HONG KONG ENGLISH
AUTONOMY AND CREATIVITY

Edited by
Kingsley Bolton

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Introduction

Hong Kong English: Autonomy and creativity

Kingsley Bolton

Background

Hong Kong is an extraordinary society that has experienced a series of dramatic changes over the last fifty years in almost all aspects of its economic, social and political life.[1] Immediately after the Second World War, the population of Hong Kong exploded as a result of continuous waves of immigration from Guangdong province and other parts of China, with its population almost quadrupling from 1945 to 1951. Since then, its population has continued to increase at an average rate of one million people per decade, to 3.1 million in 1961, 4.1 million in 1971, 5.6 million in 1991 and to around 6.7 million in the year 2001. In the late 1940s, the transfer of Shanghainese industrial expertise and capital helped set up the labour-intensive low-cost industries, such as textiles, garments and plastics, that became the major employers in the period up to the mid-1970s. These Shanghai emigrés brought with them a cosmopolitanism and cultural capital that found expression in the film industry, music, food and entertainment in 1950s Hong Kong. The Shanghainese were soon outnumbered by huge numbers of refugee immigrants from southern China, many of whom came from small towns and pre-modern agricultural communities in the Pearl River Delta and Guangdong province. These immigrants provided the labour force for the low-cost industries of the 1950s and 1960s, and were initially housed in extreme conditions of discomfort and overcrowding.

After the riots and social disturbances of 1966 and 1967, Hong Kong underwent another period of rapid change. In the 1970s, MacLehose's reformist administration began to provide a greatly expanded range of social services, including public housing, health care, public transport and education. The equivalent of the British 1870 Education Act (providing for elementary education for all) took effect in Hong Kong in 1974, and the equivalent of the British 1944 Education Act (providing secondary education) went into effect in 1978. Judged by the usual economic indicators, Hong Kong society

became rich extremely quickly in the period of its modern formation, with the per capita GDP rising from US$410 in the 1960s to US$23,000 by 1996, although great disparities of wealth continue to exist. The territory's separation from mainland China meant that Hong Kong also began to develop its own cultural identity. By 1971, a majority of the population (some 56 percent), could claim to be 'Hong Kong-born', and by 1991 this proportion had risen to almost 60 percent. By the early 1980s, it was clear that Hong Kong people (a term that first appeared after the 1967 riots) were no longer 'sojourners', but 'Hong Kong people', *hēung góng yàhn*, with their own distinctive culture in film, television, music, print-media and much else.

The period from the 1960s to the 1990s also witnessed the rise of the modern Hong Kong Cantonese language, and its growing use in a wide range of public domains, including the civil service, the mass media, and the entertainment industry. This also contributed to the specific characteristics of the Hong Kong speech community in the late colonial period. Immigrants and their children from the different dialect areas of Guangdong and Fujian province quickly adapted their speech to meet the norms of urban metropolitan Cantonese in the territory. The use of indigenous dialects, such as Hakka, began to decline rapidly at this time. After the riots and disturbances of the 1960s, language rights and the recognition of Chinese as an official language became a focus of intellectual radicalism in the early 1970s, which led in turn to the recognition of 'Chinese' as a co-official language of government and law in 1974. Nevertheless, the demands of parents in the mid-1970s ensured that English was retained as a language of textbooks and at least at a nominal level of instruction in the vast majority of secondary schools. The use of Cantonese in this period also began to expand into many so-called 'high' domains of use, including government, the law courts, and broadcasting. The fact that English occupied the space of a *de jure* official language in the territory allowed Cantonese to elaborate its functions in Hong Kong in ways that were denied to 'dialects' in Guangzhou and other parts of mainland China, where official policy since 1949 has forcefully promoted the national language, Putonghua.

The pre-eminence of Cantonese in the 1970s and 1980s helped foster among academics and commentators in the media the ideology of Hong Kong as a 'monocultural', 'monoethnic', and 'monolingual' society. The fact that this ideology was at odds with the early history of the society, as well as its contemporary development, seems to have weighed little against the force of such belief. By the 1990s, however, it became clear that Hong Kong's linguistic profile was changing, and this was reflected in the results of language censuses and surveys for this period. The numbers of those claiming a reasonable command of English rose from 6.6 percent in 1983 to around 33.7 percent in 1993 (Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998). By 2001, the census results indicated that, overall, 43 percent now claim to speak English, 34.1 percent Putonghua, and 96.1 percent Cantonese (HKSAR Government, 2001: 39). Multilingualism

is not only confined to these languages, as there are also minority groups of Chinese dialect speakers, as well as Filipinos, Indonesians, Thais, Japanese, Indians, Malaysians, Parsees and others resident in the territory.

After the Joint Declaration of 1984 had decided Hong Kong's political future, the problematization of English was intensified by a range of language debates in academic circles and the media. The 'falling standards' debate became a focus of commercial, political and ethnic anxieties. Against this political backdrop, there seemed to be little space for a recognition of 'Hong Kong English'. In other Asian societies such as India, Singapore and the Philippines, there was a growing awareness and occasional pride in a local variety of English, as well as a local literature written in that variety. Among the general Hong Kong population, however, there was a tendency to regard Hong Kong English as, if not non-existent, then as 'bad' and 'incompetent' English (Harris, 1989: 40). Among linguists, this attitude took different forms, as it was mediated by a more sophisticated and professional approach that described the English proficiency profile of local speakers in terms of concepts such as 'error analysis', 'approximative systems', 'interference', 'transfer', 'communicative strategies' and 'interlanguage'. Identifiable language contact phenomena included 'code-mixing', 'code-switching', 'language alternation' and 'mixed code', and linguists strove to describe and analyse the linguistics of language contact from a professionally modern perspective. In spite of the anxieties about 'falling standards' and 'monolingualism', knowledge of English in the community continued to spread, as did the use of a localized variety of the language; which drew the interest of journalists if not academics. A 1987 *South China Morning Post* editorial noted:

> The fact is Hongkong English has evolved into an incipient patois, an inevitable process in any colonial setting where the imported tongue cannot avoid absorbing the characteristics of the vernacular, especially one as vibrant as Cantonese (*South China Morning Post*, 1987a: 28)

In the 1990s, the numbers of English speakers increased, particularly among the younger age groups. One result of the popularity of emigration to North America in the late 1980s was that by the mid- and late 1990s, large numbers of Hong Kong residents had been educated abroad. A *Time* magazine article of 1996 noted that, with the exception of Filipino domestics, the 34,000 resident Americans then constituted the largest foreign community, outnumbering the 27,000 British. The authors went on to argue that Hong Kong's style was becoming rapidly Americanized:

> In the streets ... the tempo of American mass culture — from hamburgers to fashion and TV shows — suits Hong Kong's fast-track lifestyle like no other foreign influence. Hong Kong consumers devour anything American. Disney's new stores push everything from T shirts to gold Mickey Mouse earrings.

