more characters within a shorter time, teachers will be able to enthuse them to read at a younger age. Learning to read at a young age will have a multiplier effect. When students are able to read on their own, they will be able to read age-appropriate stories that appeal to them. This will motivate them to read more and acquire new vocabulary and knowledge, which in turn will lead to improved language competence.

15. A number of approaches based on the “Recognise First, Write Later” pedagogical principle have been used successfully in China.

16. For example, the Shanghai Experimental School founded the “computer-aided character acquisition” (电脑识字) approach in 1991. With the aid of computers, pictures, characters and sounds are integrated to increase the efficiency of character recognition. Other examples of teaching approaches are Rapid Literacy (集中识字), and the Phonological Approach (注音识字, 提前读写).

17. The Committee recommends that MOE study a few approaches founded on the principle of “Recognise First, Write Later”. As China’s language environment is predominantly Chinese, we would need to adapt the approaches used in China to suit the diverse range of CL learners in Singapore.

18. Based on our needs, MOE should adopt a suitable approach and pilot it in some primary schools in 2005. It is proposed that the pilot study should teach students how to recognise enough Chinese characters for them to read age-appropriate children’s literature on their own in the early primary years, together with a reduced emphasis on character stroke memorisation.

Review of Character List

19. The current CL curriculum is designed based on the distributed approach of learning characters. This means that students learn characters as they encounter them in their texts. To enhance early reading and recognition skills, the Committee recommends reviewing the character list in order to implement the clustered approach of character learning.

20. The clustered approach entails more systematic teaching of related characters and radicals, and a greater emphasis on character and word reading strategies³⁰. Common sight characters (i.e. characters with unique forms such as 左 and 右) number about 500-600. These need to be learnt as whole characters. Beyond this number of sight characters, students can be taught how to disambiguate regular compound characters (e.g. 湖 and 妈) by identifying the meaning and sound components. This can help improve character recognition ability and general reading performance.

21. The sequencing and number of characters that students learn at each level should also reflect the revised curriculum objectives. MOE should review the sequence of characters learned based on its pilot study of the “Recognise First, Write Later” pedagogical principle and research done on the minimum number of characters required for age-appropriate meaningful reading.

22. MOE should also review the current character list to remove relatively obscure or less frequently occurring characters (e.g. 亩, 癆). This would help to make learning CL less onerous and more directly relevant to students. In the longer term, MOE should review the purpose of the character list for use in the production of instructional materials, teaching and assessment.

WRITING SKILLS

23. Students are currently expected to reproduce from memory 90% of what they are able to read and recognise. With the shift in focus to listening and speaking and the early acquisition of reading, there needs to be a shift in the way writing is currently taught.

24. Students must continue to learn and practise basic character strokes and character formation. However, instead of focusing on repeated practice and memorising of a large number of individual characters and phrases, script-writing should be used to develop an appreciation of Chinese characters. Writing characters will also reinforce character recognition and acquisition of new vocabulary.

25. With strengthened recognition and reading skills, students will be better able to remember and use the characters they learn. With the aid of computers, they would then be able to use these characters in their compositions, without being limited by the number of characters they can accurately reproduce from memory.

26. The proposed learning outcomes for listening and speaking, reading, and writing are outlined in **Annex C**.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Engaging and Relevant

27. The use of textbooks is a key element in CL lessons. In order to enthuse students in learning CL, the language used in textbooks must be accessible. The

³⁰ Research shows that children benefit from systematic instruction in using radicals to disambiguate unfamiliar words (e.g., Anderson, Li, Ku, Shu, & Wu, 2003)

topics covered and the content of passages should also be relevant and appealing to students. The Committee recognises that striking this balance is a challenging task.

28. To make the materials more interesting and original, textbook writers should:

a. *Have flexibility in using the character list.* Allowing writers greater flexibility to use characters outside of the stipulated block for each level will constrain their writing less. In the longer term, MOE should review the purpose of the character list for use in the production of instructional materials, teaching and assessment;

b. *Come up with original themes and topics outside the currently stipulated five themes.* For textbooks to be engaging and interesting, textbook writers should have more flexibility in choosing the content and themes for passages, particularly at the secondary level when interest in CL and the topics taught wanes significantly³¹. Texts can incorporate contemporary elements of Chinese culture and topics of interest³². There is also no need for every passage to cover one of the five themes based on our National Shared Values and Singapore Family Values, as currently recommended. While these themes are important, they need not be stressed in every chapter, as is currently the case, as this becomes both predictable and monotonous for the student; and

c. *Vary the number and length of passages.* The number and length of passages could vary, although the upper limit on passage length for each level should be maintained.

Accessible

29. While engaging material is crucial in maintaining a child's interest in CL, it is important to pitch the language used at a level that the child can understand. The Committee recognises that this is a mounting challenge in Singapore's context, where the majority of students study CL at a second language level.

30. At the primary level, textbooks should include more rhymes, songs and oral activities. Not only will this aid recall of words, sentences and phrases learnt, it will enhance phonological development, which is fundamental to language acquisition.

31. The Committee also recommends that the number of passages in the textbooks be reduced by about 20% from the current number in order to create more space in the curriculum³³. This will give teachers more room to use a variety of means to engage students in active learning, so that they will gain fluency and confidence in using CL.

³¹ MOE Survey, 2004.

³² For example, fables and stories are more popular among primary, secondary and JC students than topics such as ancient Chinese artefacts and traditional customs (MOE Survey, 2004).

³³ Feedback from teachers indicates that there is a need to create space in the curriculum for reinforcement, enrichment and activity-based learning. For the primary level, the reduction of the number of passages by 20% would have been achieved through the scaling of Core modules to 70-80% of curriculum time.

Beyond Textbooks

School-based Materials

32. The Committee recognises that our school environments differ widely. In many cases, teachers are in the best position to determine the most suitable materials for their students. Teachers should be encouraged to make use of space in the curriculum, to develop their own materials. Teachers should also have access to shared resources, for example through the CL Centres of Excellence (see **Chapter 6**).

Supplementary Materials

33. MOE should tap on external sources of talent, both locally and overseas, to develop supplementary reading materials and multimedia learning resources. For example, MOE can enlist the help of China's MOE's People's Education Press, to assist in developing supplementary reading materials for students that reflect their reading interests and preferences, e.g., stories and fables³⁴. The Committee recommends that supplementary reading materials be made available at every primary level, and not just for P1 and P2, as is the current practice.

USE OF IT TO ENHANCE CL LEARNING

34. We must recognise that our students have grown up using mobile phones, writing with computers, playing computer games and surfing the Internet. They enter the classroom expecting to use technology in their learning.

35. In addition, rapid developments in CL-based productivity tools are taking place with the growth of China. The growing range of affordable software that facilitates CL use has considerable potential to enhance CL learning.

36. The Committee recommends that schools tap on the IT literacy of students, as well as the excellent infrastructure in schools, to introduce appropriate CL productivity tools, as well as engaging resources customised to the needs of our learners.

37. The use of IT must be focused to achieve our revised CL curriculum objectives. IT resources must be engaging in order to enthuse students. They should focus on helping students learn to recognise characters and compose coherent essays. They should also promote independent learning and provide greater opportunities for students to communicate in CL.

38. The Committee recognises that we have a strong foundation to build on. Today, teachers have access to open tools to set worksheets, create web resources, puzzles and games. NIE has also set up a web portal *Shuma Heshan* as an online community for teachers to share their learning resources. Students have access to CD-ROM content-based resources developed based on the syllabuses, and online learning resources through two portals (*Happy Town* and *Free to Express*). As part of the IT Masterplan I, schools have also been provided with the *Hansvision* suite of tools.

³⁴ MOE Survey, 2004.

Media-Rich Learning Resources

39. The Committee recommends that MOE look into developing resources that support the pedagogical principle of “Recognise First, Write Later”. For example, resources that integrate sound and graphics to dynamically represent the etymology of Chinese characters could help students appreciate and recognise Chinese characters more easily.

40. MOE should also consider collaborating with local and foreign Chinese educational organizations, such as experimental schools in China, to identify and develop other suitable web-based portals and interesting IT packages (e.g. games, animation video clips) to enhance CL learning.

Assistive Technologies

Software Tools

41. MOE’s IT Masterplan I equipped all schools with networked computers at a ratio of 6.6:1 in primary schools, and 5:1 in secondary schools. The migration to the Windows XP platform³⁵ for all schools was completed in Jul 2004. Schools are now equipped with the Simplified Chinese Language Pack that comes embedded with Windows XP. Other CL software, such as speech-to-text software, can therefore run smoothly on all school computers³⁶.

42. The Committee recommends that schools capitalise on freely and commercially available tools, and allow students to use them to facilitate the character writing process. Students and teachers alike must have adequate training in using these tools. These tools can be installed on school and home computers.

43. Through these tools, character writing from memory will no longer be a limiting factor to students’ ability to compose and express their thoughts in print. In addition, the frequent use of *hanyu pinyin* to type CL characters can enhance character recognition. For example, students can be allowed to write their composition in class and later fill in the characters they cannot write from memory with the help of the computer.

Handheld Electronic Device

44. MOE should capitalise on affordable technology available today and, in collaboration with industry, aim to equip every student with a handheld electronic device by the end of 2005.

45. This handheld device must be affordable and customised to the learning needs of our students. More than print dictionaries, electronic handhelds can enhance the process of CL learning by providing a mobile resource that allows, for example, conversion of *hanyu pinyin* input to characters.

³⁵ All but two schools operate on a Microsoft Windows platform.

³⁶ CL software requires the operating system to be CL-enabled so that the user can properly view the Chinese characters.

Adaptive and Communication Technologies

46. Finally, the Committee recommends that MOE, NIE and schools launch pilot experiments using adaptive technologies for assessment, as well as technologies that enhance the opportunities for students to communicate in CL. These projects can be experiments initiated by teachers or schools. They need not be MOE-driven. However, MOE should identify a forum through which schools and teachers can share their experiences. One possibility is to use the CL Centres of Excellence (see **Chapter 6**) as platforms for the sharing and exchanging of innovative uses of IT in CL learning.

47. Adaptive technologies that provide dynamic feedback to the learner can be used in assessment and to increase the opportunities for independent learning. MOE and NIE should work with schools to experiment with using speech-to-text software that can enhance the independent learning and assessment of oral-aural communication skills.

48. Schools should leverage on the many platforms our students use to communicate with one another (e.g. SMS³⁷, Instant Messaging) to provide authentic and real-time opportunities for students to use CL. An example is the freely available *hanyu pinyin* input function on mobile phones. Teachers could, for example, design creative tasks and activities that require their students to communicate with their friends using CL SMS for one day of the week.

