

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Learner preferences of activity types: a case study in a Chinese-medium secondary school in Hong Kong

Ng, Mei Han

*Date of Award:*  
2003

[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

**LEARNER PREFERENCES OF ACTIVITY TYPES**

**- A CASE STUDY IN A CHINESE-MEDIUM  
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HONG KONG**

**NG MEI HAN, MAY**

**STUDENT NO. 01405632**

**A Dissertation Submitted In Partial  
Fulfilment Of The  
MASTER OF ARTS IN LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**AUGUST 2003**

**Abstract of dissertation  
entitled  
Learner Preferences of Activity Type  
- A Case Study in a Chinese-medium Secondary School  
in Hong Kong**

The main concern of this study is to investigate the most preferable activity types as perceived by the learners. The researcher is also interested in exploring the new dimension in English teaching and learning – the task-based learning and through this exploration, F. 2 learners' preferences of different types of activities and those special features of the activities are examined.

Six activities will be used for this study and the task-based approach to English teaching and learning will be adopted in the English classroom of two F. 2 classes. The task-based teaching will be conducted over a period of two months. The six activities will be designed and categorized into three types, namely, *exercises*, *exercise-tasks* and *tasks* according to the three-part continuum proposed by Morris, et. al. (1994) in the Interim Report of the TOC Evaluation Project. The most preferable activity types of the junior F. 2 students, in relation to the special features present, are sought to contribute in some ways to using the most preferable activity types for enhancing students' motivation in English learning.

The results show that *exercise* is perceived by the students as the most preferable activity type. On the other hand, the power-point presentation, which belongs to the activity type of *task*, is perceived by the students as the most preferable activity. Students who chose this activity as their preference indicate that they like activities, which are interactive. This finding implies that the advocacy of adopting a more communication-oriented approach in the teaching and learning of English can be implemented in the English classroom of the junior forms but activities focusing on form at appropriate stages are still needed to develop learners' grammatical competence. It is hoped that the findings in this study could contribute in some way to using the most preferable activity types to cater for learners' needs and promote language development in secondary schools.

## 摘要

### 香港中學生在英語課堂上喜愛之學習活動類型 - 個案研究：一所以中文為授課語言之中學

此論文主要為研究學生最喜愛之學習活動類型。研究者亦對現時英語教學之新方向 - 以課業為本學習感興趣。通過今次之探索，研究者嘗試在其學校找尋出中二級學生所喜愛之英語學習活動及活動類型，並嘗試探索不同學習活動所隱藏之特徵。

此研究採用了六個不同類型之英語學習活動，在為期兩個月之研究期間，研究者在其中二級課堂上亦採用以課業為本學習為授課方式。此六個英語活動由研究者設計，可歸類為「練習」(exercise)，「介乎練習及課業為本之學習活動」(exercise-task) 及「課業為本學習活動」(task)。此分類方式是根據莫禮時等(Morris et. al.)在一九九四年所撰寫之「目標為本學習之中期檢討報告」劃分。研究者希望透過此研究能有助教師提高學生在英語學習上之學習動機。

研究結果顯示「練習」(exercise) 為學生最喜愛之活動類型，另一方面，簡報(power-point presentation) 則為學生最喜愛之學習活動。學生之喜好可顯示出學生普遍接受互動性及溝通性之學習活動。數據分析顯示互動性及溝通性之學習活動在初中級英語課堂上是可行的，但在適當之階段，教師亦須適量地提供語言文法之基本練習予學生，以增強學生之語法知識及建立其語文運用能力。研究者希望此研究結果能找出初中學生喜愛之活動類型，以配合學生之學習需要，藉此提升中學之語文發展。