> American retailers such as Timberland, Esprit and Toys 'R' Us have sprouted in American-style malls — which are catching on in a society that had always preferred the small, mom-and-pop store. Cricket is out; basketball is in, overtaking soccer as the preferred sport among teenagers. The National Basketball Association runs a nine-person office in Hong Kong. On television, the Cantonese version of the NBA's 'Inside Stuff' attracts 56 percent of the young male Chinese audience (Elliot and Strasser, 1996: 28).

The same article then discussed Chief Executive Designate Tung Chee-hwa's intention to 'revamp' Hong Kong's education system along US lines in order to promote high-tech industries, and noted that four out of six university vice-chancellors polled had American passports. The prediction that Hong Kong universities would move towards an American unit-credit system has proved substantially correct, and this change now has been made at most tertiary institutions in the territory.

At the same time, just before and after the 1997 Handover, there was a rapid growth in the use of personal computers and the Internet at all Hong Kong universities, and most schools. Hong Kong students have become computer literate in a very short space of time, and much computer communication, particularly website use on the Internet, is conducted in English, as well as e-mails and online chat. Whether all this is evidence of increasing 'Americanization' remains to be seen. Hong Kong's culture, like its language, has a strong hybrid quality, which finds expression in the interface between English and Chinese so that '[i]n the new breed of Hong Kong Chinese, the mediation of languages and cultures is an internal one that takes place inside individual speakers as they interact within the home speech community', so that 'the younger generation of Hong Kong Chinese are creating hybrid identities from a mixed pool of linguistic and cultural resources' (Pennington, 1998: 28).

The origins and development of Hong Kong English

The origins of English in southern China date back to 1637, when the first British trading ships under the command of Captain Weddell reached Macau and Canton. After the restriction by imperial decree of all foreign trade to Canton (Guangzhou) after 1755, this port became the world centre for the tea trade, and a range of other exports including silks and porcelain. The first attestations that are available for Chinese speakers of English date from the 1740s and are cited by pidgin scholars and creolists as early examples of 'Chinese pidgin English'. The term 'pidgin English', however, did not appear 1859, and, throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, reference was typically made to the 'broken English', 'jargon', or 'mixed dialect' used at Canton. One early glossary of such jargon from Canton

includes such items as *chop* ('a seal or stamp'), *face* ('appearance in society, reputation'), *hong* ('a commercial establishment'), and *side* ('a position, place'), and it is interesting to note that these words and expressions are still in use in Hong Kong today (Morrison, 1834).

After the First and Second Opium Wars of 1839–42 and 1856–60, 'Canton-English' (yet another term for the jargon spoken in Guangzhou) spread north with the expansion of compradore system to Shanghai and other treaty ports throughout the country. After the ratification of the Treaty of Tianjin in 1862, numerous other 'ports', including inland enclaves, were opened to Western missionaries, merchants, and colonial officials. By the turn of the century, over forty Chinese cities had been opened to Western powers, and a system of treaty-port 'semi-colonialism' had been established in China. By the early twentieth century, however, there was greatly increased access to educated varieties of English through mission schools and other sources, and some Chinese speakers of English developed a distaste for pidgin. For example, Green (1934) noted that 'hundreds of mission schools have for years past been turning out thousands of Chinese who speak English at least as well as most non-English peoples; even among servants there are those who really resent being addressed in pidgin' (1934: 331). By 1944, Hall noted the 'decline' of pidgin English, which he claimed had begun in the 1890s. After the end of the Second World War, and the formation of the PRC in 1949, conditions in the treaty ports in mainland China changed drastically. According to some accounts, pidgin English continued to be spoken in Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s among tradespeople and servants, but most contemporary writers today claim that Chinese pidgin English no longer exists, even in HKSAR.

Elsewhere, I have argued that characterizations of Western 'comic' writers such as Leland (1876) played an iconic role in the creation of a 'Chinese imaginary' in Britain and the USA from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Leland's 'rhymes and stories' were published during an era of unequalled Western expansion into China through the treaty-port system, and also during a period of mounting Sinophobia against the 'heathen Chinee' in the United States. Leland's book, *Pidgin English Sing-Song*, helped construct an overtly racist anti-Chinese discourse that was spread across all classes of society in both the United States and Britain (Bolton, 2000).

The 'de-pidginization' of English in treaty-port era came about through the system of missionary schools that spread across China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The earliest of these missionary schools were established in South China, in Macau and Hong Kong. Prominent amongst these were The Morrison Education Society School (opened at Macau in 1839, and transferred to Hong Kong in 1842), and the Anglo-Chinese College (which moved to Hong Kong from Malacca in 1843). Early mission schools in Hong Kong included St Paul's College (1851), Diocesan Girls' School (1860), Diocesan Boys' School (1869), and St Joseph's (1876). Eventually, the colonial

government established the Central School (1862) which later became Queen's College. These schools played a crucial role in the history of Hong Kong as a British colony, by educating a compradore class of merchants who played in the commercial and political development of China in the late Qing period (Smith, 1985).

It was not, however, until the late colonial period that access to English in Hong Kong became available through a mass education system. Following the 1967 riots in the territory, a number of social reforms were initiated by the colonial government, including the educational reforms of 1974 and 1978, which provided for a system of free, compulsory primary and secondary education. Largely because of these reforms, the numbers of English speakers in the territory in recent decades has risen dramatically. In 1960, the proportion of the population claiming to know English was estimated at 9.7%. By 1991, this figure had risen to 31.6%, and by 1996 to 38.1%, and by 2001 (as noted above) this figure had reached 43%, with 39.8% of these respondents identifying themselves as speakers of English 'as another language' (i.e. English-knowing bilinguals).

