Worcester Polytechnic Institute
100 Institute Rd
Worcester, MA 01609

December 15, 2010

Ms. Brenda Yuen
Language Center
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Clearwater Bay, Kowloon
Hong Kong

Dear Ms. Yuen:

We would like to take the opportunity to thank you for all the guidance and help you have given us thus far in our project as our liaison. Attached is our project proposal including our literature review and anticipated approach to the research project. We plan to debrief the proposal with a presentation in the first few days that we arrive in Hong Kong and have sent you the proposal at this time with the hope that you will get a chance to review it before our arrival.

We are scheduled to arrive in Hong Kong on Thursday, January 6, 2011 and plan to visit Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on Friday, January 7, 2011 to introduce ourselves to you and the Language Center team. What is the most convenient time and location to meet with you? We have a meeting with our advisors that morning at 9:30am, so we would not be available until after noon.

After spending a term preparing for this project, we are extremely excited to finally be able to work with you and your team in person and hope to answer all the research questions posed. Have a wonderful holiday season and see you in January.

Thank you,

Derek Andersen
Tiffany Chau
Austin Noto-Moniz
Yuchen Xu

English Improvement at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Project Proposal
Interactive Qualifying Project
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester, Massachusetts

Sponsoring Agency
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Language Center

Submitted to:
On-Site Liaison:
Ms. Brenda Yuen, Language Center, HKUST

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Date:
December 15, 2010

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Executive Summary

English is the third most popular primary language in the world (Rosenburg, 2010). In particular the English language is especially popular in the fields of business, law, and education globally. Since Hong Kong is an international business center, and despite the transfer of control of Hong Kong from the British to the People's Republic of China in 1997, English has remained an official language of Hong Kong. Therefore, it is vital that Hong Kong inhabitants know the English language. However, for a myriad of reasons, the inhabitants of Hong Kong as a whole are not highly proficient in spoken English.

Hong Kong universities often provide special services to assist their students in learning English, since so few attendees are native English speakers (Ropi, Nguyen, Lam, et al., 2008.). As with other Hong Kong universities, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) developed a Language Center to improve this situation, specializing in creating classroom courses and tutoring programs. However, HKUST's Language Center has decided that its newest offering will not be of the traditional variety, opting instead for an extracurricular program, known as LEAP. The Language Center's Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) is a program that aims to enhance student's English language competency.

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the HKUST LEAP program and make recommendations as to which components and aspects of LEAP's initiatives are the most beneficial for the participants. Some of the key research objectives of this project are to determine if LEAP participation affects student English competency, to verify the perceived benefits of LEAP, to recognize the factors and conditions that positively affect learning, and discover what processes initiate and sustain LEAP involvement.

This project will meet these objectives through implementing surveys, interviews, focus groups, student observation and personal student interactions. In addition, we will be conducting a documentary analysis of previously written reports and questionnaire data from previous LEAP participants. Overall, effective programs will maintain student interest in LEAP as well as assist them in developing improved use and enjoyment of the English language.

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, the ability of people to communicate internationally with one another is more important than ever. Opportunities for individuals to interact with people of different mother tongues are increasing because of the demand for intercultural communication. In order to keep intercultural communication easy and understandable, a common language must emerge. For a variety of reasons, English frequently assumes this role and it has become the worldwide *lingua franca* (van Gelderen, 2006). Thus, it is important that non-native speakers learn the English language if they wish to fully function in the international environment.

Since Hong Kong is an international business center, and despite the transfer of control of Hong Kong from the British to the People's Republic of China in 1997, English has remained an official language of Hong Kong. Therefore, it is vital that Hong Kong inhabitants know the English language. However, for a myriad of reasons, the inhabitants of Hong Kong as a whole are not highly proficient in spoken English. Hong Kong universities often provide special services to assist their students in learning English, since so few attendees are native English speakers. Ideally, these services would enable non-native English speakers to emerge from universities with the English proficiency necessary to communicate with the rest of the world. However, while many students successfully develop their reading and writing skills, they are less comfortable with their verbal English skills. This is often attributed to the lack of opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom. To this end, the Language Center at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) has developed an extracurricular English program, known as the Language Enrichment Activities Programme (LEAP).

Similar to many other Hong Kong universities, students at HKUST are required to take English courses throughout their university experience (Crisp, 2005). The specific English courses taken are determined by the student's area of study. For example, three freshmen English courses exist: one each for business, science, and engineering students. Despite this English requirement, there seems to be a general feeling amongst the faculty and students that many of the students' English skills are not at the level necessary for true success at HKUST. In fact, some students who completed the first year English courses felt that it was "not worth their time", and even that their English ability had declined since arriving at HKUST. To promote English in an informal and more social setting, the Language Center introduced LEAP. The LEAP program promotes the use of English through activities such as the English Language Buddy Scheme, conferences, and other social activities. By teaching and encouraging the use of English outside of the classroom, the expectation is that this informal style of instruction will engage students more and encourage them to speak English.

While LEAP attempts to fill a gap that naturally occurs in any English as a Foreign Language program, there has been insufficient research evaluating its effectiveness (personal communication, October 26, 2010). Without supporting research, the Language Centre has no means to define successful programs and less successful programs. Research aimed towards which activities are the most popular and which ones best promote the improvement of spoken English would serve to guide the Language Center in future program development. Currently, the Language Center is developing new activities to garner greater interest in LEAP, but until they know whether or not they are making an impact, it is difficult to deem the program a success.

Our project goal is to evaluate the HKUST LEAP program and make recommendations as to which activities are the most beneficial for the participants. This study seeks to identify the factors that affect the acquisition of verbal English skills, which conditions appear to be necessary to achieve this language acquisition, and the processes that will initiate and sustain participants' involvement. Data on the participants' English improvement and use will be acquired by our own participation in the LEAP activities. Participant and facilitator opinions will be gathered through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. This research is a necessary step in promoting the effectiveness of LEAP, as well as the proper use and enjoyment of English as a whole at HKUST.

2. Background

Research on English education encompasses many facets of language education. In this chapter, we will review English's dominance in the world, foreign language education, the history of English in Hong Kong, and HKUST's involvement in English language education. Additionally, we will discuss previous studies, past approaches and English's current status in the world.

2.1 English in the World

English is the third most popular primary language in the world (Rosenburg, 2010). With its usage on the rise, more people are developing a need to learn the language. *Lingua franca* is a term coined to describe a language that is commonly used by non-native speakers to communicate (van Gelderen, 2006). In medieval times, Latin was the lingua franca. Today, English has taken on this role. Due to its popularity, English remains the international language of business, politics, and global diplomacy.