49. Internet-based environments should also be used to enhance learning in a relevant and authentic way. For example, Instant Messaging (IM)³⁸ platforms, which many students are well-acquainted with, or web-based environments such as Multi-user Virtual Environments (MUVEs)³⁹, can provide students with opportunities to communicate with more CL users, including those overseas.

³⁷ Mobile penetration in Singapore is 89.4% of the total population (Sep 2004).

³⁸ IM allows users to chat real-time with other users on an internet-based platform, over a wide range of devices.

³⁹ A MUVE incorporates computer graphics, sounds, and networks to simulate the experience of real-time interaction between multiple users (usually represented by avatars) in a three-dimensional virtual "world". MUVEs have potential in language learning, where, apart from communicating with other users, expert users can serve as mentors and teachers to scaffold the language learner's experience.

Chapter 5

Examination Format

CURRENT SITUATION

1. The examination format of high-stakes tests such as the PSLE and 'O' Level has a powerful influence on the behaviour of both students and teachers. The format and type of PSLE questions have remained largely unchanged despite two major reviews⁴⁰, primarily because of the utility, objectivity, and efficiency of a structural approach to testing vocabulary acquisition⁴¹. Under this approach, a student's knowledge of words and phrases is tested in discrete isolated sentences (e.g. 填写汉字). This makes memorisation, rather than active learning an efficient way to do well in examinations. It also takes the joy out of learning a language.

2. The Committee received consistent feedback through focus group discussions, articles and commentaries in the local press as well as the Singapore Chinese Teachers Union (SCTU) Memorandum⁴², that even the most well-meaning teachers placed undue emphasis on repetitive drills and writing exercises because of the current approach to CL testing. In turn, it is the memorisation of words and phrases to prepare for examinations that emerged as the top reason that students across most levels dislike learning CL⁴³.

3. While some level of memorisation is necessary to acquire vocabulary, over-emphasis on mechanical memorisation of discrete words and phrases does not equip our students with the facility to apply their vocabulary effectively and confidently in terms of practical language usage. The examination format of high stakes tests should therefore be aligned with the proposed shift in curriculum objectives to enable CL students to communicate effectively.

CONTEXTUALISED AND AUTHENTIC TEST ITEMS

4. The Committee found that the relative weighting of oral and written components in our national examinations was reasonable. For example, 30% of the PSLE CL examination is based on the testing of oral and listening skills. Rather than changing the weighting of the different skills tested in our national examinations, the Committee recommends changes to the question types.

5. Our examinations should move towards integrative and communicative approaches⁴⁴ where contextualised and/or authentic language materials are used as

⁴⁰ After the 1991 and 1999 CL reviews, a few changes were made (e.g. introduction of listening comprehension and use of dictionaries), but not enough to change the way CL is taught.

⁴¹ Discrete-item testing assumes that language can be broken down into parts which can be tested one by one and a sufficient number of discrete point items would ensure a valid proficiency test. However, such an approach demanded a decontextualisation that often confused the test-taker (Brown, 2004).

⁴² SCTU submitted a Memorandum on the Learning and Teaching of CL to MOE this year. The memorandum included recommendations to improve the learning, teaching and assessing of CL.

⁴³ MOE Survey, 2004.

⁴⁴ The integrative approach to language testing argues that language competence is a unified set of interacting abilities that cannot be tested separately. It attempts to integrate two or more language skills in a test item (Brown, 2004).

test items. Contextualised test items will expose students to more print reading while authentic test items will make the learning of CL more relevant to daily life. It will also allow teachers to move away from teaching vocabulary out of context and enable them to adopt more lively teaching strategies. This will discourage students from spending an inordinate amount of time memorising characters and phrases without understanding how to use them in real-life situations.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

6. The Committee feels that there is merit in extending school-based assessment to CL national examinations, from primary to pre-university levels, particularly for the testing of oral and aural components of CL proficiency.

7. A school-based mode is an effective way of testing a student's CL proficiency *authentically* and *formatively*. Authentic assessment is a form of assessment that requires students to demonstrate skills and competencies that realistically represent problems and situations likely to be encountered in daily life. It typically consists of continuous long term assessment, which encourages open-ended, creative answers and fosters intrinsic motivation.⁴⁵ For example, students could be asked to design brochures to publicise services that their school's Community Club can offer for the elderly. Authentic assessment enables the teacher to employ real-world tasks in teaching and evaluating students' work.

8. Formative assessment improves the quality of student learning, as students are able to reflect on and iteratively improve their skills in a particular area. This could also improve instructional quality as it enables teachers to engage their students in proactively enhancing their learning at different stages of the learning process. In addition, formative assessment does not rest on a one-time test and could alleviate stress that is commonly associated with summative assessment. This would help achieve the objective of making CL learning both motivating and enjoyable.

9. In school-based assessment, students could be asked to build a reading portfolio over a term. They would choose an anthology of reading materials, reflect on the various works, and make an oral presentation on their anthology at the end of the term. The teacher could then assess the student's level of reading maturity and oral presentation skills. Such a test places the responsibility of learning on the student and makes learning a more authentic experience. Other forms of school-based assessment include projects and writing portfolios.

10. Although there are clear benefits to school-based assessment and the inclusion of a school-based component in national examinations, the Committee recognises the standardisation and resource issues that MOE and schools would face in implementing such an initiative. First, teachers would need to be trained on how to conduct authentic and school-based assessment. Second, some form of external moderation would need to be established, to ensure an adequate degree of parity across schools. Third, school-based assessment is much more resource-intensive than one-off timed paper-and-pencil tests.

⁴⁵ Brown (2004).

11. Nevertheless, the move to include school-based assessment in CL examinations is a good one that is aligned with our aim of developing students who can communicate spontaneously and effectively. To maintain objectivity, the weighting of school-based assessment in high stakes national examinations should not exceed 40%.

USE OF RUBRICS

12. The Committee recommends the use of rubrics in CL assessments wherever appropriate. A rubric is a carefully designed descriptive rating system by which the evaluator can determine the level of proficiency at which a student is able to perform a task or demonstrate knowledge of a concept. Different levels of proficiency can be defined for each criterion. Rubrics are currently used as a grading tool in SAIL (Strategies for Active and Independent Learning), which MOE launched this year.

13. Rubrics allow students to know in advance how they will be evaluated and hence, will provide the framework necessary to improve the quality of their work and enhance the learning process. It is a qualitative and relatively objective way of assessing students' understanding. It also helps to promote independent and reflective learning.

14. Students can also design evaluative rubrics. Recent studies have shown that students who are given a role in the assessment process are empowered to take responsibility for their learning. This would make learning CL a more enjoyable and enriching experience for our students.

TESTING WIDER RANGE OF SKILLS

15. Finally, the Committee recommends that CL examinations offer a range of possible question types instead of having the same type of questions each year. This would reduce the predictability of CL examinations and enable teachers to focus on developing well-rounded language skills in our students.

16. In addition, CL examinations should do more to test thinking skills. The current CL comprehension component generally assesses lower-order thinking skills such as factual recall and comprehension. There is a need to include more questions that assess higher-order thinking skills, such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Testing of higher order thinking skills need not be done through open-ended questions. Multiple-choice questions can be used to assess higher order thinking skills.

USING IT IN ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS

17. Since the launch of MOE's IT Masterplan I in 1997, all our schools have been equipped with basic IT infrastructure. The Committee recommends that MOE progressively incorporate IT into CL assessment.

Assistive Writing Tools

18. Students at the secondary level are allowed to use dictionaries for the composition section of their examinations. The Committee recommends that this be

extended to the PSLE examinations. As soon as practicable, print dictionaries can also be replaced by the electronic handheld devices recommended for all students (see **Chapter 4**).

19. The Committee further recommends allowing students to use IT in assessment and examinations, whether it is under school-based, centralised, formative or summative assessment conditions. This is feasible given recent advances in computer technology, where Chinese input software, formerly an expensive add-on, is now embedded into common operating systems.⁴⁶ The use of IT can help students in their essay writing, especially since we can expect that, under the revised curriculum objectives, students' ability to recognise characters would surpass their ability to write them from memory.

Supporting Read-aloud Skills

20. Speech-to-text (speech recognition) and text-to-speech (speech reproduction) technology has improved in the last several years. The Committee recommends that MOE explore the possibility of using such software to aid our students in practising their reading-aloud skills. This would provide students feedback as they practise, serving as a useful formative assessment tool. It must be noted, however, that such software may not assess all aspects of oral communication skills effectively, because the ability of software to respond in a dynamic and critical manner, as required in conversation, is still limited.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

21. CL examinations will have to undergo radical changes in order to shift teachers and students away from the rote-learning of vocabulary. In order for these changes to be implemented effectively, there should be sufficient time and support for teachers to understand and embrace these changes. Teachers need to be trained to teach the new assessment formats.

22. We propose that an interim examination format be drawn up. This interim examination format will be aligned with the current syllabus objectives. Under the interim format, the regular CL examination will start to shift in emphasis towards aural/oral and reading skills, and reduce the burden of character memorisation. The interim format for PSLE and 'O' Level could be implemented as early as 2006, and act as a "bridge" to significant changes in the examination format, which should be implemented for PSLE by 2010, in accordance with the implementation of the revised curriculum.

⁴⁶ Operating systems, such as Microsoft Windows and Macintosh OS, have embedded Chinese input as a standard, free-of-charge feature. Chinese input methods, such as the *Hanyu Pinyin* input method, have improved significantly in recent years. This includes the use of predictive technology to prompt and enable users to key in long phrases as opposed to character by character input.

Chapter 6

Chinese Language Teachers and Specialists

IMPORTANCE OF CL TEACHERS

1. CL teachers are key to the successful implementation of the proposals of this review. Good CL teachers are fundamental to instilling students' interest in the subject, modelling good CL usage, as well as translating the proposed curriculum and assessment changes into an effective instructional programme.
2. The Committee's proposed changes in curriculum and assessment modes will place new demands on our teachers. The generational shift towards the use of EL among our students is mirrored among our teachers. While our younger teachers are bilingual, their depth of exposure to CL is, in general, no longer comparable to earlier generations of Chinese-educated CL teachers. These challenges must be met through systematic training in language skills and pedagogical knowledge. CL teachers must have sufficient time and space for professional development in these areas, to enable them to plan and design more effective and engaging lessons, as well as reflect on their teaching practices.
3. In addition, there is a need to cultivate and groom a strong core of curriculum designers and specialists who have the necessary skills and knowledge to develop engaging yet accessible instructional materials for CL.
4. The Committee recommends the following strategies:
 - a. Strengthening the competencies of the CL teaching force;
 - b. Providing professional support to CL teachers;
 - c. Recruiting more CL teachers; and
 - d. Nurturing a pool of CL specialists.