Post-colonial Hong Kong

At midnight on 30 June 1997, Hong Kong ceased to be a British colony. The Handover ceremony took place at the Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wanchai, on the northern waterfront of Hong Kong Island. The British representatives at the ceremony included Christopher Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, Prime Minister Tony Blair and Prince Charles. Chinese government officials included President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Li Peng, Vice-Premier Qian Qichen, People's Liberation Army General Zhang Wannian, and Tung Chee-hwa, the first Chief Executive of the HKSAR. In his speech to the 400 guests and assembled world media at the ceremony, President Jiang Zemin commented on the historical significance of the event, declaring in Putonghua that:

> The national flag of the People's Republic of China and the regional flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China have now solemnly risen over this land. The return of Hong Kong to the motherland after going through a century of vicissitudes indicates that from now on, the Hong Kong compatriots have become true masters of this Chinese land and that Hong Kong has now entered a new era of development (Matheson, 1997: 3).

Jiang Zemin concluded his speech by re-stating the commitment of the PRC (People's Republic of China) government to the 'one country, two systems' concept, with its promise of 'a high degree of autonomy' for the

executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Hong Kong government. At the end of the ceremony, in the words of the *South China Morning Post*, 'the two groups of principal officials stood, shook hands and descended from the stage into history' (Matheson, 1997: 3).

Some five years on, Hong Kong's history has been less political than economic. By 1998, the recession that hit other Asian economies had begun to bite Hong Kong and the following three years have seen unprecedented budget deficits, increasing unemployment, and the halving of residential property values. Ironically, in the years before 1997, a favourite trope of journalists and other commentators had hinged on the nature of the transition, and whether Hong Kong's economy and lifestyle would 'take over' the mainland, rather than the reverse. In the event, since 1997, most economic indicators for the territory have plunged while those of the PRC, led by the resurgent financial powerhouse of Shanghai, have risen sharply. On 12 October 2001, the World Trade Organization granted full entry to China as an equal member of the world's leading capitalist trade organization. As capitalism 'with Chinese characteristics' spreads throughout mainland China, a number of commentators, both local and international, have voiced concerns that Hong Kong's position as a leading business and financial centre might soon be superseded by Shanghai.

As China's business and trading communities adapt to international markets, the popularity of English in the PRC seems to have reached a new high with government policy-makers, educationalists, and the Chinese public. Last year, the government introduced plans to begin teaching English from the first year of primary schools across the whole nation. In major Chinese cities today, such as Beijing and Shanghai there are now campaigns to promote English among police, restaurant staff, taxi-drivers, and other service personnel in anticipation of an influx of businessmen and tourists in the next few years. Beijing will be hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, and, in the minds of many, English seems inextricably linked to the nation's continued economic growth and the continuation of the 'Open Door' policy towards the West that was introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s (Bolton, 2002).

Hong Kong's reunification with mainland China since 1997 has raised a number of issues related to the economic, political and social development of the HKSAR, but linguistic issues obviously are present in this process as well. The Basic Law of Hong Kong broadly stipulated that the Hong Kong way of life would remain largely unaltered through a system of 'one country, two systems' for a period of 50 years, but the 'convergence' of the HKSAR with the People's Republic has already begun. Since the economic recession began to bite in 1998, Hong Kong has begun to re-evaluate its cultural identity as well as its economic fundamentals. Despite the often mixed messages of government spin doctors, part of Hong Kong's postcolonial PR message to the international business community has been its claim to 'world-class'

cosmopolitanism. In his October 1999 Policy Address, entitled 'Quality People Quality Home', Mr Tung Chee-hwa, the HKSAR's Chief Executive, launched the re-branding of Hong Kong as a 'world-class city', asserting that 'Hong Kong should not only be a major Chinese city, but could become the most cosmopolitan city in Asia, enjoying a status comparable to that of New York in North America and London in Europe'. As part of this policy statement Tung also announced 'a territory-wide publicity campaign to promote the use of English' to halt 'a decline in the English standards of our younger generation since the early 1990's' (HKSAR Government, 1999).

English since the Handover

Before 1997, there was speculation that the change of sovereignty in Hong Kong would lead to a reduced role for English in the HKSAR, and the parallel promotion of Chinese in various domains of society, including government, the law, and education. In reality, the changes that have taken place in the last five years or so have been less dramatic than many previously imagined.

In government, the official line of the government has been to pursue a 'trilingual, biliterate' language policy that recognizes Cantonese, Putonghua, and English as spoken languages, and written Chinese and English as written languages. However, within the government generally, and within the Legislative Council in particular, there has been a marked shift from English to Cantonese since the Handover. The shift towards Cantonese was already quite noticeable by the early 1990s. Yau (1997: 44–5), for example, notes that in 1995, there were already quite significant numbers of Legco councillors using 'only Cantonese', i.e. 53% of non-directly elected members, and 89% of directly elected members. Smaller percentages of both groups also opted to use 'both English and Cantonese'. It is signficant that no directly elected members in her data chose to use 'English only', compared to 34% of those members who were non-directly elected. Since 1997, English is rarely heard in Legco, although some non-Chinese civil servants continue to present information in English, and some Chinese officials and legislators do occasionally opt for English instead of Cantonese.

Within the civil service, the 'localization' policy of the Hong Kong government in the 1990s led to a decrease in the numbers of 'expatriate' civil servants (i.e. non-Chinese government officers, on 'overseas terms'). In 1999, it was reported that the numbers of such staff had fallen from 1,807 in 1995 to 778, out of a total civil service workforce of 188,000. As a result of such changing demographics and the changed political status of the HKSAR, it is perhaps now more common to conduct internal meetings in Cantonese than in the past. But this is by no means always the case, and whatever the choice of language at the spoken level, English still appears to be firmly entrenched as

the *written* language of the civil service, and at present English remains the dominant language of written records ('the files'). At the spoken level, a good deal of Cantonese-English code-mixing (see Li, this volume) takes place in many government departments, despite the efforts of the 'Official Languages Agency' whose stated mission foregrounds 'promoting wider and more effective use of Chinese within the civil service', and 'setting the standards for official writing in Chinese and monitoring its use' (HKSAR Government, 2000).