Starting in the 1600s, English began its journey around the world (van Gelderen, 2006). With England's colonization of regions in Africa and Asia, the English influence became an important component of many societies. The language remained intact even after the independence of countries such as the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Kenya. Some of these countries, such as India and South Africa, adopted this language because of the lack of a unifying, common language. It is not only due to previous British authority that English remains of importance in India. India is known for outsourcing industries and services, and the role of English has been dramatically increasing due to the need of the language to function in the global market.

After World War II, the United States began to establish its dominance in the cultural, scientific, and economic fields (van Gelderen, 2006). This put pressure on other countries to teach and learn the English language. Some argue that there is a conscious effort to uphold the importance of English because of the financial and economic benefits. Many investments are made involving English instruction, thus encouraging the use of the language.

There are many reasons why English is such a universal language. Whether the world is deliberately upholding the language or the historical influence of English persists, the importance of the language is undeniable. English continues to dominate as the language to learn worldwide.

2.2 Language Education in the World

To understand English teaching methods in Hong Kong, it is important to review English teaching techniques used in other countries. Specifically, we will look at countries where English is not the primary language spoken. Although English is an official language in Hong Kong, a large percentage of the population does not speak English with a high level of proficiency, or even at all. To achieve this, we profiled the language teaching methods of three other East Asian regions: Japan, South Korea, and mainland China.

2.2.1 Japan

"There is a realization within Japan today that globalization means that the Japanese people need a far higher level of English proficiency than has hitherto been the case" (Honna & Takeshita, 2005, p. 363). This observation could not be clearer in emphasizing the importance of English in today's world. As a result, Japan has felt the need in recent years to revamp its English instruction to meet this growing demand on their residents to speak English. Thus, they created a

five-year plan, dubbed "Strategic Plan to Cultivate 'Japanese with English Abilities'". This plan lays out higher standards for English language comprehension and proficiency at the high school and university levels.

Japan remains one of the few Asian countries that have not introduced English at the primary school level (Honna & Takeshita, 2005). A proposal for the addition of formal English instruction to Japan's primary schools was to be introduced by the end of 2004 but was put on hold in favor of other academic subject areas. Another problem with introducing English to primary school students is teacher opposition. While parents are largely for the introduction of mandatory English instruction (70.7% are in favor), only 36.6% of teachers favor it, with 54.1% against it. Teachers seem to be most worried that the students' understanding in other subjects will suffer, or even that their acquisition of Japanese will suffer.

It is important to note that English is not entirely absent from primary schools in Japan (Honna & Takeshita, 2005). Rather than any in-class English instruction, primary school students often participate in more informal English education, such as Integrated Study Hour. Additionally, schools may elect to teach English, although there is no national standard or pressure to make this a requirement. Regardless of this informality, about seventy percent of primary schools in Japan teach English in one form or another.

In Japan's five-year plan, junior high school graduates will be expected to have the English skills to "conduct basic communication with regard to areas such as greetings, responses, or topics relating to daily life" (MEXT, 2003). To this end, small-group teaching was adopted. This will help to move English courses away from the traditional methods of translation teaching and

remove the temptation for a teacher-centered course. Furthermore, the focus of English instruction will shift from reading abilities to communication abilities. Where junior high school students were traditionally taught English through grammar and vocabulary, the focus will now be on listening to and speaking English.

Senior high school students are being held to a higher standard of English comprehension (MEXT, 2003). Their expected command of spoken English provides "normal communication with regard to topics, for example, relating to daily life" (MEXT, 2003). As with the junior high schools, the small-group method of teaching was adopted. However, they will not only focus on listening to and speaking of English, but also reading and writing. Thus, English grammar and vocabulary education are preserved, but in a more applied, practical, and useful approach.

Japan has also set a goal to increase its study abroad program (MEXT, 2003). Their aim is to have 10,000 high school students studying abroad in any given year. As there are not many opportunities in Japan to practice English with native speakers, the study abroad program will afford many students that chance.

One final change that will have an indirect impact on senior high school English instruction is modifications to acceptance standards for universities (MEXT, 2003). A listening section is being added to the University Center Examination to encourage greater proficiency in spoken English. Additionally, universities will now consider the results of other English proficiency evaluations in determining acceptance. Courses are often designed to allow students to pass standardized tests. Thus, changing to a method of standardized testing supports the proposed modification to English instruction at the senior high school level.

University students also have a new standard for expected English proficiency upon graduation (MEXT, 2003). They should be able "to use English in their work" (Goals to Cultivate). In light of the new standards for English proficiency upon high school graduation and the more thorough testing of true English comprehension on the university entrance exam, students should be entering Japanese universities with a better understanding of English. This will allow for a reorganization of English instruction techniques in the university itself. However, there are no changes being imposed on university English instruction as part of this plan, save for a brief mention of a foreign exchange program. Thus, one can infer that it will be up to the Japanese universities to individually determine the components of their English instruction going forward.

2.2.2 South Korea

Recently, South Korea has begun to put more emphasis on English language education in its public school system. In 1994 the government decided that English instruction as a Foreign Language (EFL) would begin in the third grade. This gives South Korean children a strong base in the language, as young children have the easiest time learning a foreign language. Previously, the government decided to introduce the communicative language teaching (CLT) method for English education at the secondary school level (ages 12-18). CLT is a speaking based teaching method that focuses on meaningful tasks in the language, rather than on the language itself. Thus, one can conjecture that CLT is a more practical approach than it is a thorough one. Investigating the impact of this technique, Defeng Li (1998) found that CLT is not a very effective method of English education for secondary school students in South Korea for a number of reasons. He identified four major problems with the CLT method as applied to EFL in South Korea: difficulties caused by the teacher, difficulties caused by the student, difficulties caused by the education system, and difficulties caused by the CLT method itself.

While the Korean teachers were largely confident in their English reading and writing skills, they cited their own lack of expertise in spoken English as hindering their utilization of the CLT method (Li, 1998). Even those who felt they could teach using the CLT method found themselves unable to answer questions promptly. In South Korea, the ability for a teacher to answer any student question promptly and correctly is highly valued. One teacher even stated, "In [South] Korea, when you can't answer all of the students' questions right away, you can't be a teacher" (p. 687). Thus, even if their English skills were adequate, a lack of confidence in answering student questions deterred some teachers. Additionally, the teachers felt that they did not receive enough training in CLT, leading to a struggle in understanding and implementing the CLT method.

In order to be effective, the CLT method requires some pre-existing oral English skills. As English instruction did not begin until middle school, the teachers felt that their students did not possess the necessary understanding of English to use CLT (Li, 1998). Furthering this problem is the students' desire to focus on grammar rather than communication. Although they know communication is more important overall, they care more about grammar since that is the knowledge need to pass the grammar-based National University Entrance Exam.