STRENGTHENING COMPETENCIES OF CL TEACHING FORCE

5. Today, the threshold requirement to teach CL at secondary and pre-university levels is a university degree in Chinese Language or Chinese Studies. Both graduates and non-graduates with good CL grades at 'O' or 'A' level may teach CL at the primary level following their Diploma/Post-graduate Diploma in Education (Mother Tongue) course at NIE. These threshold requirements are pegged at an appropriate level and should be maintained.
6. Within this framework, MOE should explore the following ways to improve the CL competency levels of our pre- and in-service CL teachers.

Review Pre-service Training

7. Pre-service training must continue to evolve as the profile of CL teachers entering NIE changes. Also, in tandem with the curriculum and pedagogical changes recommended, there is a need to review the content of pre-service programmes.

8. The Committee recommends a review of the pre-service programmes for CL teachers to ensure that CL teachers develop a high level of proficiency in the language, in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture, as well as competency in language teaching methodologies. The content of pre-service programmes must give trainees sufficient exposure to CL and ensure that teachers are able to deliver the proposed changes in the CL curriculum at the primary and secondary levels. MOE should work with NIE to design appropriate pre-service pedagogical training for prospective teachers. For example, the training programmes at NIE could offer modules on language acquisition/bilingual theory, and diagnostic testing.

Systematic In-Service Training

9. During its focus group discussions and school visits, the Committee received consistent feedback from CL teachers on the need for more intensive and continual training in the subject. The need pertained to both language-related content and pedagogical knowledge.

10. Today, there are various avenues of training for CL teachers. For example, Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Training and Development Division and NIE run CL in-service courses. There are also core courses for primary and secondary CL teachers, and teachers are encouraged to attend 3 core courses within 5 years. Since 1999, there have also been opportunities for CL teachers to attend courses in universities in China to upgrade their knowledge and skills⁴⁷. Teachers who wish to upgrade their skills can also apply to NIE and attend courses offered under the Advanced Diploma Programmes.

11. While CL teachers have access to a range of training opportunities, more should be done to ensure that the broad base of our CL teachers are systematically trained and upgraded to deliver the proposed curriculum. MOE should establish a more structured training roadmap for all CL teachers, which should vary according to the teacher profile. For example, compulsory courses should be developed for new CL teachers in their first few years of teaching, to strengthen their language competency and pedagogical skills. More experienced CL teachers should attend courses focusing on developments in pedagogy and assessment methods.⁴⁸

12. In addition, there should also be a wider range of CL-related courses available for teachers, for example, in Chinese culture or calligraphy. We should tap the wider community to run courses and activities for CL teachers, to supplement those organised by MOE.

⁴⁷ Each year, 43 places are provided for courses in China, which focus both on content and pedagogy.

⁴⁸ Some of the other academic subjects also have compulsory core courses. For example, EL teachers needed to attend a grammar course prior to the implementation of the revised EL syllabus in 2001. When the new history syllabus in JC was implemented in 2001, MOE conducted compulsory in-service training courses on the new assessment mode. In addition, MOE also collaborated with the History Department in NUS to hold content-based courses for the teachers.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Leveraging on CL Centres of Excellence

13. To complement the training opportunities available to CL teachers, MOE should support CL teachers by strengthening the platforms for sharing resources and teaching methods. Teachers highlighted the need to have a one-stop resource centre where CL teachers can tap readily-available resources.

14. The Committee proposes leveraging on MOE's cluster or zonal Centre of Excellence (COE)⁴⁹ model to provide a platform for CL teachers to exchange and share teaching resources, materials and best practices.

15. There are currently two CL COEs at Nan Hua Primary and Secondary schools, for Chinese Language and Chinese Studies respectively. Looking ahead, we can develop satellite COEs for CL in the other zones which are linked to these two main COEs to tap their well-established resources and networks.

16. These satellite COEs will be situated in suitable schools which have a proven track record of excellence and interest in CL and Chinese culture. Not only does a COE add to the diversity of the education experiences provided for students, it also actively engages the teaching community to take ownership of their own development and learning.

17. The COEs will offer more opportunities to directly engage the wider community in the teaching and learning of CL. In order to facilitate the collaboration between the COEs and external organisations, it is proposed that the main COEs take on the role of coordinator, and be the link for the satellite COEs to actively engage the various sectors of the Chinese community to provide resources and to organise activities for both teachers and students.

18. Apart from their zonal-level programmes, the Committee feels that the COEs can actively contribute to the online portals that MOE's Educational Technology Division and NIE produce and maintain. This will allow the resources, materials and best practices to be shared with a wider catchment of CL teachers.

RECRUITING MORE CL TEACHERS

Need for More CL Teachers

19. Based on the results of the School Climate Survey conducted in 2003, CL teachers who teach at the secondary level have a slightly heavier workload in typical activities⁵⁰ as compared to other subject teachers. This was also reflected in the feedback given by the CL teachers during the focus group discussions and school visits.

⁴⁹ COEs were developed to tap a school's strength in a particular area, and to help extend this area of strength to develop other schools in the cluster or zone.

⁵⁰ Typical activities are lesson preparation, marking and giving feedback on assignments, CCAs, and administrative duties.

20. What appears to be an issue unique to CL teachers is a heavier lesson preparation and marking load, which contributes to a higher overall workload. As MTL classes at the secondary level tend to take place for multiple classes across one level at the same time, CL teachers often have to teach across levels and streams.⁵¹ Typically, a CL teacher in a secondary school would have to teach 5 classes across 3-4 levels or streams. The problem is more acute in secondary schools where there is a mixed population and hence a greater need to have common blocks for MTL lessons, and where the schools offer several CL courses (i.e. CL, CL N(A), CL 'B'). However, the Committee notes that school leaders tend to take this into consideration and generally ease the load of CL teachers in other areas (e.g. form teacher duties).

21. Deploying more CL teachers in schools where the workload is particularly high for CL teachers⁵² will give the CL teachers in these schools more time and space to plan their lessons, develop themselves professionally, and reflect on their teaching practices.

Future Requirements

22. Schools may also need more CL teachers because of the proposed curriculum changes at the primary and secondary level. The modular approach, changes in examination format, and the training required for these, may require more teacher resources, especially in the interim years of the curriculum changes. In addition, there will be new CL subjects offered at the secondary level (e.g. Chinese Culture and Thought).

23. The Committee notes that MOE will be providing more teacher resources to schools by 2010. Schools will be given the flexibility to decide how to deploy these additional teachers, and can request extra CL teachers if necessary. To facilitate this, more CL teachers will need to be recruited.

Recruitment Efforts

24. Today, there are 3,581 trained CL teachers in our schools, with the majority in primary schools.⁵³ As the demand for CL teachers is likely to increase with the changes proposed, the Committee recommends that MOE continue its efforts to recruit more CL teachers, and boost both the *quantity and quality of CL teachers*. A two-pronged strategy is proposed:

- a. Augment recruitment; and
- b. Enhance the attractiveness of the CL teaching profession.

⁵¹ Language teachers as a whole have a heavier workload due to the open-ended nature of language assignments.

⁵² The current PTR is approximately 23:1 at the secondary level.

⁵³ The majority of our CL teachers are also degree holders – 100% of those in JCs, 91% in secondary schools and 50% in primary schools.

Augment Recruitment

25. The Committee recognises that MOE has put in place a number of measures to increase the number of CL teachers. MOE will continue to step up recruitment, as needed, from a variety of sources – the local graduate pool; foreign teachers; and former teachers who prefer to serve as adjunct teachers.

Look to Polytechnics as Potential Source

26. With the long-term view of increasing our supply of competent CL teachers, the Committee proposes that MOE identify one or two suitable polytechnics to start a Diploma course in Chinese Studies.⁵⁴

27. Currently, 4.8% of our primary school CL teachers are polytechnic graduates.⁵⁵ The level of CL among our polytechnic students is quite high, and there is a sizeable number of polytechnic students who meet MOE's threshold requirements for CL teaching.⁵⁶ For example, 9% of polytechnic students who offered 'O' level CL scored an A1. About 44% of polytechnic students who offered 'O' level HCL scored a B3 or better.

28. Therefore, polytechnics can play a bigger role in promoting CL and the CL teaching profession among its students. Today, some polytechnics already offer electives in CL which are not compulsory (e.g. Ngee Ann Polytechnic offers Presentation Skills in Chinese). Going forward, we want to ensure that the polytechnic graduates who enter the teaching force as CL teachers maintain currency and proficiency in the language.

29. NIE can work with the polytechnics to design a curriculum suitable for prospective CL teachers. To attract students on the course to enter teaching, MOE should offer sponsorships similar to the Art & Music Teacher Training Scheme for 'O' level holders⁵⁷. Upon graduation, these students will proceed to NIE for teacher training. Polytechnic graduates would be trained as primary school teachers, while outstanding ones could be trained to teach at the secondary level.

Enhance Attractiveness of CL Teaching

30. Currently, we have some measures to encourage our students to consider a career as CL teachers. For example, students in the Chinese Language Elective Programme (LEP) are invited for tea sessions with MOE senior management and CL teaching scholars to encourage them to apply for teaching scholarships to become CL teachers.

31. We should build on existing measures and do more to attract our students to become CL teachers. An attractive career path should be made known at the point of recruitment and the professional standing of CL teachers could be improved. The Committee recommends the following:

⁵⁴ One possibility is Ngee Ann Polytechnic as it has strong links with the Chinese clan associations.

⁵⁵ All CL teachers with a polytechnic diploma are deployed to teach in primary schools.

⁵⁶ These are based on the 2003-2004 figures from the 5 polytechnics.

⁵⁷ Students under the Art & Music Teacher Training Scheme receive a monthly bursary for their first 3 years in Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and are appointed to service in their 4th year at NIE.

a. *Nurture the talent pool in JCs.* We should actively encourage more JC students to take up teaching scholarships in CL in either local or foreign universities, or to enter the CL teaching force in future. There should be more publicity on the career prospects of CL teachers. MOE should extend the Chinese Language Elective Programme to another suitable JC.⁵⁸ This will provide a bigger pool of students who may consider studying CL in university.

b. *Allow able and interested CL teachers the flexibility to teach another non-CL subject.* To attract more candidates to consider CL scholarships and teaching positions, MOE should give selected CL teachers the flexibility to teach a non-CL subject in addition to CL, if they have the interest and necessary competencies. Assignment of the second teaching subject would be based on 'A' level results or other subjects offered in university.

c. *Career progression paths for CL teachers.* CL teachers must find the progression paths available to them attractive. MOE should leverage on awards given to CL teachers to highlight the opportunities available to CL teachers (e.g. as school leaders), and should create greater awareness of the Master and Senior Teacher, and the Senior Specialist tracks. The Committee also notes that MOE will be implementing a mentorship scheme from 2005 where Principals and senior Education officers will be assigned to mentor overseas teaching scholars, including CL teachers, and recommends that such personnel development continue.

d. *Develop greater awareness of postgraduate opportunities for CL teachers.* CL teachers with the aptitude for postgraduate studies should be actively encouraged to take up the scholarships which MOE awards. MOE should continue to source appropriate postgraduate courses for CL teachers in overseas universities and create greater awareness of these courses among CL teachers.