In the domain of law, various changes took place in the runup to 1997. In 1986, the Hong Kong government launched the 'Bilingual Laws Project', and since then a large proportion of the written laws of Hong Kong have been translated into Chinese. From the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, various amendments to the Official Languages Ordinance have permitted the use of spoken Chinese into the higher courts. In December 1995, the first civil High Court case was heard in Putonghua, and in August 1997 the first criminal High Court case was conducted in Cantonese (Cheung, 1997). Previously, before the late 1980s, so-called 'expatriate' lawyers from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand were heavily represented in the higher ranks of the legal profession, and a system of court interpreters was available to manage the negotiation between English, Chinese, and other languages such as Vietnamese, Filipino, etc. In the last ten years or so, increasing numbers of 'local' Hong Kong Chinese have been appointed as barristers and judges, but, in spite of increasing flexibility towards the use of varieties of spoken Chinese, spoken English is still used, particularly in the higher courts of the HKSAR, and English seems to have retained its *de facto* status as the the dominant language of court records and almost all important legal documents. Given the role of the law courts in bolstering the HKSAR's reputation as a centre for regional and international business, and the importance of contractual law to the international business community, it is likely that the language will retain its importance in the system of law for the foreseeable future.

Within education, the major change in secondary education occurred in March 1997, when the government announced a new 'firm guidance' policy of requiring the majority of secondary schools to teach through the 'mother tongue', Cantonese. According to this, only 100 secondary schools (some 22% of the total of 460) would be allowed to use English as a teaching medium, with stiff penalties prescribed for school principals who did not comply with the government directive (Kwok, 1997). Later the figure of 100 was amended to 114, after applications from a number of schools to retain English were approved. Since then, however, it seems that the government policy on this issue has relaxed somewhat, and significant numbers of schools are now continuing English in the upper forms of secondary schools. A recent report from Hui (2001) claims that 'as many as 134 out of the 294 Chinese-medium secondary schools in Hong Kong are now teaching either all or some of this year's Form Four students in English', and then goes on to explain that:

> These students are the first group affected by the Government's "mother tongue" policy, introduced three years ago when 223 secondary schools were forced to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction. Many principals said that the decision was made because students educated in Chinese-medium schools needed to be proficient in English both to succeed in the tertiary education system and to meet society's expectations (Hui, 2001: 2).

The apparent confusion in government circles on a language policy for Hong Kong's public schools has been matched by contesting views among educationalists on the same issue. In April 2000, Professor Cheng Kai-ming, a prominent educationalist, took issue with the use of Cantonese as a teaching medium, arguing that Cantonese had no use outside southern China and Chinese immigrant communities worldwide, and that 'Cantonese is leading us nowhere' (Tacey, 2000: 9). Cheng's suggestion to promote the wider use of Putonghua, in preference to Cantonese, was recently echoed by Michael Tien Puk-sun, a prominent businessman and the chair of a government think-tank on language policy, who suggested that 'all secondary school students should be taught in English and Putonghua in the future to make Hong Kong a trilingual city':

> Mr Tien said English was the key language in commerce and Putonghua was becoming more important in the light of economic integration with the mainland. Most students and teachers were not ready for the switch and it might not be achievable even by 2010. He said it was essential to create an English-speaking environment in secondary schools (cited in Cheung and Ng, 2001).

Ironically perhaps, at a time when Hong Kong continues to debate the issue of the teaching medium for schools, it has also been announced that the HKSAR's neighbours in Guangdong schools have now begun to experiment with the use of English as the medium of instruction in senior secondary schools, in a move 'to equip Guangdong students in urban and Pearl Delta areas with the same command of English as their counterparts in Hong Kong and other Southeast Asian countries by 2005' (Yow, 2001: 2). Back in the HKSAR, the current debates on language in education remain unresolved, although a thorough review of language policy has been slated for 2003 (Cheung and Ng, ibid.).

In other domains, such as media and employment, the role of English has also been the subject of scrutiny and criticism. Chan's survey of the media (this volume) highlights a number of limitations on English-language newspapers and print media, including their limited circulation within Hong Kong's Chinese community. In the last year or so, the general situation has deteriorated still further. In September 2001, 140 employees were suddenly dismissed from the *Hong Kong iMail*, including many of the newspaper's international staff. Overnight, the tabloid was transformed from a feisty,

irreverent rival of the *South China Morning Post* to a somewhat unreadable digest of local and 'Greater China' business news. In November 2001, *Asiaweek* magazine was shut down by its parent company, Time Inc., on grounds of dwindling profitability. This now leaves the *South China Morning Post* with an uncontested position as the leading voice of HKSAR journalism. The *Post* management now calculates that around 50 percent of its readers are bilingual Chinese, and they are very much concerned to increase their appeal to such an readership in future.

In the electronic media, English continues to find a place in local television and radio stations, despite the limited size of audiences, but the variety of satellite television stations on offer is surprisingly many fewer in other supposedly less developed Asian societies such as the Philippines. At the cinema, by contrast, there has been a marked increase in the popularity of English-language films, particularly Hollywood movies (subtitled in Chinese), since the heyday of the Cantonese cinema in the 1980s. Internet usage has also grown rapidly in the last few years. By June 2001, it was claimed that Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore were leading the Asian region in terms of home Internet usage, with 58% of Hongkongers regularly surfing the Internet from home computers, compared with 57 percent in Korea and 56 percent in Singapore (Zajc, 2001). Popular local Internet sites include such Chinese-language webpages as *Apple Daily, Netvigator, HongKong.com,* although English sites such as the international *Geocities.com,* and *Microsoft.com* and the locally-based *Icered.com* also enjoy a measure of popularity. At the same time, however, other figures put the degree of 'Internet penetration' in the HKSAR at 43 percent of the adult population, compared with 51 percent for South Korea and 48 percent for Singapore (Chiu, 2001: 8). Nevertheless, many young people in the HKSAR increasingly surf the Internet in both Chinese and English. At university, many students favour English-language email in preference to Chinese, not least because of the relative ease of communication in typing English emails, compared with inputting Chinese characters. For recreation, many students now surf the Web bilingually and multiculturally, accessing popular entertainment sites, music, film sites, and other Web pages in both Chinese and English.