As the CLT method aims to increase communication, smaller class sizes are optimal. However, South Korean secondary school classes usually consist of 50 students, providing a barrier to the successful implementation of the CLT method (Li, 1998). Moreover, the grammar-based National University Entrance Exam is required to enter university in South Korea. Thus, if the students aspire to attend university in South Korea, they need to have a good understanding of formal English grammar rather than good English communication skills. To quote a teacher from

the study, "Because [the National University Entrance Exam] only tests students' grammar knowledge and reading ability, both students and teachers are interested in grammar and reading in English classes" (p. 692).

Another major problem with the CLT method is that the Korean teachers Li (1998) interviewed felt the CLT method is not very well suited to an EFL environment. The CLT method appears to be a good method when the students need English for their daily lives and is thus well suited for an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Since Korean students are likely to only encounter English in class, the benefits of the CLT method are often lost.

2.2.3 Mainland China

English as a foreign language has been taught in the People's Republic of China since 1862 (Wang-Kun, 1981). During the period of 1922 to 1949, in-class English instruction was facilitated with extracurricular activities such as singing songs, telling stories, and performing. This teaching manner is known as the Direct-method approach. This method approaches teaching by "…associating of word with thing, or thing with context, and of context with expression in the language under study" (pp.656-657). The perceived benefit is that the full "contextual situation of a living event" (pp. 656-657) is experienced, thus allowing the student to experience the language by association with the activity.

During the 1970s and the early 1980s, the commercial structure was reformed, and external trade was opening-up, bringing more opportunities for communication with outsiders to inhabitants of mainland China. During this time, English became a highly desirable skill, which prompted its introduction in middle schools in most cities, and in elementary schools in well developed areas.

Students used records, tapes, slides and other visual/oral aids assisted English Learning and acted as a supplement for textbooks. Extracurricular activities such as stage performances, singing groups, and film studies are also provided for students to learn the idiomatic expressions of English.

In class English education in mainland China concentrates on reading and writing skills, while listening and speaking skills generally fall far behind (Hu, 2004). One factor that contributes to this problem is that the language skills of the English instructors are not balanced. When the instructors were learning English at college, English audio materials were scarce, and some written materials were outmoded. As a consequence, these instructors might not able to provide enough information on practical English skills to their students. Furthermore, due to the large number of students, the quality of in-class English education cannot be guaranteed. Since a single class can contain 70 to 80 students, not every student can be taken care of in the allotted 45 to 50 minutes. Reading and writing skills can be practiced in class or in homework individually; however, listening and speaking skills are unlikely to be addressed in this manner. Moreover, although controversial, education in mainland China is still exam-oriented. Under these circumstances, listening and speaking skills are more likely to be ignored since they are rarely tested on the standard exams.

To address the deficiencies of in-class teaching methods, other forms of English education have emerged in China (Hu, 2005). These enhancement courses offer varying concentrations and teaching styles, all of which have played an important role in English education in mainland China. Some courses are still exam-oriented, such as those specially designed for the College Entrance Exam, CTE-4, CET-6, IELTS, and GRE. In those courses, instructors are not only

responsible for teaching, but also studying the exams and predicting the questions that are likely to appear on the next exam. Students may receive a satisfactory grade, but their overall language abilities are not necessarily improved. Other enhancement courses are designed based on students' interests and emphasize their speaking and listening skills. These are often small courses, or even one-on-one tutoring. Instructors are usually native English speakers or have a background overseas. However, this kind of course is generally expensive and can be offered to very few people.

Additionally, studies have been done with regard to the role of extracurricular activities in learning. Yanren Ding (2007) completed three interviews of professors in 2006, which studied "the practices of successful Chinese Learners of English" (p.1). The interviews suggested that text memorization and imitation were the most effective ways to learn English. In particular, Ding suggested that the students benefited most from "reciting lessons, imitating tapes, holding in-class discussions, and extracurricular activities" (p.4). While studying texts and tapes were rather useful, in-class discussions gave the students the opportunity to practice their English proficiency in front of their peers. While there weren't many extracurricular activities available, the interviewees suggested that speech and drama performances supported their skills. One of the interviewees recalled that she received first prize in a contest for imitating dialogue from the movie *Gone with the Wind*; this rewarding experience stimulated her interest further in learning English. Another interviewee stated that he learned "more outside the class than inside" (p. 5). In particular the three interviewees would watch movies and memorize their favorite movies. Overall, the role of in-class discussions and out of class activities assisted these students in perfecting their learning of the English language.

2.3 History of English in Hong Kong

The English language made its debut in Hong Kong in the mid to late 1800s and has maintained its presence until today (Carroll, 2007). It is one of the official languages of Hong Kong, along with Cantonese. This can be attributed to its history of British occupation. The British first occupied Hong Kong in January 1841 and soon after make it a formal British Colony during the Opium War.

From the beginning of its colonial history, Hong Kong incorporated many ethnicities, such as Chinese, European, Eurasian, Indian, American, and other ethnic groups (Carroll, 2007). Generally, each ethnic group isolated itself and did not interact much with the other cultural groups. This would soon change in 1942, only a year after colonization. The British built private schools taught in English, and the Chinese village schools soon followed suit. There were voices form a rising Chinese middle class demanding English education, and it became apparent that teaching in English would help improve Sino-British relations.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a demand for higher education was present, which led to the establishment of Hong Kong University on March 11, 1912 (Carroll, 2007). Unfortunately, English education ceased to advance in Hong Kong due to the interruption in education caused by World Wars I and II. This was due in part to Japanese control of the island during World War II. Hong Kong saw the rise of more universities after the British regained control in 1945. English was seen as the language of business and law. Consequently, schools in Hong Kong offered higher education in English throughout Hong Kong's later colonial history. Even after control of Hong Kong was transferred from the British to the People's Republic of China in

1997, English remained an official language and is presently used as the primary language in higher education.

2.4 Language Education in Hong Kong

The language education present in Hong Kong today is varied and unique. Many schools are investigating teaching and learning through electronic methods. Others are still implementing traditional weekly lectures. Some schools are exploring more unconventional methods by expanding learning outside of the classroom (Felder & Henriques, 1995). Since students respond better to different teaching methods, it is important to incorporate all facets of learning in an English program.

Some Hong Kong schools implement successful English programs by integrating both literature approaches and applied linguistics (Crisp, 2006). However, these programs are electives, and most students opt to take literature based courses. Because of their comfort in the literary context and their discomfort with the application involved in applied linguistics, not many students have embraced the challenge of the courses. ENG 3150, an English course offered in Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), focusing on the applied use of the language in the classroom. Of the 125 students allowed to take the course, only 24 students enrolled.