NURTURING A POOL OF CL SPECIALISTS

32. Another group of professionals that we need to actively develop is a core group of CL specialists. Currently, most of MOE's curriculum designers are teachers posted to MOE for 3-4 years. In the MTL units, some curriculum designers also shoulder the responsibility of producing local instructional materials for our students.

Curriculum Designers

33. Curriculum design and the writing of engaging yet accessible instructional materials require a flair for CL, knowledge of how students acquire language, particularly CL, and pedagogical knowledge. Curriculum designers and writers must be well equipped in these areas.

34. MOE should create platforms where curriculum designers can partner more actively with NIE and its Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice in the design, piloting and evaluation of instructional materials and resources.

⁵⁸ Currently, the Chinese LEP is offered at Hwa Chong JC, Temasek JC and Nanyang JC, and the students offer Higher CL at 'A' Level.

35. Curriculum designers in MOE should also have the opportunity to be attached to schools on a regular basis, so that they have a clear understanding of how CL instructional materials are used in schools, as well as obtain feedback from teachers and students. MOE could also engage CL language experts from overseas to conduct professional training courses for our curriculum designers. They could be attached to MOE for a short stint to impart their expertise in the production of instructional materials.

Enhancing Senior Specialist Track

36. MOE should study ways to increase the attractiveness and visibility of the Senior Specialist track, so as to develop a larger pool of specialised CL curriculum and instructional designers.

37. Teachers posted to MOE as curriculum developers should, if interested and deemed to have potential, be actively groomed for the Senior Specialist track. During their stint at MOE, they should have opportunities for relevant in-service training, and short attachments to local or overseas education publishing companies. This would improve their skills as curriculum designers, and also develop their interest in specialised CL and curriculum-related topics.

Chapter 7

More Opportunities to Use CL

SCHOOL CONTEXT

1. Fluency in a language is primarily determined by language use, which is in turn determined by need. Consistent usage and exposure to CL in various spheres of a child's life will facilitate language acquisition. To help maintain CL as a vibrant language, schools must create an environment where students have ample opportunities to use CL.
2. This can be done in a holistic manner, especially by our SAP schools. The following strategies should be explored:
 - a. Flexibility in apportioning subject instructional time between CL and EL language subjects;
 - b. Flexibility in increasing total exposure time to CL;
 - c. Experiment with a "SAP-Plus Programme"; and
 - d. Offer more subjects in CL at the secondary level.

CL and EL Subject Instructional Time

3. EL is the medium of instruction in our national schools. Apart from CL language lessons, all Chinese students learn Civics and Moral Education in CL from P1-P6. At the secondary level, S1-S2 students in the Special Course in SAP schools are required to take Appreciation of Chinese Culture (ACC) on top of their HCL lessons. Beyond the CL subject, HCL students may also offer Literature in Chinese as a full humanities subject at the 'O'-levels.
4. The curriculum time allocated to the CL subject is reasonable (see **Table 3**). At the foundation stages, particularly P1-P2, about 60% of curriculum time is set aside for languages, as language learning is most effective at a young age and builds the necessary foundation for future learning.
5. When students progress to the secondary level, they offer more subjects, in line with MOE's philosophy of providing our students a well-rounded education in Languages, Mathematics, Science and the Humanities. There are increasing demands on our students' time at the secondary level, and accordingly, the CL subject occupies about 15% of total curriculum time.

Table 3: Allocation of Subject Curriculum Time (CL and EL)

Stage	EL Subject Curriculum Time (hrs) (% of total)	CL Subject Curriculum Time (hrs) (% of total)		Additional Curriculum Time in CL (hrs) (% of total)
P1-P4	7.8 (32%)	HCL	5-7.5 (20-31%)	1-1.5 (4-6%) <i>CME</i>
		CL	4-6.5(16-27%)	1-1.5 (4-6%) <i>CME</i>
P5-P6	6.5 (27%)	HCL*	5 (20%)	1.5 (6%)
		CL	4 (16%)	1.5 (6%)
S1-S4	3.8 (15%)	HCL*	4.25 (17%)	1-2 (4-8%) <i>ACC for S1-S2 in SAP schools</i>
		CL 'O'	3.8 (15%)	

Note: Based on average recommended curriculum times set out in the Principal's Handbook.

* Schools often include additional time outside of formal curriculum hours for HCL teaching

6. The Committee recognises the significant variance in school profiles. Nevertheless, there are some schools where students could benefit from more CL subject instructional time. These are typically schools with students who come from primarily English-speaking homes. These students enter school proficient in EL, and would have a high level of exposure and strong home support in learning EL.

7. We should therefore allow schools greater flexibility to apportion curriculum time between CL and EL subjects, which at the primary level is currently about 40:60 (CL:EL) and at the secondary level 50:50 (CL:EL).

8. Schools may in fact choose to adopt different arrangements for different classes, as there would be some heterogeneity in the language background of their students. As a guideline, the increase in CL subject curriculum time vis-à-vis EL should not result in more than a 60:40 CL:EL distribution at the primary level. The distribution between CL and EL subject curriculum time should range between 60:40 and 40:60 (CL:EL) at the secondary level.

CL in the Informal Curriculum

9. Beyond the formal curriculum, schools should also explore ways to increase the total exposure time to CL through activities in the informal curriculum. For example, school-wide reading programmes currently practised in many schools can stipulate specific periods for reading in EL and CL (and other MTLs). If there is demand, schools can also organise CCAs or enrichment programmes that introduce students to Chinese culture in a way that is accessible to students of all races.

Enriching our SAP Schools

10. The SAP school programme began in 1979. The purpose of the programme was to preserve some of the best Chinese-school practices of the Chinese medium schools. Today, our SAP schools continue to serve this objective. Many offer Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) like Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Dance, Chinese Drama,

Chinese Debate and *Wushu*. Some conduct school assemblies and teach non-examinable subjects like Music in CL. 38% and 78% of SAP Primary and Secondary school students take HCL, compared to the national average of 23% and 16% respectively.

11. SAP schools are not unaffected by the shift towards the use of EL among students. The MOE Survey (2004) found that the proportion of students from EL-speaking homes attending SAP schools was higher than the national average, possibly a result of EL-speaking parents wanting their children to learn CL well in a SAP school environment.

12. If there is demand, MOE should allow a few SAP primary schools to provide more CL-based learning for a few classes at the early primary level. Such a “SAP-plus” programme may include CCAs and activities conducted in CL, designated days to speak CL, environmental cues (e.g. signs, posters) in CL, and more subjects taught in CL. In the lower primary years, teaching more subjects in CL could result in students having up to 60% CL exposure in their total curriculum, compared to the current 33%⁵⁹.

13. The “SAP-plus” programme may appeal, for example, to parents and students from EL-speaking homes. Some parents may even welcome examinable subjects (e.g. Mathematics) taught in CL, particularly at the lower primary level. However, parents must recognise that increased exposure to CL in the school context would mean less exposure to EL.

14. The Committee notes that MOE will be providing more teacher resources to schools by 2010. According to their staffing situation, SAP Primary schools should request more CL teachers from MOE who, among other things, can teach non-CL related subjects in CL.

Offering New Subjects in CL (Secondary)

15. At the secondary and junior college level, students have some flexibility in choosing their subject combinations. There is scope to increase the number of ‘O’ level subjects offered in CL.

16. The Committee recommends introducing two new subject electives in CL that both CL and HCL students can take as part of their Combined Humanities requirement⁶⁰. These are Literature in Chinese, and a new subject, Chinese Culture and Thought. The Literature in Chinese subject elective can be based on the current Literature in Chinese full subject, and focus on contemporary Chinese literature.

17. Chinese Culture and Thought should focus on traditional and contemporary aspects of Chinese culture, as well as introduce students to the different schools of thinking and associated historical developments in China. Chinese Culture and

⁵⁹ CL-to-EL language exposure time refers to time within the curriculum where CL is used as the medium of instruction. This is different from CL:EL *subject* instructional time, which is the curriculum time spent on CL vs. EL subjects.

⁶⁰ All ‘O’-level students are required to offer Combined Humanities, which comprises a compulsory Social Studies component, and a second Humanities elective (choice of Literature in English, Geography or History).

Thought should be offered as a Combined Humanities subject elective as well as a full humanities subject.

18. These new subjects will complement the new China Studies curriculum at the junior college level, which MOE had earlier announced in March 2004. The Committee proposes that the Literature in Chinese subject elective be available to S3 students from 2006, and that Chinese Culture and Thought (both full and elective) be available to S3 students from 2007.

WIDER COMMUNITY

19. Our students will find CL an interesting and vibrant language only if they have occasion to hear, see and use CL beyond the school context. Community and media organisations have an important part to play in creating situations in society where students find it natural and necessary to use the language skills and cultural knowledge they learned in school.

20. This can range from multilingual signages in public places to age-appropriate CL television programmes and public broadcasts. In recent years, publications like *Zaobao* have played an active role in establishing platforms (e.g. 爆米花) and organising events that promote the use of CL among our students. The Committee feels more can be done to encourage our community and media organisations to promote the widespread use of CL among our students.

21. Following this review, MOE should establish a committee to explore ways through which our Chinese community and media organisations can collaborate with our schools to achieve the objectives set out by this review. The success of the Committee's recommendations depends very much on support from the Chinese community.

22. One possibility is to form a committee of Chinese Community Organisation representatives. In line with the Committee's recommendations, this committee could focus on promoting reading and oral expression amongst students. For example, it could work with local and overseas publishers to produce engaging reading material and multimedia resources, and organise events and activities such as student reading clubs or oratorical competitions. The committee should also seek the views of the English-speaking community (e.g. parents) in order to understand the needs and interests of students from English-speaking homes.

23. Finally, MOE should engage the pre-school service providers to encourage CL teaching and learning methods in the pre-primary years consistent with the revised objectives of the proposed curriculum.