In personal domains such as family, friends, social activities, etc., the use of spoken English is typically superseded by Cantonese or 'mixed code', when Hong Kong Chinese talk to one another. But at the same time, there is also evidence that the HKSAR is becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural, in a variety of ways. Patterns of emigration to English-speaking countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coupled the increased popularity of overseas universities, have helped create a younger generation with an international outlook. 'Returnee' children now account for 70% of the student population in the English Schools Foundation (ESF), which previously mainly taught the children of British families resident in Hong Kong. Even the 'stay-

at-home' students who form the majority of the student population in Hong Kong have become increasingly cosmopolitan over the last decade, and that internationalism has been negotiated partly through English and increasingly through electronic media such as the Internet, with which young people in Hong Kong are so skilful.

Precisely how much English Hong Kong people encounter in the personal domain depends on a wide variety of factors, including social class, educational level, and age. The élite (sociologically, 'capitalist') class in Hong Kong has long been multicultural, and for their children an overseas education has been the norm for almost three decades. In local 'dynastic' families that own banks and major Hong Kong companies, a degree of intermarriage with Europeans and Americans has become increasingly acceptable in the last four decades. This is also increasingly true of other social classes in the community as well, to the extent that so-called 'mixed marriages' are by no means uncommon. In such families, overseas education, travel, cosmopolitanism, and fluency in a number of languages is the norm.

In many 'ordinary' families in Hong Kong, English is encountered at home on a daily basis in a number of different ways. Children of all ages devote hours of homework to the study of the language, with older brothers and sisters teaching the language to their siblings. A large proportion of undergraduates at the University of Hong Kong and other universities have part-time jobs as English tutors, and parents themselves often teach their children simple conversational skills. In addition, there are now around 160,000 Filipina domestic helpers or 'amahs' working in the territory, who often mainly use English and who function as unofficial tutors with children. Given that Hong Kong households numbered 1.8 million in 1996, the indication is that English-speaking Filipinas are resident in over 11% of households. In the 1993 survey referred to earlier, a total of 26.9% of the sample reported speaking English with 'foreign friends', while 57% of the sample stated that they had close relatives in an English-speaking country.

Many of the lower-middle class and working-class children at local universities have parents who emigrated from mainland China to Hong Kong twenty or thirty years ago, and have little or no knowledge English themselves. In such families the children often have little chance to speak English, but when they graduate from university and begin work in the business sector, as the majority increasingly do, they find an immediate use for spoken English. This is particularly the case if they manage to secure a job in one of the international companies based in the territory, for whom so many students aspire to work on graduation. In such companies, there is frequently an immediate context for the use of spoken English, often with colleagues from other Asian societies as well as from Hong Kong. Spoken English also serves as a lingua franca between some Hong Kong Cantonese speakers and Putonghua speakers from mainland China, particularly in the professional and

academic sectors of society. The fashionable restaurant and bar areas popular among young Hongkongers attract resident British and American youths, ethnic Chinese from local international schools, returnee kids from Canadian and US universities as well as large numbers of 'local' young people, creating a multicultural social mix in the social domain was almost unknown twenty years ago. Thus today, the complete range of purposes that young people 'need' English for may range from work to social life, and from academic study to entertainment and recreation.

Since 1997, a number of competing and often contradictory trends have emerged in the sociolinguistics of Hong Kong society. Official language policies promoting the increased use of the 'mother tongue' have been accompanied by a range of anxieties concerning both the future status of Cantonese as well as the continued use of English within the HKSAR. The blurring of linguistic concerns with political worries also seems to be a recurrent theme in such discussions. For example, Ng (2001) recently penned a scathing assessment of government policies (entitled 'Cosmopolitanism at risk') in which she equated recent linguistic trends with a growing ethnic nationalism:

> A few years ago, the streets of Central teemed with people of every race and colour. Now, the crowd is almost uniformly Chinese and local. Bilingualism used to be the rule in street signs and public notices, now they often are in Chinese only. Although the media has always consisted of more Chinese than English, now a non-Chinese speaker might stay unaware of even major news. [...] In the Legislative Council, English speeches are given little coverage. Subtly but certainly, non-Chinese-speaking people find the Chinese speakers around them less prepared to make allowance for their disability. Their areas of activity and awareness have diminished. Barristers who have no Chinese more frequently find themselves out of work. Patriotism and nationalism are the prerequisite for political advancement. Only Chinese food is politically correct for official functions. The best people swear by Chinese medicine. The only jarring note is that most senior civil servants (all of whom are Chinese) send their children to Britain and the US to be educated (Ng, 2001: 16)

Ng goes on to argue equate such trends with the increasing sinicization of Hong Kong, as well as concerns about the continued autonomy of the HKSAR, culturally and politically, noting that 'The SAR Government is to move towards greater concentration of power in the hands of a few senior officials, and power is to be exercised personally and directly, in imitation of Beijing' (Ng, 2001: 16). Ng's measured yet pessimistic conclusion is that:

> The determination to cleanse Hong Kong of its colonial past and its multiculturalism, and strive for a stronger and purer Chinese identity will do Hong Kong no good. Nor does Hong Kong's situation require such fundamental ethnic cleansing, even if pervasive economic hardship is making people seem stuck in pessimism. Hong Kong's fundamental institutions and values are sound. They have made Hong Kong prosperous. China's recent

> success is a story of how the leadership succeeded in steering the nation away from old habits into a modern society – such as Hong Kong. [...] To marginalise what is non-Chinese will not make the SAR a jewel of the ascending China. It will only strip Hong Kong of its cosmopolitan nature and expose its raw centre as no more than second-rate and provincial (Ng, ibid.).

Such concerns perhaps catch the mood of Hong Kong at the time of writing. With the HKSAR stuck in the economic doldrums from early 1998, with budget deficits, salary cuts, and low levels of 'confidence' in the community, political and economic anxieties find expression in a range of discourses, including those on language. In this context, it is perhaps useful to consider Hong Kong's own 'complaint tradition' in language issues, a tradition that mirrors discourses in Britain and other societies where 'language issues' often instantiate a displacement of other concerns, particularly political and social anxieties of various kinds (Milroy and Milroy, 1985).