The professor of ENG 3150 found it difficult to cover all the material for the course in a traditional classroom setting (Crisp, 2006). To help deal with this shortcoming, he began making use of an internet-based program. The professor and teaching assistants were available to help clarify the exercises for the students. After developing the curriculum, the professor offered a course of study to CUHK and Lancaster University students. He discovered that web-based

learning is more engaging and interesting to students than traditional classroom lectures. At the same time, this web-based learning can be just as challenging as its traditional counterpart. A similar evaluation of the distance education programs at the universities in Hong Kong concluded that both web-based teaching programs in conjunction with traditional lectures were more effective than traditional lectures alone.

It is also important to note that traditional classroom lectures in Hong Kong may not be as beneficial as they appear to be. Frequently, the supplementary material is in English but the professors themselves lecture in Cantonese (Flowerdew, Li, & Miller, 1998). The absence of a connection between the two languages often leads a lack of proficiency. The lack of exposure to English in this situation perpetuates an unending cycle of lacking the ability to learn in English. The teachers themselves are not always as proficient in English as they should be. This leads to what Flowerdew calls a mixed mode of teaching. A mixed mode uses "Cantonese with English terminology for oral exposition and English as the medium of textbooks, written assignments, and examinations" (p. 205).

More unconventional methods of teaching languages are becoming more popular because of the deviation from conventional lecture styles. Studies have shown that the most successful teachers incorporate "reading and writing activities daily, explicitly model literacy skills and strategies, and integrate literacy instruction with the rest of the curriculum, creating naturalistic opportunities for addressing literacy skills" (Anthony, 2008, p.476). This can be done by decreasing the obstacles of cognitive load, culture load, language load, and learning load. By simplifying the amount of information taught and the activities the teacher requires the students to apply the language to, the language can be more internalized. Creating this supportive learning

environment by beginning with less complicated lessons and increasing to more complex lessons creates a sense of confidence that enable students to succeed.

Flowerdew (1998) also discusses the importance of collaborative conversations in learning a new language. By working together to exchange ideas and course material, the majority of learning comes from these dialogues. Similar to focus groups, these collaborative dialogues require an equal amount of interaction from both teacher and student. While Flowerdew's collaborative conversations involve teachers and students, these groups may also be comprised solely of students. In such a situation, peers are teaching peers, and the strengths of one student could be a weakness of another. Facilitating this exchange of ideas fosters the communication that is scrucial in education.

With respect to teacher student collaborative groups, students must ask teachers the same number of questions that teachers ask students. Unlike structured lectures, these conversations should consist of discussions open to interpretation. Offering too many closed questions with right or wrong answers changes the purpose from communication to examination. This method of collaborative groups encourages the students to apply their own knowledge of the language and not be afraid to participate.

2.5 HKUST

Although all courses at Hong Kong universities are taught in English, a relatively small proportion of each school's student population speaks English as their native tongue (Ropi, C., Nguyen, K., Lam, N., et. Al., 2008). This introduces a problem which all universities in Hong Kong must address. HKUST is no different. As with other Hong Kong universities, HKUST has

developed a Language Center to improve this situation, specializing in creating classroom courses and tutoring programs. However, HKUST's Language Center has decided that its newest offering will not be of the traditional variety, opting instead for an extracurricular program, known as LEAP.

2.5.1 Language Center

Since courses in HKUST are taught in English, the students are required to possess a comprehensive level of English proficiency. Although the Language Center in HKUST offers courses in various languages, their primary responsibility remains to assist students with English ((Ropi, C., Nguyen, K., Lam, N., et. Al., 2008).

In order to empower students to study independently in the university as well as to work and communicate in a language that is not their native tongue, various programs sponsored by the Language Center are available (Language Center Handbook, 2009). The Language Immersion by Residence Abroad (LIBRA) program offers overseas opportunities to study language to deserving students. Language exchange programs and foreign-language conversation groups will provide opportunities for language practice in different social contexts. Writing and Speaking through the Curriculum Program sponsors students activities, such as mini-workshops and face-to-face tutorials with assessors. In addition, "The Language Centre will continue and expand its provision for guidance to students entering for the IELTS (English) and State Commission (Putonghua) examinations, [and] will extend its provision of extra-curricular and co curricular courses, including on-campus residential immersion programmes" (p. 4).

2.5.2 LEAP

The Language Center's Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) is a program that aims to enhance student's English language competency (Language Center – LEAP, 2010). Through collaboration with the student body and various university departments, LEAP integrates extracurricular experiences into the curriculum to create and extend student English learning opportunities outside the classroom. This serves to enhance language acquisition while enabling peer-supported learning.

The initiatives of LEAP consist of the English Language Buddy Scheme (ELBS), Campus WRAP, and Mini-Immersion Programme (MIP) (Language Center, 2010). The ELBS workshops are social settings to encourage the use of English among students through peer-supported learning. Campus WRAP is an English-language camp for incoming students that helps students acquire English skills needed to succeed in their future studies in a fun and interactive environment. The MIP initiative is a series of day-camps offering an immersive environment for the participants to hone their verbal English skills.

2.6 Previous Studies at HKUST

The LEAP initiative at HKUST is a very young program. Thus, there simply has not been the time for any studies to evaluate its effectiveness. However, a number of studies have been conducted with its parent, the HKUST Language Center. As these studies have no doubt influenced the Language Center's decision to create LEAP, they will serve to inform our own evaluation of LEAP. The English Program Analysis at HKUSY evaluated the existing English language education system at HKUST, while the Learning Styles at HKUST looked at the various English learning styles among students with different cultural background.

2.6.1 English Program Analysis at HKUST

All freshmen at the HKUST take one of three English courses, determined by their intended area of study. Business majors, engineering majors, and science majors take LABU 101, LANG 106, and LANG 108, respectively. The authors were interested in gathering the opinions of current students, teachers, and previous students of the program in order to assess the effectiveness of these three courses. Specifically, they gathered data on the areas that students felt most unconfident initially and how they have improved by the end of the program.

The data suggested that the majority of students were interested in learning English, although the percentage interested seemed to vary with area of study (Humphrey, et al., 2008). The students across all three freshmen English classes agreed that their biggest weakness was their ability to speak English, and they were most interested in improving that skill. Students concluded each course with the impression that they had largely improved their speaking skills, although those coming out of LANG 106 felt that they improved their writing skills more.