Chapter 8

Summary of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS ON CL CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

1. The Committee proposes the following objectives for CL teaching and learning:

a. For all CL students, the common denominator should be to enthuse them in learning CL, so that they develop an abiding interest in the language and culture well after leaving school;

b. For the majority, the emphasis should be on effective oral communication and reading. However, as the four language skills tend to reinforce each other, a judicious attention to writing is also essential to strengthen these language skills;

c. For students with the ability and interest, especially Higher CL students⁶¹, to retain the objective of developing fluency in all the four language skills and good understanding of Chinese history and culture. This can be further enhanced in the SAP school environment; and

d. For a core group of students in each cohort, the aim is to achieve both high proficiency in the four language skills and a confident and intuitive understanding of history, culture and contemporary developments in China. This can be done through the Language Elective Programme (Chinese) and the recently-launched Bicultural Studies Programme (Chinese).

2. The broad objective of using the teaching of CL to transmit traditional culture and values is still relevant for the majority of students. However, it should be achieved in a flexible and natural way that students find interesting and relevant.

OTHER KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Other key recommendations of the Committee to help achieve the above objectives, as well as their proposed implementation timeline are as follows:

⁶¹ Currently, 22% of Primary and 16% Secondary students study Higher CL.

Key Recommendations	Details	Levels Affected	Year of Implementation						
			2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
CURRICULUM STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY									
Develop a modular curriculum structure at primary level	Customise primary CL and HCL syllabuses by developing Bridging/Reinforcement, Core and Enrichment modules	Primary		#		X			
Pedagogical approaches	Shift towards more oral-aural skills	All		#		X			
	Approaches based on “Recognise First, Write Later” principle	Primary	#			X			
Character and word list	Revision of character list	All	X						
	Word list for oral-aural skills	Lower Primary		#		X			
New Instructional Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Flexible use of the character list ▪ Flexibility in choice of topics for writers ▪ Flexibility to vary length and number of passages ▪ 20% reduction in number of passages in textbooks 	Primary		#		X (P1,4)	X (P2,5)	X (P3,6)	
		Secondary					#		X (S1)
Use IT to support pedagogy	Develop IT packages that can be used to support the “Recognise First, Write Later” approach	Primary		#		X			

Key Recommendations	Details	Levels Affected	Year of Implementation						
			2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Equip students with tools to facilitate character writing	To equip every student with affordable hand-held electronic device	All	X						
Use of adaptive technologies	Experiment with adaptive technologies for assessment and to promote independent learning, e.g. text-to-speech software	All	X						
Use of communication technologies in CL learning	To launch pilot projects to incorporate commonly-used platforms like SMS in CL learning	All	X						
EXAMINATION FORMAT									
Examination format	Interim: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of shift of emphasis towards oral/aural and reading skills Reduce considerably discrete testing of words and phrases Use of CL dictionaries/handheld devices in examinations 	Primary Secondary		X					
	Revised: Align with new curriculum objectives and focus	Primary						X	
MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO USE CL IN SCHOOL									
Flexibility in apportioning subject time for CL	Greater flexibility to increase CL subject curriculum time vis-à-vis EL subject curriculum time	Primary Secondary	X						

Key Recommendations	Details	Levels Affected	Year of Implementation						
			2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Experimenting with "SAP-Plus" programme	A few primary SAP schools to strengthen their students exposure to CL, for example by teaching more subjects in CL	Primary	X						
Introduction of new CL subjects	Literature in Chinese subject (Combined Humanities elective)	Secondary		X					
	Chinese Culture and Thought (full and Combined Humanities elective)	Secondary			X				
TEACHERS AND SPECIALISTS									
Deployment of more CL teachers	As part of MOE's ongoing effort to provide schools additional teacher resources by 2010.	All	X						
Setting up of satellite COEs for CL	Satellite COEs, linked to current COEs for CL, to be set up in other zones.	-	X						
Polytechnic Diploma in Chinese Studies	A Diploma in Chinese Studies to be offered in one or two polytechnics, to create an additional local source of CL teachers.	-	X						

Key Recommendations	Details	Levels Affected	Year of Implementation						
			2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enhance attractiveness of CL teaching profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start another LEP at a suitable JC ▪ Articulate career progression paths for CL teachers ▪ Create greater awareness of postgraduate study opportunities 	JC - -	To be studied further by MOE						
Review pre-service training	Content of pre-service training at NIE to prepare teachers for proposed changes	All	To be studied further by MOE						
Systematic in-service training	Develop structured training roadmap for CL teachers	All	To be studied further by MOE						
Professional exposure for curriculum designers	More training opportunities for curriculum designers and writers	-	To be studied further by MOE						
Enhance the senior specialist track	Increase the attractiveness and visibility of the Senior Specialist track, so as to develop a larger pool of specialised CL curriculum and instructional designers.	-	To be studied further by MOE						

Key: X = Year of implementation. # = Year of pilot

CONCLUSION

4. The objective of this Review has been to set the broad direction for CL teaching and learning, by establishing a system flexible enough to allow children of different language backgrounds and abilities to achieve their fullest potential in CL, in a manner that enthuses them. We believe that the changes we propose, to differentiate learning through the modular approach, and to develop stronger competency in speaking, listening and reading, will go far in ensuring that CL remains a living language for Chinese Singaporeans.

5. Our most valuable asset is our multi-language abilities which enable us to connect with the region and the world. Our bilingual policy of English as our working language, while learning and using Chinese, Malay, Tamil or the other MTLs, is the practical way to safeguard our future.

6. We must remain flexible with our language strategies in future. We have to be prepared to adjust the way we implement the bilingual policy in schools, in response to the shifting dynamics of the global environment and Singapore's changing social landscape.

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Proposed Learning Outcomes

	CL (P6)	HCL (P6)	CL (S4)	HCL (S4)
Listening and Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand daily conversations, stories on radio, TV serials and simple local news reports related to daily life ▪ Able to hold a conversation on topics related to daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand daily conversations, stories on radio, TV serials and local news reports related to daily life ▪ Able to hold a conversation or give a short presentation expressing opinions on topics related to daily life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand local news reports, as well as lectures and talks on topics of interest ▪ Able to hold a spontaneous discussion expressing opinions on topics of interest ▪ Deliver, with prior preparation, coherent views on local news reports, and other topics of interest in front of an audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand local and simple foreign news reports, as well as lectures and talks on topics of interest ▪ Able to hold a spontaneous and fluent discussion expressing opinions on topics of interest ▪ Deliver coherent views on local news reports, and other topics of interest in front of an audience
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to read and appreciate short stories ▪ Able to understand articles in students' newspapers and magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to read and appreciate simple poems and short stories ▪ Able to understand simple local news reports and articles in students' newspapers and magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to read and appreciate poems, literary prose and short stories ▪ Able to read most of the articles in local newspapers and magazines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to read and appreciate poems, literary prose and novels ▪ Able to read articles in local newspapers and magazines
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to compose a 80-100 word narrative essay with the help of a dictionary and additional aid, e.g., helping words, hanyu pinyin and/or assistive computer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to compose a 180-200 word narrative essay with the help of a dictionary and additional aid, e.g., helping words, hanyu pinyin and/or assistive computer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to compose a 250-300 word narrative or expository essay with the help of a dictionary and/or assistive computer tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to compose a 450-500 word narrative or expository essay with the help of a dictionary and/or assistive computer tools

Feedback Channels

1. The Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee met with stakeholders and other parties with considered views on the teaching and learning of the Chinese Language, in consultation and dialogue sessions, and received numerous comments via email, fax and post. The feedback channels used to canvass public views from March to October 2004 included:

- a. Focus group discussions with the following school stakeholders:
 - i. Principals of SAP primary schools;
 - ii. Chinese Language Head of Departments/Subject Heads in junior colleges and Millenia Institute;
 - iii. Chinese Language teachers in primary and secondary schools;
 - iv. Students in primary, secondary and junior colleges;
 - v. Chinese-speaking parents of primary and secondary school students;
 - vi. English-speaking parents of primary and secondary school students.
- b. Dialogue with the following professionals:
 - i. National Institute of Education; and
 - ii. Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice
 - iii. Language experts and master teachers from the People's Republic of China
- c. Dialogue with Teachers' Unions, viz. Singapore Chinese Teachers' Union, Singapore Middle School Chinese Teachers' Association and Singapore Teachers' Union;
- d. Focus group discussions with the following community stakeholders:
 - i. Chinese literary organisations, publishers and book retailers⁶²;
 - ii. Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
 - iii. Chinese Clan Associations⁶³

⁶² Singapore Association of Writers, Bukit Timah Community Club Literary Centre, SNP Panpac Pte Ltd, Asiapac Books Pte Ltd, Equatorial Wind Publishing House, Lingzhi Media Pte Ltd, Pan Asia Publishing Co, Union Book Co (Pte) Ltd, World Scientific Publishing Co Pte Ltd, Maha Yuyi Pte Ltd. (Singapore), Shanghai Book (CNPIEC) Co (Pte) Ltd, The Commercial Press (S) Pte Ltd, Popular Book Co Pte Ltd

- e. Written comments from the following groups:
 - i. Members of Parliament (14);
 - ii. Representatives from the media;
- f. Overseas Consultants from China and Hong Kong
- g. In addition, the Committee drew insights from visits to the following schools:
 - i. Anglo-Chinese Junior School
 - ii. Henry Park Primary
 - iii. Nanyang Primary School
 - iv. Naval Base Primary
 - v. Tampines North Primary School
 - vi. Tao Nan School
 - vii. White Sands Primary
 - viii. Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road)
 - ix. Dunman High School
 - x. Fairfield Methodist Secondary
 - xi. Loyang Secondary
 - xii. Orchid Park Secondary
 - xiii. The Chinese High School

⁶³ Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations, Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan, Singapore Kwangtung Hui Kuan, Singapore Foochow Association, Singapore Hainan Hwee Kuan, Sam Kiang Huay Kuan.

Key Consultation Findings

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. There was strong support from all stakeholders that the CL curriculum should cater to learners from different language backgrounds, as well as differing linguistic abilities and aptitudes. In view of the changing language environment in Singapore, stakeholders agreed that CL curriculum and teaching should be more customised and flexible so that students could learn at a pace suitable for them. While all agreed on the importance of CL learning, some brought up that students did not necessarily like the subject. Many felt it was impractical and unrealistic to demand that all students attain the same level of bilingual proficiency. What was more important would be for our students to develop a firm foundation and lasting love for CL, so that they would be keen to extend their learning experience into later life.

2. It was generally agreed that the four language skills needed to be refocused, especially at the primary level, taking into consideration the changing language profile of our P1 students and new developments in CL teaching and information technology. The broad direction of CL curriculum should be to help the majority of students learn Chinese as a functional language for communication in a social setting. Majority supported the proposal to shift the emphasis to listening and speaking skills at lower primary level, followed by reading and writing skills. However, stakeholders were concerned that with less emphasis on writing, the standard of CL would drop.