The Hong Kong complaint tradition

The expression of political and social concerns in commentaries on local language issues is hardly new. One obvious example of this is the discourse on 'falling standards' that has permeated debates about language for at least the last thirty years. As early as the 1970s, a number of articles appeared detailing the weaknesses and shortcomings of Hong Kong students in learning English. (Kwok and Chan, 1972, Kwok and Chan, 1975). Around the same time, Hunter (1974) reported that there was much discussion about 'the poor standard of English spoken and written in Hong Kong by non-native speakers', and suggested that the problem could be seen as symptomatic of the gulf between the Chinese-speaking and English-speaking communities (1974: 15). The use of 'bad English' could thus be seen as 'a successful compromise between the twin necessities of communicating with another community and of remaining an acceptable member of one's own' and a way of 'informing one's interlocutor that one is not trying to become accepted by his community' (1974: 17).

In the early 1980s one local linguist described students as 'cultural eunuchs' who were 'semilingual' in English and Chinese (T'sou, 1985). Another (Gibbons, 1984) lamented the low standards of proficiency, and endorsed Lord's (1974) earlier blistering appraisal of students at the University of Hong Kong:

> For the majority of students entering the University of Hong Kong English is not a viable means of communication at all. About a fifth of them cannot make themselves understood in English, and their comprehension of spoken English is poor in the extreme. Few students can write English which is not bizarre (Lord, 1974, cited in Gibbons, 1984: 66).

The debate on 'low' or 'falling' standards of English has thus run from at least the mid-1970s to the present, although it probably reached a peak in the late 1980s, when a *South China Morning Post* editorial declared that '[t]he decline in the standard of spoken and written English in recent decades is obvious and measurable, and efforts by the Government and the tertiary education institutions have been insufficient to stop the slide' (*South China Morning Post*, 1989: 18). The debate was not confined to academics, but was rehearsed and expressed in the broadcast media and the local press, with editorials on language policy, feature articles, news reports and letters to the editor regularly appearing in the *South China Morning Post*. Many of the arguments also turned on the choice of language for schools between English, Cantonese and Putonghua but, as Lin (1997) notes, one of the strongest arguments in favour of English was economic, expressed through an identification of English with business, trade and prosperity. One 1986 editorial in the *South China Morning Post* made the case for English thus:

> English is pre-eminently the language of international trade, which is, and for the foreseeable future will remain, Hongkong's raison d'etre. There are indications that the territory's role in world commerce, far from diminishing as 1997 approaches, will increase in importance. Southeast and East Asia is widely seen as the growth area of the future and we are ideally placed to take advantage of this. Hongkong, as a stable and sophisticated oasis, is the obvious choice of any overseas company wishing to participate in the boom years ahead. The widespread use of English is an obvious added attraction (*South China Morning Post*, 1986a: 10).

A second editorial appeared in the same newspaper some two months later expressing concern about the possible effects on business and finance of the promotion of Cantonese:

> It is honourable for the people of Hongkong to feel a sense of 'nationalism' as we move towards 1997 and the change of sovereignty which will again make the territory part of China ... Cantonese is and should always be the mother tongue of Hongkong. There is no dispute in this. But it is a fact of life that Hongkong has grown to become a world leader in trade and finance on the back of and assisted by the English language ... It cannot be disputed that the international language in trade and commerce and a plethora of other interactions is English. And so it should be in Hongkong (*South China Morning Post*, 1987b: 8).

The reference to nationalism in the editorial also pointed to another strand in this debate, which was overtly political. In fact, some months earlier, the *Post* had published another editorial in response to a warning from a Chinese Education Ministry official (Mr Yang Xun) that the promotion of Cantonese as the teaching medium ran against the grain of mainland policy

and would be 'a step backward for Hongkong'. The *Post's* response in those pre-Tianmanen days was to endorse such concerns:

> Mr Yang has made an important point. We would recommend a fresh look at the subject. Putonghua and English are the languages which Hongkong should be stressing. English has, because of its adaptability, subtlety and richness, plus historical accident, become the language of international contact. Hongkong's status as a centre of world trade must be maintained, and our children must learn English to prepare them for the role they will one day assume. Putonghua is the official language of the nation to which Hongkong will be irrevocably joined after 1997. Our children will also become citizens of China, and should speak the language of their compatriots as well as English (*South China Morning Post,* 1986b: 16).

The political was to take a number of other forms in the language debates of the era. One news report even suggested that many schoolchildren were beginning to lose the motivation to study English because there was 'a different political atmosphere with Hongkong coming under Chinese rule' (Lau, 1986: 4). Ten years later, the politics of English took a new turn when significant numbers of the Chinese business and political elite started to 'drop' the use of English first names in favour of their Chinese given names. One prominent civil servant explained his decision by saying 'I do not have a Christian name, because I am not and have never been a Christian', adding that 'I have always been an atheist and the name "Brian" is, in fact, a product of colonialism' (*South China Morning Post,* 1996: 11).

From an empirical perspective, very little hard research was conducted on the issue of 'falling' language standards during these years, and what was done was inconclusive at best. King (1987) reported on the results of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority's (HKEA) English language examination for the years 1984 and 1986. After analysing a substantial number of statistics relating to 15,000 students, his conclusion was that there was no 'convincing evidence to suggest that the English standard of the best students coming through the Hongkong system has deteriorated in recent years' (King, 1987: 17). However, he went on to add that '[i]t is clear that the whole of the secondary system is being seriously affected by the presence of large numbers of students whose English language standards are quite inadequate to cope with an education in the medium of English' (ibid), which suggested that the root cause of such perceptions was the rapid expansion of the educational system. Johnson and Cheung researched levels of reading literacy in the mid-1990s as part of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) World Literacy Project. Their results showed good levels of attainment in Chinese-language reading proficiency, but relatively poor levels of proficiency in English literacy, although the research report suggests that this result might be influenced by the quality of schools as much as the choice of language, as

'[g]ood schools produce good results in both Chinese and English and poor schools are equally consistent in producing poor results' (Johnson and Cheung, 1995: 10).

As has been shown in many other societies, ideologies about 'falling standards' are often related to other factors, including social class divisions. Romaine (1994) suggests that '[s]tandards of language use and standard languages are essentially arbitrary conventions which can be learned only by going to school', and that '[t]his is precisely why they are so effective in maintaining barriers between groups' (1994: 202). She also points out that such debates have existed in Britain since the fifteenth century, and continue to the present day, even at Oxford University. In the Hong Kong context, one plausible inference with reference to these 'language standards' debates is that, in large part, they were a reaction to the rapid and unprecedented expansion of education, as well as the pace of political and social change in the society at large. These ideologies continued to be voiced with varying degrees of amplitude up to the 1997 Handover (Boyle, 1997), but now seem to have undergone a definite revival since Hong Kong entered an economic slump in 1998.