A large number of teachers for these introductory courses believe writing English is actually the most important English skill for success at HKUST, although the LANG 106 teachers believe oral English to be most important (Humphrey, et al., 2008). The teachers seem to agree that their students were weakest in these two areas, largely because of a lack of opportunities to interact with native English speakers. Consequently, all teachers believed they were doing a good job emphasizing these skills.

Not surprisingly, previous students of the program agreed with both the teachers and current students that speaking is the most important skill imparted by the first-year English program

(Humphrey, et al., 2008). However, it seemed that many students of LANG 106 and LANG 108 did not feel the course was structured in a useful manner. They felt it met too infrequently and was not worth enough credit to encourage students to put forth their best effort, thus their actual English proficiency did not benefit significantly.

2.6.2 Learning Styles at HKUST

In 2009, an Interactive Qualifying Project carried out by students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute assessed the affects of learning English at HKUST (Do, et al., 2009). Two different studies were completed to accomplish this goal. One study examined the differences in learning styles between Eastern and Western students, and the other study investigated whether a student's academic major affected English learning styles. Overall, the group felt that learning styles plays a significant role in how students view and use information presented in the classroom. While the goal of our project is to analyze out of classroom English activities, it is important to understand in-class English learning styles.

The first study analyzed the differences present between Eastern and Western students. The study examined "learning styles based on four dimensions: active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal, and sequential/global" (Do, et al., 2009, p. 5). The active and reflective dimension refers to the approach to understanding new concepts. Sensing learners prefer to learn all the specific details, whereas intuitive learners prefer theory. Visual learners better process information through the use of visual aids, while verbal learners favor the oral presentation of material. The last dimension encompasses sequential learners who prefer to learn in a linear fashion and global learners who would rather focus on the overarching concepts before concentrating on the smaller details. The only significant difference found between Western and

Eastern students was that Eastern students were more reflective, and Western students were more active learners. Western students prefer to learn by participating and involving themselves in discussions and experiments; by contrast Eastern students prefer to analyze and think about a problem before applying themselves. While this information is valuable, it was the only conclusive result the study was able to support evidence, as the other three dimensions provided no significant differences between the Eastern and Western learning styles.

Learning Style in HKUST investigated the correlation between academic majors and English learning style (Do, et al., 2009). English Program analysis at HKUST was further categorized by students' major including engineering, business and management, and science majors. The significant findings were that science majors were the most reflective of the three majors, and business and management students were the least reflective. Engineering students were more visual when compared to those form science and management departments. In addition, they were less sequential and more global than other majors. Despite the lack of significant conclusions for each dimension and major, the study on learning style suggested that academic major is an important factor in determining the most effective learning techniques to use in language learning curricula.

After completing the initial studies, focus groups were held with participants from the previous study (Do, et al., 2009). These focus groups addressed three categories: teaching methods, student outlook on English classes, and student study habits.

The discussion of teaching methods included discussions about the role of PowerPoint, student preferences, and class organization (Do, et al., 2009). The PowerPoint discussion did not result

in a general consensus among the students; however, more students preferred PowerPoint to using blackboard. Student conversation regarding their preferences in the classroom demonstrated that more emphasis was needed with respect to in-class student presentations. These students believed that this would improve their presentation skills and prepare them for future academics and careers. Class organization focus groups concluded that students were frustrated with the expectation of knowledge of prerequisite course material.

HKUST students preferred more engaging activities in class that extended beyond the textbook (Do, et al., 2009). Half of the students wanted more classroom interactions in which they could exercise their English speaking skills, and just less than half thought they would benefit from in-class writing activities.

The students expressed a general lack of motivation to study English, often only studying before an exam or assignment deadline (Do, et al., 2009). Overall, the students indicated their English is practiced usually through magazines, movies, television, the radio, chatting, and playing video games. The report addressed the issues of learning English in a predominately Chinese-speaking country. The results from these studies indicated that the students at HKUST are more reflective than students from Western cultures, and that academic major also impacts learning styles.

2.7 Summary

The English language plays an important role in the World, stemming from its colonial roots; it has developed into the language for international business, law, and education. Hence, great emphasis is placed on English education all over the World. While many countries have their own means of educating their students in the English language, Hong Kong, in particular

HKUST, has developed their own approach for learning English. Through the language center, LEAP provides HKUST students opportunities to develop their English language proficiency with out of class activities. While studies have been conducted on English learning styles inside and outside of the classroom, there is a need to investigate the impact of these alternative approaches on the modern student learning English. This project will assist LEAP in understanding the most effective pedagogical strategies to encourage and develop the use of English at HKUST.

3. Methodology

To assess which components and aspects of LEAP's initiatives are most beneficial to the HKUST students' English improvement, four objectives must be met. The following methods target these objectives: identify LEAP activities that actively engage students and encourage participation, determine the amount of change in English language competency amongst LEAP participants, identify LEAP activities that effectively improve HKUST students' English, and verify the perceived benefits of LEAP participation. We will meet these objectives through participation in LEAP and by the use of surveys, observational data, existing document analysis, interviews, and/or focus groups.

3.1 Student Interactions in Various Environments

This objective encompasses a large component of the methodology for this project. This investigation focuses on observing HKUST students in social and academic environments in conjunction with engaging the students in various LEAP activities. Participation in LEAP activities and observation of HKUST students will occur in all of the programs, but the emphasis will be in two main programs, a two-day student conference and ELBS.

3.1.1 *Connecting the Dots* Conference Experience

In an attempt to "promote interaction and discussion among students with different cultural backgrounds" at HKUST, we will work in teams of two to give two twenty-minute presentations at the HKUST Language Center's (2010) first annual conference "Connecting the Dots". This two-day conference will bring together alumni speakers, HKUST student speakers, and other notable speakers to share their experiences during and after university life. They will have the opportunity to share their experiences and viewpoints about the future of their academics, career

values, and life's balance. There will be multiple components of the conference, including a problem solving seminar and a round table discussion.

The first presentation we will give is entitled "Work and Enjoyment in Life" and will discuss the relationship between work and life. We will share our beliefs about how the relationship should exist and if we should live to work or work to live. This presentation will be prepared by two members of the group and will aim to interact with the students to prompt their own thoughts about the subject.

Our second presentation, entitled "University: When Opportunity Knocks", will explore the speakers' own experiences in an American university. Specifically, the speakers will focus on techniques they have employed for getting the most out of their university experience. As one speaker is an international student and the other is American-born, two unique viewpoints will be presented, shedding light on the differences in attitude and expectations. Between the two speakers, their university experience will be presented as full of unique chances and opportunities that will provide a great influence on their future.