3. There was a general consensus that the current CL objectives of developing language proficiency and inculcating Chinese culture and traditional values should be maintained. However, stakeholders generally agreed that we need to define a desirable balance between these objectives, so that they remain achievable and relevant to different groups of students.

GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN CURRICULUM

4. There was strong support to adopt a modular approach to CL teaching in the primary years, so as to better tailor the curriculum to suit the wide range of CL learners. However, there were concerns over the actual implementation in schools due to its complexity and limitations of resources. Others suggested that a Learner Support Programme for CL could be established to assist students with learning difficulties, while students with strong language ability should learn at a faster pace and develop as future Chinese elites.

5. Many teachers felt that the content of the current syllabus was too heavy. They suggested that more time be freed up to give teachers space to conduct interesting class-based activities.

6. Many felt that students should be given more exposure time in the language in school. Instead of increasing curriculum time for the subject, it was suggested that some of the other non-core subjects could be taught in CL. Schools could also organise more Chinese-related activities for their students. In addition, schools could

liaise with education institutions in China and arrange for their students to visit China on study trips.

ASSESSMENT

7. There was a general sentiment that the current CL examinations were not aligned with the current curriculum objectives. Experts and teachers felt that our examinations overly emphasised the testing of discrete point knowledge, such as writing characters precisely and sentence construction (造句). It was suggested that more creative assessment modes which stressed on comprehension and the contextualised use of language be explored.

8. There was general agreement that school-based assessments could be integrated as part of PSLE examination to test students' aural/oral skills. However, all stakeholders expressed concern that standards may differ across schools and school-based assessment might lead to subjective and unfair grading.

9. Many felt that HSK (*Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi*) might not be entirely suitable for as an alternative to our current examinations, and suggested that we learn from it or use it as a benchmark to gain a better sense of the CL standards in our schools.

PEDAGOGY

10. Appropriate and interesting teaching methods were cited to cultivate the learning interest of students in the subject.

a. *Creative new methods.* Many reflected that CL teaching was not as student-centred as in other subjects, and that students tended to be passive learners. Teachers would need to re-look their pedagogical methods and actively engage their students in order to challenge and motivate them. For example, teachers could incorporate more activity-based learning methods such as “show and tell”, drama, comics, songs, debates, games, and use of IT in their lessons. Pedagogical methods used should also be age-appropriate.

b. *Use of Hanyu Pinyin.* There were mixed opinions on the use of *hanyu pinyin* (HYPY) at P1. While most students could master HYPY, others struggled to understand it. Moreover, some students had already started learning Chinese characters in pre-school. Although the intent of introducing HYPY in P1 was to provide students a tool to help them in reading, there was a lack of supplementary reading materials with HYPY for students to practise on their own. There were also concerns that students would be too reliant on HYPY.

c. *Bilingual approach.* Opinions on the use of EL to teaching CL were also mixed. While some parents, particularly those from EL-speaking backgrounds, said that this approach was very useful in helping their children grasp the language, others cautioned that over-dependence on this approach may lead to some students becoming over-reliant on using EL to learn CL.

TEACHERS AND TEACHER SUPPORT

11. All agreed that teachers played a key role in motivating students to learn CL effectively. Teachers must be given the necessary space, support and training in order to learn and implement new pedagogical approaches.

12. There was a general perception that the CL standards of younger teachers were not as high as that of older teachers. There were also concerns about the recruitment of foreign CL teachers as some of them had found it difficult to adapt to the local curriculum and teaching environment. At times, students also found it hard to adapt to their teaching styles.

13. While teachers saw the need to develop more creative and innovative methods of teaching CL, they cited a lack of time as a key challenge. This was due to competing demands on their time and a heavy workload. Common feedback given by teachers was that their workload was too heavy. Most primary school CL teachers had to teach 2 to 3 classes of different levels, and secondary school teachers typically taught 5 classes across different levels in order to meet workload requirements. This meant more preparation time and a heavier marking load. Some teachers also commented that HCL lessons conducted outside curriculum time were not counted towards their total teaching periods.

14. Many teachers requested more support be given in the collation of interesting and relevant teaching materials so that they have easy access to a repository of resources. Teachers suggested that more degree and diploma courses be set up by higher education institutions, to nurture a larger pool of CL teachers.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

15. The general consensus was that there were insufficient interesting teaching materials which local students could relate to. More creative teaching resources should be developed to facilitate teachers in their teaching.

16. Teacher participants felt that the writing of instructional materials and the teaching of CL should not be confined by the character list as this suppressed the creativity of curriculum writers and teachers. Some teachers suggested doing away with the character list entirely while others suggested reducing the number of characters on the list. Other suggestions included having a word list rather than a character list, and the inclusion of more contemporary words which students use in their everyday life.

17. Feedback was also given that textbooks should include topics which were age-appropriate and interesting. Among the suggestions on how CL textbooks could be made more interesting were the inclusion of children's rhymes, songs, poems, riddles, jokes, comics, news, suspense and detective stories, contemporary topics, and more cultural elements. There should also be teaching resources for teaching listening and speaking skills, as the current textbooks were more for teaching vocabulary and reading. It was also mentioned that CL instructional materials did not encourage higher order thinking.

18. It was suggested that MOE build up a core team of curriculum specialists with deep knowledge in the subject to develop interesting local teaching materials. Feedback was that currently, most of the specialists were teachers posted to MOE for a brief stint. As a result, they did not have rigorous training in curriculum design. Likewise, there could also be a core group of NIE research specialists to collaborate with in the design of instructional materials.

ROLE OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY

19. It was widely acknowledged that students' interest and exposure to CL should extend beyond the school. In this respect, parental support and the wider community played a key role. MOE, schools and the Chinese community could create more platforms and opportunities for students to learn and use Chinese outside the classrooms. However, it was observed that there was generally a lack of good and suitable media and literary resources to help bolster students' interest and exposure to the language. Such resources would help cultivate intrinsic motivation in students to learn the language well, and not to do so just because of examinations.

CONCLUSION

20. The feedback gathered revealed that many saw the need for the review of Chinese language curriculum and pedagogy. In view of our unique language environment and the growing influence of China, there were constructive inputs from different perspectives on how to achieve the current policy objective of learning CL, which is for every Chinese Singaporean to study the language for as long as possible and to as high a level as possible with reasonable effort.

21. Almost all agreed that a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors was necessary to motivate students in learning CL. More could also be done to create a conducive environment to promote the use and learning of CL. This would require strong support from the government and the Chinese community.

Survey of Teaching and Learning of the Chinese Language Key Findings

INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents a summary of the key findings from the Survey of Teaching and Learning of the Chinese Language (MOE Survey, 2004).
2. The survey was administered by Forbes Research in May 2004 and collected detailed responses from about 4500 students, 4600 parents, 320 Principals, and 1000 Chinese Language teachers.

KEY FINDINGS

Use of Chinese Language at Home and in Social Settings

3. The findings point to a generational shift in language use at home among students. The proportion of parents who speak to their child mainly in Chinese declined with the age of their child, from 59% at S4 to 37% at P2.
4. This is matched by the growing proportion of parents who speak to their child in English, from 18% at S4 to 26% at P2. The increase in the proportion of parents who speak to their child in both⁶⁴ English and Chinese is even more significant, from 20% at S4 to 33% at P2 (See Table 1).

Table 1

% of parents ⁶⁵ who reported speaking to their child in	Level				
	P2 ⁶⁶	P4	P6	S2	S4
English	25.7	23.5	21.5	24.4	17.6
English and Chinese	33.0	27.4	29.6	21.8	19.6
Chinese	37.3	44.8	44.1	50.2	59.1

5. Students' responses indicate a broadly similar picture. Chinese is still a major spoken language, but declining in prominence. The proportion of students who reported speaking to their mother in Chinese decreased over time, from 57% at S4 to 48% at P4. Likewise, there was a decrease in the proportion using Chinese with their siblings and classmates.
6. English is gaining prominence among the younger students at social settings. The proportion of students who speak with their friends/classmates in English increased from 33% at S4 to 53% at P4 (See Table A-1 at Annex D2).

⁶⁴ It is unclear if both languages are of equal prominence or which of the two is the predominant language. The standard of languages used in bilingual homes vis-à-vis purely monolingual homes is also unclear.

⁶⁵ About 67%-73% of the parents' questionnaires were completed by the mother.

⁶⁶ At P2 level, only parents were involved in the survey; at other levels, sampled students and their parents were involved.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING OF CL

7. Across all levels, the majority of students prefer to speak in both Chinese and English, but read in English, and write in English (See [Table 2](#)).

[Table 2](#)

% of students who preferred to	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
Speak in Chinese	17.0	16.6	23.1	25.4
Speak in English	28.0	28.3	26.3	23.4
Speak in Chinese and English	55.0	55.1	50.6	51.3
Read in Chinese	7.0	7.2	9.1	7.3
Read in English	53.5	57.0	67.1	66.5
Read in Chinese and English	39.5	35.7	23.8	26.2
Write in Chinese	7.9	6.6	8.0	8.7
Write in English	49.5	54.9	65.2	65.4
Write in Chinese and English	42.6	38.4	26.8	25.9

8. About 79% of P4 students liked learning Chinese, but the proportion declines at higher levels. However, Chinese Language tends to be less liked by students, compared to English or Mathematics (See [Table 3](#)).

[Table 3](#)

% of students* who liked	Level				
	P4	P6	S2	S4	JC1**
Learning Chinese	78.5	77.2	65.9	69.9	69.9
Chinese more than English and Mathematics	19.2	23.2	24.8	23.7	16.4
English more than Chinese and Mathematics	39.3	39.3	37.0	35.2	28.3
Mathematics more than Chinese and English	30.5	34.0	35.6	39.2	54.4

*Percentages do not add up to 100, as there are tied ranks or missing ranks.

** As JC1 students represent only about a quarter of a typical cohort, the data on JC1 students is not directly comparable to the survey of students at primary and secondary levels.

9. Most students who liked learning Chinese cited the reason as “I am comfortable speaking Chinese” (44% - 78%). This was particularly so for older students. Few cited liking to read or write in Chinese as the reason for liking the subject (See [Table A-2](#) at [Annex D2](#)).

10. The reason most frequently cited by students who did not like learning Chinese was “I have to memorise many Chinese words” (43% - 70%). This was particularly true for older students. Other key reasons included not liking to read and write in Chinese. Not doing well in examinations⁶⁷ was an important factor for the younger students (See [Table A-3](#) at [Annex D2](#)).

⁶⁷ Performance in Chinese Language is an important part of progression criteria at the lower levels.