In March 1998, for example, a *South China Morning Post* editorial with the rubric 'Standards of English' gave a dismal assessment of the English of HKSAR university students:

> The poor standard of English among students in Hong Kong will continue to cause concern until the right questions are asked. Years of English-language education has failed to produce a bilingual society. Pupils often leave secondary education with only rudimentary knowledge of the tongue in which they were taught. It is surprising that so many go on to higher education with English as the medium of instruction, and emerge with a degree. [...] Hong Kong's educational institutions are failing to produce the goods (*South China Morning Post*, 1998: 18).

By 2000, various government-backed campaigns had begun to raise the standard of English in business and professional sectors in the HKSAR, including the *Workplace English Campaign*, which began in March 2000 by focusing on upgrading the English skills of relatively junior staff in Hong Kong businesses, i.e. secretaries, clerks, frontline service personnel, receptionists, and telephone operators, who collectively account for around a third of the work force. The scheme received substantial financial backing from the Department of Education and Manpower, who were also concerned to 'benchmark' levels of attainment for higher-level employees such as computer operators, engineering technicians, law clerks, and nurses (as well as schoolteachers who have been targeted in a separate and parallel campaign). The chairman of the government's *Workplace English Campaign*, Michael Tien, identified the issue as crucial to the HKSAR's future:

> Hong Kong is at risk of being perceived as just another "mainland city" unless standards of written and spoken English are not improved, a local businessman says. English is essential for the future of Hong Kong and the SAR must improve the language skills of its workforce to be globally competitive. [...] He said the last 10 or so years had seen a decline in English standards, perhaps reflecting the political shift towards the mainland. The perception in the business world is that other Asian capitals are stealing a march on Hong Kong. "We're not making Hong Kong user-friendly enough to attract foreign businessmen. We must make Hong Kong the first choice location of corporate executives and businessmen in Asia," Mr Tien said. (Regan, 2000: 23)

An examination of the record, as noted above, throws some doubt on the reality of a 'decline' in English standards in Hong Kong in the last ten years or so, as it is clear that the discourse on low standards goes back at least to the 1970s. An alternative explanation is that the demands of a rapidly changing economy have vastly increased expectations of the quality of English required, even from relatively low-level employees, particularly in comparison with that found in such Asian societies as Singapore and the Philippines where the sociolinguistic dynamics of society are very different. Which receives support from reports that in the HKSAR, the 'demand for good English speakers was now outstripping supply' (Gould, 2002: 1). Whether the government's *Workplace English Campaign* will be judged a success remains to be seen, but, if nothing else such debates at least testify to the raw tenacity of a complaint tradition that surfaces continually in the expression of ideologies on the decline in 'language standards'. Whether this culture of complaint actually improves the climate for language education in the community is again debatable. One important theme of the present volume is that a paradigm shift, especially at an attitudinal and ideological level, is long overdue in the community.

Hong Kong English: Autonomy and creativity

In the last twenty years or so there has been a forceful attempt by academics from a number of different countries to promote a non-Eurocentric (or 'non-Americentric') approach to the discussion world Englishes (or 'international varieties of English'), and this 'paradigm shift' in the academic world has been seen in the publications of journals like *English Today, English World-Wide,* and *World Englishes.* Braj B. Kachru, the co-editor of *World Englishes,* has argued for a model of global English, in terms of 'three concentric circles', *the inner circle* (societies such as Britain, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc. where English is the 'first language' of a majority of the population), *the outer circle* (societies such as India, the Philippines, etc. where English has the status of a 'second

language') and *the extending (or 'expanding') circle* (societies such as China or Japan where English has the status of a 'foreign language').

In pioneering a pluricentric approach to the study of world Englishes, Kachru has challenged a range of previously orthodox approaches to English worldwide, particularly those that saw the 'new Englishes' of Asia as linguistically and culturally dependent on the authority of such native-speaker norms as British or American English. In a recent paper, Kachru describes the spread of English in Asia, noting that at present:

- That the estimated total English-using population of Asia adds up to 350 million out of an estimated population of 3½ billion;
- That India, in the Outer Circle, is the third largest English-using country after the USA and the UK;
- That English is the main medium in demand for acquisition of bilingualism/multilingualism in the whole Asian region;
- That in parts of Asia (e.g., in Singapore) English is gradually acquiring the status of the dominant language or the *first* language — whatever we mean by that term (Kachru, 1997: 7)

Kachru argues for the acceptance and utilization of English as an Asian language, and the acculturation of English to sociolinguistic realities, as well as the imaginative needs, of Asian societies such as India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. The world Englishes approach to Asian varieties of English thus raises a number of questions for Hong Kong. In the case of Hong Kong, the existence of 'Hong Kong English', has received little recognition, despite the long and rich history of the English language in the South China context.

Some years ago, Llamzon (1986) wrote on the 'life cycle' of new Englishes in a paper which attempts to identify and describe the developmental stages of 'outer circle' Englishes. The metaphor of a life cycle for Asian Englishes is an interesting one, and one speculation that might arise from a comparison of Hong Kong and Philippine English is that the two varieties are located at different points in such a cycle. The irony in Hong Kong seems to be that at just that time when the government has felt moved to restrict the use of English in some official domains, bilingualism in English among the general population has reached its highest point ever. As Bacon-Shone and Bolton (1998) put it, the current situation is that 'not only are more and more people speaking English, but also that they are doing so with varying degrees of ability', in other words, 'more people than ever are speaking "good" English, and more people than ever are speaking "bad" English' (1998: 84). In its own specific post-colonial moment, Hong Kong English thus seems caught on a cusp of both 'expansion' and 'restriction' (Llamzon, 1986: 101–2). In this context, the notion of 'autonomy' refers not only to issues of linguistic description with reference to features of accent and vocabulary, but also to the history

of the variety, as well as the existence and vitality of creative writing in the HKSAR.