After each presentation there will be ten minutes for comments and questions, allowing students to clarify ideas presented, or even interject their own thoughts on the topic. During the problem solving seminar, we will be able to observe and participate in a "game of life" that will simulate real life problems one may have to deal with in the future. We will take notes on the level of engagement and participation the students demonstrate. Overall, the goal of the first day is to observe and note student engagement with the conference.

On the second day of the conference, more presentations are given by other speakers, and towards the end there is a round table discussion. This discussion based activity allows the participants to question other students, alumni, and faculty on their views and beliefs. Our goal during this is to note the level of engagement, as well as determine the level of understanding the students have. We plan to ask them a few questions during this process and have them fill out a questionnaire afterward (see Appendix C.1). Overall, while observational analysis will occur, the round table discussion and student questionnaires are going to allow for a quantitative analysis of the students' development.

3.1.2 ELBS – Student Experience

The English Language Buddy Scheme (ELBS) is another program offered by LEAP, and it will serve as the second main study of the project. ELBS students meet weekly with a Language Center Activity Facilitator and are given the opportunity to practice their English through socializing, movie discussions, board games, hiking and other social activities. We will be participating in the ELBS acting as assistants to the facilitators as well as student participants, engaging the students in the activities. The objective of this will be to identify which activities actively engage and encourage student participation. This will be achieved through one of two possibilities, or both. The first is an electronic survey, and the other is a focus group.

Questionnaires will be distributed to all ELBS participants (approximately 80 to 90 students) at the end of the project team's involvement with LEAP. These questionnaires (see Appendix C.2) will reveal the students' opinions about their own English improvement over the course of their participation in the ELBS, their satisfaction with activities offered and any additional recommendations or comments they would like to make. The perceived benefit of the survey is

that it allows students anonymity in their answers. Due to the anonymous nature of this survey, it will be more likely to yield honest responses.

The focus group study will be constructed with a very similar intent as the survey. However, the focus group will allow for the students to give more detailed responses than the survey (refer to Appendix C.3 for an outline). This may offer students who have trouble articulating their thoughts on paper the opportunity to draw more personalized opinions. The student feedback will allow for appropriate analyzing and will allow us to identify LEAP activities that actively engage students and encourage participation. Additionally, the conversations that occur can be used to evaluate the English language competency of the students. Of the ninety students in ELBS, we will randomly select twenty to participate in our focus groups. They will be split into two focus groups of ten students each in order to keep the size of each group manageable.

3.2 Student English Evaluations

One of our main goals is to evaluate how much LEAP actually impacts student English skills. To achieve this, we have decided to use an oral examination, as a written exam fails to test the participants' skill at speaking and listening to English. However, we are unsure of the details of the implementation of this oral evaluation at this time. In order to discover how to best proceed with this examination, we must first become familiar with the students and determine our relationship with them. This will allow us to devise an effective and thorough examination strategy. We have already produced some ideas, such as a custom evaluation of their apparent level of understanding and sentence forming ability (briefly outlined in Appendix C.4). Our current thoughts center on having one group member pose as a bystander who will take notes while the student subject interacts with another group member. This will allow for an interaction

in which the student will be uninfluenced by the fact that they are being evaluated, but still allow us to gather useful data.

3.3 Evaluation of Effective LEAP Activities

The data collected will allow us to assess the overall English progress of the students in LEAP, which can then be compared to the progress made by students who are not part of LEAP. This will give us an idea of how much English improvement was actually due to LEAP. Once determined, this information can be combined with data on the successes of LEAP as an initiative, as well as student impressions of the program, to give us a full picture of the difference it makes. We will then provide a full assessment of this data and provide recommendations where appropriate. The recommendations will identify LEAP activities that effectively improve the English competency of HKUST students.

3.3.1 Program Organizer Interviews

To understand LEAP successes over the years, we will interview various staff members who organize and plan programs for LEAP such as Language Center Activities Facilitators (from ELBS), English professors and other LEAP management members. Through these interviews, we hope to discover their personal views on student growth and written and oral English improvement from the program as well as their predictions about student performance in the future based on their English ability. We expect to conduct three to five such interviews (see Appendix C.5).

3.3.2 Student LEAP Feedback

It is also important to consider student opinions when evaluating LEAP. In the form of a survey, located in Appendix C.6, we hope to gain insight about the program as a whole, not specifically

targeting any initiative, such as the conference or ELBS. These questionnaires will be distributed to approximately 20 students participating in each component of LEAP. Their opinions about which programs are the most effective, the most enjoyable and comments about program structure will be beneficial when comparing the program opportunities and the fulfillment of student needs through those opportunities. Their personal insights about their English proficiency after participating in some of these programs will help establish how effective LEAP is in meeting their goals.

In addition to this survey, we will conduct individual student interviews. At random, we expect to interview two students participating in the following activities, ELBS, the two-day conference as well as general LEAP activities. Questions will be focused on the general impressions that students have about their English improvement through involvement with LEAP (See Appendix C.7)

3.4 Summary

To summarize, the methodology is broken up into three approaches that each tackle an objective. The first objective seeks to identify LEAP activities that actively engage and encourage student participation through various activities, such as the conference, ELBS, and other activities. The second objective will determine the amount of change in English language competency there is amongst LEAP participants, based on the Language Center's English program analysis. The third objective identifies LEAP activities that effectively improve HKUST students' English through feedback from surveys, focus groups, existing document analysis, and faculty comments/interviews. All of this information will be analyzed and allow us to determine our fourth objective, which is verifying the perceived benefits of LEAP participation.

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Appendix A: Sponsor Description

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) is a public university in Hong Kong, founded in 1991 (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Ordinance, 1997). It was conceived in the mid-1980s as "a university that could propel [Hong Kong] towards a knowledge- based economy, and provide the entrepreneurs and innovative ideas; the scientists and groundbreaking research; the engineers, global business managers and other leaders necessary" (HKUST, 2010b). Today, HKUST consists of just over 6,000 undergrads and just under 500 instructors (HKUST, 2010a).

The mission of HKUST is to "advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research, particularly in science, technology, engineering, management and business studies, and at the postgraduate level" (HKUST, 2010c). Their mission is not only academic, as they also aim to aid with the development of Hong Kong in both the social and economic fields. Their vision is three-fold, with each piece addressing a different sphere of influence: global, national, and local. Globally, HKUST aims to be amongst the best in the world in all areas of study that it has to offer. As one of the leading universities in China, they also aim to contribute to the development of China in both the social and economic fields. Locally, HKUST wishes to help develop Hong Kong as a knowledge based society through partnership with government, business, and industry.

HKUST provides a service known as the Language Center, which developed and is responsible for the Language Enrichment Activities Programme (LEAP) (Language Center, 2010). As

HKUST is a publicly funded university and funds the Language Center, the Language Center itself is publicly funded, albeit indirectly.