11. For the younger students, their liking or dislike for their teacher was also an important factor determining their liking for Chinese Language.

12. While students reported that they would like to learn fables and stories in Chinese (54% - 69%), Chinese teachers believed that it was important to include aspects of moral values (87% - 92%) and traditional customs and practices (76% - 83%) into the teaching of Chinese. The Chinese teachers' views reflect the emphasis in the current Chinese Language curriculum (See [Table A-4](#) at [Annex D2](#)).

EXTENT OF DIFFICULTY IN LEARNING CL

13. The relative difficulty in learning Chinese and English could be attributed to the generational shift in language use at home. At S4, where the predominant home language is Chinese, more students found English difficult, compared to Chinese. The situation is reversed at lower levels. For instance, at S2, where half of the students speak Chinese at home, about 3% more students found Chinese difficult, compared to English. At P4, where 45% speak Chinese at home, about 15% more students found Chinese difficult (See [Table 4](#)).

[Table 4](#)

% of students who found the subject difficult	Level				
	P4	P6	S2	S4	JC1*
Chinese	46.3	49.7	51.0	45.7	51.5
English	31.2	40.3	47.9	52.0	56.4
Mathematics	31.7	49.2	51.5	51.3	46.2

* As JC1 students represent only about a quarter of a typical cohort, the data on JC1 students is not directly comparable to the survey of students at primary and secondary levels.

14. Among the three subjects, Chinese, English and Mathematics, more students found Chinese difficult at the lower levels. However, fewer students have tuition in Chinese than in English or Mathematics. For instance, 43% of P6 students have Chinese tuition as compared to 57% - 58% having English or Mathematics tuition. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that students who could cope without tuition nonetheless viewed Chinese as difficult (See [Table 5](#)).

[Table 5](#)

% of students having	Level				
	P4	P6	S2	S4	JC1*
Chinese tuition	51.1	43.2	24.6	20.2	6.1
English tuition	68.0	58.4	30.1	20.4	5.8
Mathematics tuition	58.3	57.1	41.0	47.1	16.8

* As JC1 students represent only about a quarter of a typical cohort, the data on JC1 students is not directly comparable to the survey of students at primary and secondary levels.

15. Of those parents⁶⁸ who reported that their child had difficulty in Chinese, the most frequent reason given (52% - 61%) was that their child found it very difficult to write Chinese words.

⁶⁸ About 37% - 58% of parents reported that their child had difficulty in learning Chinese.

IEWS OF TEACHERS

On Students' Attitudes and Extent of Difficulty in Learning Chinese

16. Proportionally more teachers from the JC and secondary levels reported that their students were interested in learning Chinese, as compared to the teachers from the primary level (See Table 6).

Table 6

% of teachers who reported that	Level		
	Pri	Sec	JC
My students are interested in learning Chinese.	53.4	57.1	63.4

17. The most important factor that teachers cited for their students being interested in learning Chinese was that students felt it was important for a Chinese to know the Chinese language. On the other hand, the reason most frequently cited by teachers for their students' lack of interest in learning Chinese was that students found the subject difficult (See Table 7).

Table 7

% of teachers who reported that their students were	Level		
	Pri	Sec	JC
<u>Interested</u> in learning Chinese because they believed that it was important for a Chinese to know Chinese Language	44.1	73.9	66.0
<u>Not interested</u> in learning Chinese because they found the subject difficult	84.3	71.3	60.7

On Curriculum and Assessment

18. While more than three-quarters of the teachers felt that the instructional materials provided by MOE for teaching Chinese were of an appropriate level, fewer felt that these materials were useful to students (e.g. 71% at JC) and even fewer felt that they were interesting to students (e.g. 44% at JC) (See Table 8).

Table 8

% of teachers who reported that the instructional materials provided by MOE for teaching Chinese were	Level		
	Pri	Sec	JC
Of appropriate level	80.0	78.5	75.2
Useful to students	74.7	70.4	71.2
Interesting to students	45.1	28.5	43.8

19. The majority of the teachers reported that examinations determined how they taught their students (e.g. 92% at JC). However, much fewer felt that the current

national examinations they were preparing their students for accurately measured their competence in Chinese (e.g. 31% at JC) (See [Table 9](#)).

Table 9

% of teachers who reported that	Level		
	Pri	Sec	JC
The examination determined how they taught their students	88.7	88.0	91.5
The current national examinations they were preparing their students for accurately measured their competence in Chinese	57.4	43.7	31.4

20. A high proportion of Chinese teachers (e.g. 94% at primary) and school principals (e.g. 92% at primary) felt that there is a need to use a different method to teach students from English-speaking homes (See [Table 10](#)).

Table 10

% of teachers (principals) who felt that	Level		
	Pri	Sec	JC
Chinese teachers need to use a different method to teach students from English-speaking homes	93.7 (92.0)	94.0 (91.2)	94.8 (93.8)

FINDINGS BY HOME LANGUAGE

21. The analyses by home language indicate that home language had an influence on students' perceptions of the difficulty level of Chinese and English, particularly with the older students. More students from English-speaking homes found Chinese difficult, compared to Chinese-speaking homes. The difference ranged from about 20%⁶⁹ at P4 to 44% at S4.

22. On the other hand, more students from Chinese-speaking homes found English difficult, compared to students from English-speaking homes. The difference ranged from about 26% at P4 to 33% at S4 (See [Table 11](#)).

Table 11

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
	% of students who found Chinese difficult			
English	60.5	76.9	69.3	75.8
English and Chinese	45.8	50.3	48.0	53.3

⁶⁹ At P4, about 61% of students from English-speaking homes found Chinese difficult, compared to about 40% of students from Chinese-speaking homes.

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
Chinese	40.1	35.6	38.8	32.0
	% of students who found English difficult			
English	14.8	21.8	31.9	30.1
English and Chinese	25.9	33.7	40.2	44.8
Chinese	40.8	52.2	56.8	63.3

23. As expected, more students from English-speaking homes have Chinese tuition than students from Chinese, and English and Chinese home language background. This is most stark at P6 where 72% of students from English-speaking homes have Chinese tuition, compared to about 31%-41% of students from Chinese, and English and Chinese home language backgrounds (See [Table 12](#)).

Table 12

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
	% of students having Chinese tuition			
English	65.9	71.9	36.4	37.4
English and Chinese	47.2	41.2	25.0	19.8
Chinese	45.5	30.8	13.6	8.3
	% of students having English tuition			
English	51.7	48.1	29.0	18.7
English and Chinese	62.0	54.4	40.0	17.6
Chinese	79.2	65.1	32.5	21.1

24. The students' perceptions of the difficulty of Chinese Language are matched by their attitude. Compared to students from Chinese, and English and Chinese home language backgrounds, there were proportionally fewer students from English-speaking homes who felt that it was important to study Chinese and who liked learning Chinese (See [Table 13](#)).

Table 13

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
	% of students who felt that it was important to study Chinese			
English	85.6	85.6	71.9	75.8
English and Chinese	86.1	94.5	92.1	88.6
Chinese	92.8	95.2	87.7	92.7
	% of students who liked learning Chinese			

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
English	65.9	60.2	49.6	40.0
English and Chinese	78.9	73.9	72.4	67.0
Chinese	85.1	88.0	74.9	83.4

25. Similarly, the students' perceptions of the difficulty of Chinese Language are matched by their use of Chinese in social settings. Fewer students from English-speaking homes converse with their friends/classmates in Chinese, as compared to students from Chinese, and English and Chinese home language backgrounds (See [Table A-5](#) at [Annex D2](#)).

26. The majority of parents, including those from English-speaking homes, are keen on their children doing Chinese Language and consider it as important (See [Table 14](#)).

Table 14

Home Language	Level				
	P2	P4	P6	S2	S4
	% of parents who felt that it was important for their child to learn Chinese				
English	92.9	97.6	92.5	86.1	90.5
English and Chinese	98.2	98.0	97.8	93.2	95.3
Chinese	97.1	99.6	95.3	96.6	96.2

CONCLUSION

27. There is a clear generational shift in language use at home. More younger students come from English-speaking homes whereas Chinese is predominantly used at the homes of older students. This trend is also reflected in the declining use of Chinese with siblings and friends/classmates in the case of younger students.

28. We also observe that interest in learning Chinese wanes as students get older. Students like Chinese mainly because they are comfortable *speaking* Chinese and not because they like to *read* or *write* in Chinese. The students who dislike Chinese loathe having to memorise many Chinese words.

29. Students who find Chinese difficult generally attribute it to difficulty in the writing of Chinese words. However, most parents are supportive and view the learning of Chinese as important, including those from English-speaking homes. The high incidence of Chinese tuition in English-speaking homes is a reflection of the importance these parents place in the learning of Chinese.

30. The findings suggest that there is a need for teachers to adopt different teaching strategies for students from different home language backgrounds. This view is strongly supported by Chinese teachers.

Table A-1

% of students who usually converse with their	Language used	Level			
		P4	P6	S2	S4
Mother	English	34.3	29.9	30.7	25.3
	English and Chinese ⁷⁰	6.4	10.1	6.3	6.4
	Chinese (with Dialect)	47.8 (54.6)	50.3 (55.6)	53.5 (58.9)	57.2 (63.9)
Siblings	English	39.9	38.4	39.9	37.4
	English and Chinese	5.2	9.1	8.4	9.0
	Chinese (with Dialect)	37.5 (40.7)	37.1 (40.0)	40.5 (42.8)	43.9 (45.5)
Friends/classmates	English	53.0	46.2	41.6	32.7
	English and Chinese	13.3	18.8	19.3	20.7
	Chinese (with Dialect)	27.7 (30.4)	28.9 (31.2)	32.1 (33.9)	39.4 (40.6)

Table A-2

% of students* who liked learning Chinese because	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
Chinese is an important subject for my future	48.5	51.0	39.3	35.7
My Chinese textbook is interesting	48.3	29.5	21.8	11.5
I am comfortable speaking Chinese	43.6	59.9	71.4	77.5
Chinese lessons are enjoyable	41.4	43.6	30.3	21.9
I like my Chinese Language teacher	41.2	39.9	18.9	23.0
My parents like Chinese Language too	30.6	24.0	23.5	20.3
I do well in Chinese exams	28.9	28.5	37.6	37.6
I like to read in Chinese	19.7	19.0	18.0	18.6
Chinese is a beautiful language	17.4	23.6	27.4	43.2
I like to write in Chinese	12.1	10.0	13.1	12.9

*These percentages were computed based on those students who liked learning Chinese.

⁷⁰ It can be inferred from Table 1 and Table A-1 that while there is a growing proportion of parents who are conversing with their child in both English and Chinese, most children talk to their parents in either English or Chinese and not both.