This volume is divided into five Parts, 'Language in Context', 'Language Form', 'Dimensions of Creativity', 'Resources', and 'Future Directions'. Part I includes four chapters that discuss a variety of issues related to the specifics of the Hong Kong sociolinguistic context. Bolton's chapter on the sociolinguistics of English in Hong Kong gives an overview of the sociopolitical background in the late colonial period, and then proceeds to make the case for the recognition of Hong Kong English in terms of both distinctive linguistic features and the growing literary creativity of the variety. The following chapter from Tsui and Bunton presents a detailed account of an investigation into the normative attitudes of English-language teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools. The results of their research indicate that at present there is little support for a notion of 'Hong Kong English' from practising schoolteachers, and that target model of English adopted by teachers is clearly exonormative, usually as represented by British dictionaries and grammars and other sources of 'Standard English'. Li's chapter on Cantonese-English code-switching presents a broad survey of research in this area over the last twenty-five years or so. In his analysis of the motivations for such language switching (and 'mixing') in the written discourse of the Chinese press, Li posits four context-specific motivations, i.e. euphemism, specificity, bilingual punning, and the 'principle of economy'. Chan's chapter on the English-language media is written primarily from the perspective of a professional newspaper writer now working in the field of journalism education. Chan provides a comprehensive survey of the English media in print journalism, radio, and television, and then goes on to argue the case for the training of a new type of bilingual media professional who can contest the assumptions and biases in the English-language news coverage of Hong Kong and China.

Part II, entitled 'Language Form', details research on the linguistic aspects of the description of Hong Kong English. Hung's chapter reviews previous research on the phonology of Hong Kong English (HKE), and also reports on his own original research on the Hong Kong accent. Hung's study of the speech forms of a group of university students suggests that the typical Hong Kong speaker operates with a smaller set of vowel and consonant contrasts than in 'native' varieties of English. Hung postulates an underlying phonemic system for HKE, and also describes a number of allophonic variations. Gisborne's chapter discusses relative clauses in Hong Kong English, and discusses a number of issues concerning the morphosyntactic feature system of the variety, with particular reference to relative constructions in Cantonese. Benson's chapter on Hong Kong words deals with the distinctive vocabulary of Hong Kong English. In his discussion of this, Benson focuses on patterns of semantic and pragmatic relationships internal to the variety, as well as the sociocultural context in which a localized vocabulary is used.

Part III focuses on 'dimensions of creativity' in Hong Kong English with specific reference to literary production in the HKSAR. The five authors in this section are all themselves creative writers and write with some authority on this topic. Louise Ho's contribution considers Hong Kong ('essentially a cosmopolitan city with a rock-hard Chinese core') as a site for works of the imagination, especially poetry. The chapter includes the work of young Hong Kong poets, as well as four poems from Ho herself. Agnes Lam's chapter tackles the issue of defining 'Hong Kong poetry' from a number of perspectives, interrogates both notions of 'poetry' and 'Hong Kong', and suggests that the sociolinguistic concept of 'speech community' may be of relevance in framing an adequate definition. Two poems by Lam are appended to this chapter. Leung Ping-kwan considers the task of writing poetry 'between' Chinese and English, describing the difficulties and excitements of negotiating between two languages and two cultures with reference to his poem, 'A Leaf of Passage'. This poem draws on the mythology of the Haida Gwaii, native Americans from British Columbia as well as the experiences of contemporary Hong Kong 'astronaut' fathers who shuttle between the HKSAR and Vancouver. In the following chapter, Nury Vittachi, an acclaimed columnist and writer of comic Hong Kong fiction, explores the humorous dimensions of 'Chinglish', a broad form of Hong Kong English that might well be dubbed 'basilectal' by the technical linguist. In his contribution, Vittachi affectionately satirizes a range of colloquial styles of this variety, including bar girl patois and taxi-driver talk. In the final chapter of this section, Hong Kong novelist Xu Xi describes both her evolution as a Hong Kong writer, and the schizophrenic identity of Hong Kong itself, a city 'neither both Chinese nor Western'. This chapter also includes an excerpt from Xu Xi's recent (2001) novel of Hong Kong life in the 1990s, *The Unwalled City*.

Part IV of the book carries the rubric 'Resources' and comprises three chapters intended to indicate further resources for those interested both in the linguistic and literary aspects of Hong Kong English. The chapter from Bolton and Nelson dealing with the International Corpus of English project in Hong Kong (HK-ICE) includes examples of a range of non-literary texts in Hong Kong English, including a business talk, popular writing, business and social letters, a broadcast talk, broadcast news, a Legco (Legislative Council) debate, and an informal conversation. The following chapter from Shirley Geok-lin Lim discusses the potential of creative writing in English for developing the 'cultural imagination' of HKSAR university students. Lim recounts insights from her own experience of teaching creative writing at the University of Hong Kong and presents a number of poems and short stories authored by her students, providing an invaluable guide to the work of new voices in Hong Kong English literary production. The final section in this chapter is a guide to bibliographical resources and the academic literature on English in Hong Kong. Part V comprises a single essay from Bolton and

Lim on possible 'futures' for Hong Kong English, which reviews a number of issues, linguistic and literary, relating to the themes of 'autonomy' and 'creativity'. This final chapter expresses the hope that a paradigm shift establishing a new discourse for 'Hong Kong English' will help create the cultural space for a revitalized attitude to the teaching of English as well as for the creative potential of English and Englishes in the HKSAR.

That the potential for such literary creativity is present in Hong Kong has been witnessed by a series of literary initiatives in the last few years, including the establishment of the Hong Kong Literary Festival (now moving into its third year), as well as the setting up of a number of creative writing programmes at local universities. A new anthology of Hong Kong writing spanning five decades, called *City Voices* will be published later this year (Ingham and Xu, 2002). In another development, Shirley Lim (together with Page Richards from the University of Hong Kong) has also been a driving force in the 'Moving Poetry' project to teach creative writing in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. The quality of the contributions in the first volume of such poems to come out of this project challenges the pessimism of complaint (Lim and Richards, 2001). When a ten-year-old Hong Kong Chinese boy[2] can produce a poem that runs *Among the creatures of the deep,/ I saw a goose,/ in metallic grey,/ diving in the abyss,/ stealthily, neck straight./* something unexpected happens, reminding us of the power of both imagination and literary expression. If the challenge of a paradigm shift is somehow to change a culture of complaint to one of confidence, the children *are* our future. The other half of the equation, we may recall, is to teach them well.

Notes

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2. The writer of this poem is Justin Ho Ching, who wrote it while a Primary 5 student at St Paul's Co-educational Primary School.

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