## Table of Contents

Standard Page of Acceptance	i	
Acknowledgements	ii	
Abstract	iii	
摘要	iv	
Table of Contents	v	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Significance of this study	2
1.3	The Role of English in Hong Kong Secondary Schools Education	3
1.3.1	The Medium of Instruction	3
1.3.2	The Declining English Standard in Hong Kong	5
1.4	The Teaching and Learning of English in Hong Kong	7
1.4.1	Recent Development of English language teaching in Hong Kong	8
1.5	Organization of the Dissertation	16
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>REVIEW ON THE LITERATURE</b>	
2.1	Relevant Studies on Tasks	17
2.1.1	SLA Research on Task-Based Learning	18
2.1.2	Support from Psycholinguists	22
2.1.3	Defining Tasks	24
2.1.3a	What is a task?	25
2.1.3b	The Present Researcher's Position	32
2.2	Categories of Activities	35
2.2a	Littlewood's Task Continuum	36
2.2b	Categories of activity types in the TOC Evaluation Project	37
2.2c	Task involvement and task communicativeness	39
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>SELECTION OF ACTIVITIES</b>	
3.1	Selecting the Activities	46
3.2	Criteria for activity selection in the study	47
3.3	Rationale behind the selection and design of activities	49
3.4	Communicative Features Present in Each Activity	50

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	
4.1	Purpose of the Study	53
4.2	Research Questions	54
4.3	Research Design	54
4.4	The Procedure of Data Collection	56
4.4.1	The School	56
4.4.2	Duration of the Study	59
4.4.3	Teaching Materials	60
4.5	Data Collection Methods	61
4.5.1	Questionnaires for Students	61
4.5.2	Student Ranking Sheet	63
4.5.3	Group Interviews	64
4.6	Measurement Procedures	65
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>FINDINGS</b>	
5.1	Findings for Student Questionnaires: Students' views of the six activities	69
5.1.1	Findings from the lower proficiency group (Form 2C)	70
5.1.2	Findings from the higher proficiency group (Form 2D)	97
5.2	Findings for Students' Ranking Preferences of the Six Activities	129
5.2a	Students' activity preferences	129
5.2b	Rank Order of the three activity types	130
5.2c	The most preferable activity	131
5.2d	The least preferable activity	132
5.2.1	Module 1: School Uniform – Exercise	134
5.2.2	Module 1: School Uniform – Exercise-task	136
5.2.3	Module 1: School Uniform – Task	137
5.2.4	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong – Exercise	138
5.2.5	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong – Exercise-task	139
5.2.6	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong – Task	140
5.3	Group interview data	142
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	
6.1	Students' general feelings towards the activities in the two classes	151

6.1.1	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise)	151
6.1.2	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise)	153
6.1.3	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise-task)	156
6.1.4	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise-task)	157
6.1.5	Module 1: School Uniform (Task)	160
6.1.6	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Task)	162
6.2	Students' perceptions of the difficulties of the activities in the two classes	164
6.2.1	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise)	164
6.2.2	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise)	165
6.2.3	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise-task)	167
6.2.4	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise-task)	168
6.2.5	Module 1: School Uniform (Task)	169
6.2.6	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Task)	170
6.3	Students' views of the usefulness of the activity in English learning	
6.3.1	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise)	173
6.3.2	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise)	175
6.3.3	Module 1: School Uniform (Exercise-task)	177
6.3.4	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Exercise-task)	179
6.3.5	Module 1: School Uniform (Task)	181
6.3.6	Module 2: In and Around Hong Kong (Task)	183
6.4	In response to Research Question One: What are the Form Two students' preferred activities / activity types in English learning?	186
6.4.1	Students' preferred activities in English learning	186
6.4.2	Students' preferred activity types in English learning	188
6.5	Special features present in the activities that motivate students in English learning	191

## **Chapter 7 CONCLUSION**

7.1	Summary of Major Findings	194
7.1.1	Public Examination Pressure	202
7.1.2	The Activity Type of Exercise	203
7.1.3	The Activity Type of Exercise-task	205
7.1.4	The Activity Type of Task	206
7.2	Implications and Recommendations	208

7.3	Limitations of the Present Research and Difficulties Encountered	211
7.4	The Need for Future Research	213

	<b>REFERENCES</b>	215
--	-------------------	-----

#### **APPENDICES**

Appendix A	Unit Plans & Task Materials
Appendix B	Questionnaires for Students
Appendix C	Ranking Preference Sheet
Appendix D	Group Interview Questions
Appendix E	English First Term Examination results of the two classes
Appendix F	Lists of Tables & Figures
Appendix G	Samples of students' power-point design