Table A-3

% of students* who did not like learning Chinese because	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
I did not do well in Chinese exams	45.9	45.4	41.8	29.1
I have to memorise many Chinese words	43.4	50.0	56.8	69.9
I do not like to read in Chinese	42.6	46.1	48.8	48.5
I dislike my Chinese Language teacher	41.0	23.0	17.4	12.6
I dislike to write in Chinese	37.7	42.8	31.5	35.9
I am not comfortable speaking Chinese	33.6	36.8	26.3	
Chinese lessons are not interesting	32.0	24.3	27.2	29.6
My Chinese textbook is not interesting	15.6	10.5	23.0	24.3
Chinese is not an important subject for my future	5.7	7.2	13.6	13.1
My parents do not like Chinese Language	3.3	0.7	1.9	0.5
The supplementary materials / lecture notes are not interesting			19.7	22.8

*These percentages were computed based on those students who did not like learning Chinese.

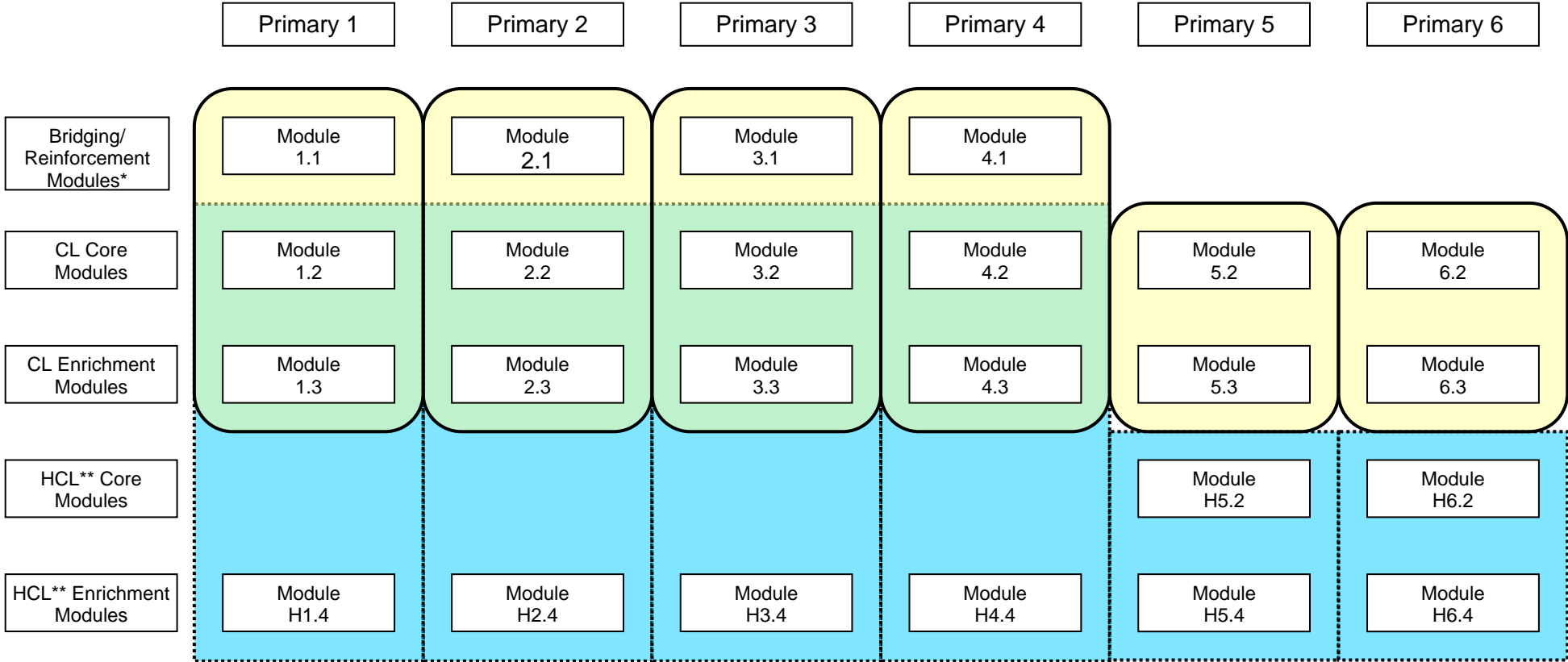
Table A-4

% of students/teachers who would like to/ would like their students to learn the following in Chinese	Level					
	P4	P6	Pri teachers	S2	S4	Sec teachers
Fables and fairy tales e.g. Sun Wukong	68.6	58.5	57.0	61.1	53.5	48.7
Chinese stories	52.5	40.9	64.7	55.7	50.8	55.0
Famous historical figures and events, e.g. <i>Yue Fei</i>	52.4	41.6	72.0	33.3	36.1	70.2
Ancient Chinese artefacts e.g. coins, weapons	42.1	43.1	15.7	31.8	26.7	14.1
Traditional customs and practices e.g. Mooncake festival	41.7	34.8	83.3	32.1	36.0	76.4
Moral values e.g. filial piety	36.5	39.9	91.9	34.2	37.6	86.9
Chinese poems e.g. <i>Tangshi</i>	35.5	26.2	64.9	20.5	24.6	68.6
Stories behind <i>chengyu</i>	34.8	35.3	77.5	32.1	35.1	66.8
Philosophy				13.9	21.2	65.2
Topics on modern China				10.5	11.1	12.6
Business Chinese				10.1	13.4	18.3

Table A-5

Home Language	Level			
	P4	P6	S2	S4
	% of students who usually converse with their friends/classmates in Chinese			
English	14.4	10.5	19.1	16.8
English and Chinese	26.0	24.9	26.2	32.1
Chinese	35.2	38.9	49.0	55.5
	% of students who usually converse with their friends/classmates in English			
English	72.0	75.4	57.4	63.2
English and Chinese	46.6	41.1	39.8	25.5
Chinese	47.3	40.4	26.2	18.8
	% of students who usually converse with their friends/classmates in both Chinese and English			
English	8.0	11.2	18.3	13.7
English and Chinese	20.6	29.2	27.2	33.0
Chinese	12.6	14.9	17.3	18.5

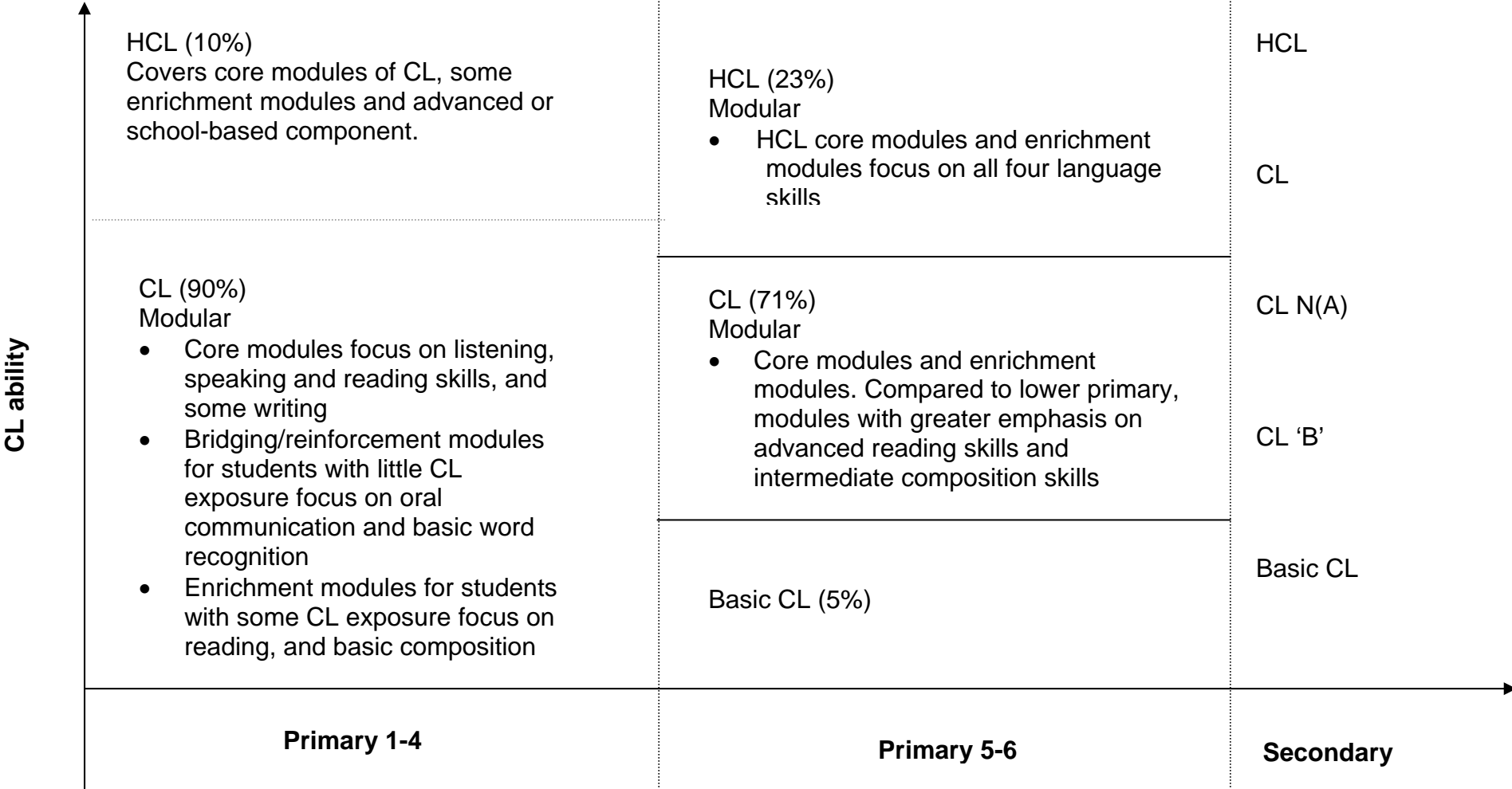
Proposed Modular Curriculum Structure for Primary CL and HCL



* Bridging/Reinforcement modules are modules designed for students with little or no prior exposure to CL. In P1-2 Bridging modules will serve as a “bridge” to bring students up to the level of the core curriculum. At P3-P4, Reinforcement modules support learning of the core curriculum. Able students can proceed to do only Core and Enrichment modules.

** Both CL and HCL at P1-P4 should share the same core modules so that CL students would not be disadvantaged to do HCL at P5-P6. There could be additional Enrichment modules for those taking HCL at P1-P4.

Summary of Proposed Structure of Primary CL Curriculum



Note: Figures refer to the distribution in 2004

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