The Language Center's mission consists of multiple components (Language Center Mission, 2010). First, it looks to empower students by helping them to study independently, to work in Hong Kong, and to communicate with the international community, utilizing English in each circumstance. It also aims to advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research in a number of areas. The Language Center focuses on areas such as: innovative course development, innovative use of technology, excellence in teaching, research relevant to language learners, and local and international co-operation through publications and conferences. All of these areas cooperate to make the Language Center a fulfilling place to work and communicate that fulfillment to the students. Finally, it works to assist in the economic and social development of Hong Kong by providing relevant language services to students. If resources permit, it will also offer courses and expertise to university staff and other Hong Kong organizations.

LEAP shares many of the Language Center's goals, although these goals are more specific to the teaching of English (What's LEAP, 2010). Looking to facilitate the learning of English amongst students of HKUST, LEAP organizes extracurricular activities as alternatives to conventional teaching methods. It plans and conducts "language activities and local immersion initiatives for students…to enhance language acquisition while enabling peer-supported learning" (What's LEAP, 2010).

LEAP is structured as a branch of the Language Center. It consists of one manager and six program members (Language Center, 2010). Student volunteers carry out and lead the activities.

LEAP has access to many non-monetary resources (Language Center, 2010). Since it primarily consists of student volunteers, there is no shortage of those who have a sufficient mastery of English to run the activities. Monetary resources come from the Language Center.

As for other organizations comparable to LEAP, they do not seem to exist in Hong Kong. While all the public universities in Hong Kong have a language center of sorts, all of their programs appear to be classroom-based. However, it is apparent that these other schools have the same concerns about their students' English proficiency as HKUST. This is demonstrated by the majority of language centers at Hong Kong universities focusing their efforts on English education. While these language centers do not solely focus on English, their emphasis of English demonstrates the language's perceived importance.

Appendix B: What is an IQP?

According to WPI's Undergraduate Course Catalog, an Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) is intended to "challenge students to address a problem that lies at the intersection of science or technology with society" (2010-2011 Undergraduate Catalog, 2010, p. 17). It should result in students learning "something about the role of science and technology, its impact on society, its place in meeting human needs and human efforts to regulate, control, promote and manage our changing technologies" (2010-2011 Undergraduate Catalog, 2010, p. 17). In order to experience this interaction, it is beneficial to shift the focus from technology into the realm of societal issues, thus forcing many WPI students to work outside of their discipline and comfort zone. This will encourage them to take a different approach to solve a problem, as the average WPI student is well versed in technology, but less experienced with societal problems. Since technology is to be a part of a solution, we have an excellent vantage point to view and experience how it affects society.

Our project makes use of a combination of the scientific method and social science observational means, to allow for both scientific and societal analysis techniques. We will use scientific and social science research methods such as surveying, observation, and data analysis in order to produce results that will allow us to evaluate a social issue and give recommendations for improvements. Without this combination of these methods, we would have no objective way to evaluate the program. The scientific method allows us to draw conclusions that are unbiased, since they are largely devoid of subjectivity. The social sciences, on the other hand, allow us to draw conclusions that include societal and individual biases. This combination allows us to approach an issue and apply scientific and social means to solve a common problem.

Appendix C: Questionnaires & Interview Protocols

The following section is a compilation of the questionnaires and interview protocols we plan to use for our study.

Appendix C.1 – Conference Survey

Connect the Dots Conference

1. I was able to visually follow the plenary speakers.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	O	O	O	O	O	Strongly Agree

2. I was able to verbally understand the plenary speakers.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	O	O	O	O	O	Strongly Agree

3. I was able to visually follow the student presentations.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	O	O	O	O	O	Strongly Agree

4. I was able to verbally understand the student presentations.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	O	O	O	O	O	Strongly Agree

5. The problem solving seminar maintained my interest.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Strongly Agree

6. I actively participated in the round table discussions.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Strongly Agree

7. The conference improved my English competency.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Strongly Agree

8. My experience with this conference was valuable.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Strongly Agree

9. I would be interested in attending another conference hosted by the Language Center.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Strongly Agree

Activity Ranking

Please rank the effect you feel the following conference activities had on your English

Plenary Speakers

0 1 2 3 4 5

No effect ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ ◯ Large effect

Student Presentations

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No effect	○	○	○	○	○	○	Large effect

Problem Solving Seminar

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No effect	○	○	○	○	○	○	Large effect

Round Table Discussion

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
No effect	○	○	○	○	○	○	Large effect

Open Response

1. What did you particularly like about the conference?

2. What did you particularly dislike about the conference?

3. Do you have any suggestions relating to future conference activities or speakers?

4. Additional Comments

English Language Buddy Scheme (ELBS)

Why did you choose to participate in ELBS?

☐ To practice speaking English

☐ Recommended by a professor

☐ Recommended by a peer

☐ For social interaction

☐ Other: [   ]

Coming into ELBS, what were your expectations? How did your experience compare to your expectations?

[   ]

Please list up to 5 of the activities that your group participated in.

[   ]

Of these activities, please list the ones you most enjoyed.

[   ]

What did you enjoy about these activities?

Of these activities, please list the ones you least enjoyed.

What didn't you enjoy about these activities?

How much do you feel ELBS has impacted your English?

        0   1   2   3   4   5

No impact O   O   O   O   O   O Very large impact

Which aspects of ELBS do you feel were most helpful? Select all that apply.

☐ Group activities

☐ Speaking to peers

☐ Speaking to the Activity Facillitator

☐ Other:

How much did interaction with the Language Center Activity Facilitator impact your English?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	A very large amount

How good do you think you are at speaking English?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Poor	○	○	○	○	○	○	Proficient

Appendix C.3 – ELBS Focus Group

Goal: To gain further understanding about the student perspectives on the ELBS program.

Setting: Private room, with couches, chairs, and a table on the side with refreshments.

