

MASTER'S THESIS

A comparison of English reading comprehension abilities of secondary students in Hong Kong and Taiwan

Chui, Mei Wai Corine

Date of Award:
1996

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

A COMPARISON OF ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION
ABILITIES OF SECONDARY STUDENTS
IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN

CHUI MEI WAI, CORINE

Student No. 94403473

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
MASTER OF ARTS IN LANGUAGE STUDIES

HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

August 1996

A COMPARISON OF ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION ABILITIES OF SECONDARY STUDENTS IN HONG KONG AND TAIWAN

Abstract

Although sharing many common features, Hong Kong and Taiwan are two Chinese societies where the English language has quite different social status and educational roles. In this study the English reading comprehension abilities of secondary students of various grades from the two regions were compared by typical reading tests. In general, Hong Kong students attained higher scores, especially in Secondary 1 level (difference in mean score was 57%). This was expected because Taiwan students started to learn English only in the secondary school. However, the differences in higher grades were found to be much smaller. For Secondary 6, the difference in mean score was 15%. The Secondary 3 mean scores of the two regions were almost the same. Analyses of partial scores did not indicate any text-related or reading subskill-related factors which could explain the inter-regional difference. Correlation analysis on test score and English background of Taiwan subjects revealed positive correlations between reading test performance and the amount of after-school English tutoring, and to a lesser degree, extra-curricular English reading. No such correlation was observed in Hong Kong students. The implications of these results to the English education system in Hong Kong, and suggestions for further studies were discussed.

香港及臺灣中學生英文閱讀理解能力比較

論文撮要

雖然香港與臺灣有不少相同之處，英語在兩地中國社會的地位及教育功能則頗為不同。本研究採常用的閱讀測驗，比較兩地不同年級中學生的英文閱讀理解能力。香港學生成績一般較臺灣學生高，尤其是中一級(平均積分差為百份之五十七)。這是預期的結果，因為臺灣學生由中學才開始學英語。然而高年級的差別比較少，中六級平均積分差為百份之十五。兩地中三級的平均積分更大致相等。分析部分積分顯示，兩地差別未能由課文有關或閱讀次技考(reading subskill)等因素解釋。以臺灣學生積分及其英語背景所作的相關分析顯示，閱讀表現與校外英語補習量有正相關，與課外英文閱讀量亦有稍弱的正相關。香港學生則無這類相關關係。這些結果對香港英語教育的含意，與及對進一步研究的建議文中均有討論。

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE OF ACCEPTANCE	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Objectives	6
1.2 Observations and Hypotheses	8
1.3 Organization of the Study	10
CHAPTER TWO REVIEW	12
2.1 Reading Comprehension	12
2.2 Reading Test	16
2.3 Effects of starting age on second language acquisition / learning	21
2.4 Roles of English in Hong Kong and Taiwan	24
2.4.1 English in Hong Kong	24
2.4.2 English in Taiwan	27
2.4.3 Second Language vs Foreign Language	29
CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY	32
3.1 Selection of Subjects	32
3.1.1 Hong Kong	33
3.1.2 Taiwan	35
3.2 Questionnaire	36
3.3 English Reading Comprehension Tests	37
3.3.1 Secondary One	38
3.3.2 Secondary Three	39
3.3.3 Secondary Six	39
3.4 Test Administration	39
3.4.1 Test Setting and Test Time	40
3.4.2 Test Grading	40
3.4.3 Test Scores	41
3.5 Methods of Data Analysis	41
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	42
4.1 Test Scores	42
4.1.1 Secondary One	42
4.1.2 Secondary Three	45
4.1.3 Secondary Six	47
4.2 Verification of Hypothesis	49
4.2.1 Hypothesis One--Overall Comparisons	49

4.2.2	Hypothesis Two--Trend of Differences	51
4.2.3	Hypothesis Three--Senior Level Comparison	54
4.3	Study of Other Test Score Related Questions	55
4.3.1	Analysis by Passage	55
4.3.2	Analysis by Reading Subskills	61
4.4	Study of Questionnaire Related Questions	67
4.4.1	Comparison of Extra-curricular English Exposure	69
4.4.2	Effects of Extra-curricular English Exposure	70
CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS		75
5.1	Summary of Major Findings	75
5.1.1	Comparison of Reading Comprehension Abilities	75
5.1.2	Difference in Extra-curricular English Inputs	76
5.2	Implications to Local Language Teaching	76
5.2.1	Effects of Starting Age	76
5.2.2	Teaching Medium	78
5.2.3	English Language Inputs	78
5.3	Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies	79
5.3.1	Study Design Limitations	79
5.3.2	Testing Other English Language Abilities	80
5.3.3	New Immigrant Study	81
NOTES		82
APPENDICES		83
REFERENCES		99