Script:
1) Introduce ourselves and welcome the student subjects as they enter the room. Offer them refreshments to make them comfortable. (Refreshments will include drinks and cookies)
2) Once all of the participants arrive, the focus group moderator will thank everyone for participating in the focus group and contributing to our project.
3) Focus group moderator will introduce the purpose of the focus group, how the focus group will be run, and explain that the participants have the right to leave the session at any time and distribute consent forms.
4) Focus Group Implementation:
   a) **Opening Phase**
      i. Go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves (Name, Year of Graduation, Major, and their favorite hobby/activity)
      ii. Introduce the ELBS Focus Group purpose (Why we are conducting this focus group, Why we are at HKUST, Why their feedback is important and vital to us)
   b) **Question Phase** (Make sure each student has spoken up, if not try and ask the student for their opinion on a particular question)
      i. "Why did you decide to participate in ELBS?"
      ii. "Coming into ELBS, what were your expectations? How did your experience compare to your expectations?"
      iii. "Through your own experiences in ELBS, what aspects of the program do you think are most effective at improving English competency? Which ones are least effective? Why?"
      iv. "What improvements would you like to see done with ELBS in the future?"
   c) **Closing Phase**
      i. Ask the students if they have any closing comments, questions, or opinions they didn't have the chance to voice yet.
      ii. Make closing comments, reviewing what was said during the focus groups.
      iii. Thank the students for their time, and encourage them to grab refreshments on the way out!

Appendix C.4 – Oral English Evaluation

Summary

Team Member A will ask Subject questions informally to measure the English speaking capabilities of the subject. Team Member A will not have any documents with them – they will memorize all the questions in the correct order to ask Subject. Team Member B will be sitting in a location nearby recording data.

Location

Locations will vary, but the ideal location is one where it will be relaxed and not intimidating. Some examples include a student lounge, during lunch in the student café, or during another social event. The conversation will remain private but it is important that there are other students in the vicinity.

Protocol

Team Member A will begin a casual conversation with Subject, pulling them away from the group with the premise that Team Member A just wants to get to know the Subject because we will be working with them for the next several weeks. Team Member A will ask the questions outlined below. (Note: Conversation should be dynamic and not just Team Member A asking all the questions.) To minimize discomfort, the Team Member and Subject will be of the same gender. Team Member B will sit nearby with a newspaper or laptop discreetly noting behavior and data.

Questions/Script
1. Where are you from?
2. What activities are you involved with on campus?
3. What interests do you have?
4. What are you studying? Did you always know that you would be studying _____?
5. What types of food do you like? Where do you suggest I eat dinner tonight?
6. What is the best part of being a student at HKUST?

Scoring & Metrics

Subject will be measured in several categories: grammar, confidence, time and relevance. For each question asked, the form on the following page will be filled out.

Question: _____   Question: _____

	Frequency
Grammar	
Incorrect Verb Congugation	
Missing article	
Incorrect Pronoun (he/she)	
Incorrect Vocabulary	
Total	
Speech Rate	
Words	
Time (s)	
Rate	
Confidence (score 1-10)	
Physical Nervousness	
Eye Contact	
Speech Characterization	
Relevance (score 1-10)	

	Frequency
Grammar	
Incorrect Verb Congugation	
Missing article	
Incorrect Pronoun (he/she)	
Incorrect Vocabulary	
Total	
Speech Rate	
Words	
Time (s)	
Rate	
Confidence (score 1-10)	
Physical Nervousness	
Eye Contact	
Speech Characterization	
Relevance (score 1-10)	

Additional Observations/Comments: Additional Observations/Comments:

Appendix C.5 – Professor & LEAP Organizer Interview Protocol

Goal: To understand professors' impressions of the benefits regarding LEAP

Interviewees: *Selected Professors and LEAP organizers from HKUST (about 3~5 interviews)*

1) **Introduction Protocol**
   a) Greet the professor to be interviewed
      i) Introduce group members by name and a handshake
   b) *Team Member 1*: Begin with introduction to English Improvement at HKUST project
   c) *Team Member 2*: Discuss purpose of interview (how is this relevant for our project?)

2) **Interview Questions**
   (Interview questions will be posed by *Team Member 1*, and notes are to be taken by *Team Member 2*)
   a) Introduction Questions:
      1. How long have you been teaching at HKUST?
      2. In your perspective, which English skill do non-native English speakers at HKUST need to improve the most (speaking, listening, writing or reading)?
   b) Core Questions:
      1. What is your opinion on the role that extracurricular activities play in supplementing English instruction?
      --Do you find that extracurricular activities help HKUST students with their English?
      --Is there any particular activities that they seem most interested in?
      2. What's your opinion about the role of social interactions in reinforcing a language?
      --Do you find social interactions helpful to HKUST students? If so, in what way are they beneficial?
      --Are there any particular activities the students seem to be interested in?
      3. (specific for organizers) How well do you think LEAP has reached its goal to help students improve their English? Could you rate this on a scale from one to five (one being not at all, and five being exceeding expectations)? Please explain your decision.
      --On which English skill do you think LEAP has the largest impact (speaking, listening, writing or reading)?

3) **Closure Protocol**
   a) Ask the interviewees if they have any additional information, comments or questions.
   b) Thank the interviewees for their time.
   c) Send the interviewees a thank-you card the following day.

Language Enrichment Activities Programme (LEAP)

1. How long have you been involved in LEAP?

○ 0-3 months

○ 3-6 months

○ 6-9 months

○ 9+ months

2. How often have you participated in LEAP activities since joining?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	○	Always

3. Why did you decide to participate in LEAP? (Check all that apply)

☐ To practice speaking English

☐ Desire to socialize

☐ Interest in a specific activity

☐ Recommended by a professor

☐ Recommended by a peer

☐ Other:

4. Please check all LEAP activities you participated in.

☐ Decision Making Skills: Think Out of the Box

☐ Wine and Dine: Business Etiquette

☐ 2011 LEAP Conference

☐ ELBS

5. Of these activities, which ones did you most enjoy?

☐ Decision Making Skills: Think Out of the Box

☐ Wine and Dine: Business Etiquette

☐ 2011 LEAP Conference

☐ ELBS

6. Which aspects did you most enjoy about these activities?

7. Of these activities, which ones did you least enjoy?

☐ Decision Making Skills: Think Out of the Box

☐ Wine and Dine: Business Etiquette

☐ 2011 LEAP Conference

☐ ELBS

8. Which aspects did you least enjoy about these activities?

9. Of these activities, which ones do you feel had the largest impact on your English?

☐ Decision Making Skills: Think Out of the Box

☐ Wine and Dine: Business Etiquette

☐ 2011 LEAP Conference

☐ ELBS

10. In your opinion, what about these activities helped your English?

11. How likely to participate in future LEAP events?

1 2 3 4 5

Not likely ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very likely

Appendix C.7 – Student Interview Protocol

Goal: To understand students' impressions on LEAP

Whom to interview: *Voluntary students across various LEAP initiatives (5~8 students)*

1) **Introduction Protocol**
   a) Greet the voluntary students
      i) Introduce group members by name and a handshake
   b) *Team Member 1*: Begin with introduction to English Improvement at HKUST project
   c) *Team Member 2*: Discuss purpose of interview (how is this relevant for our project?)
2) **Interview Questions**

   (Interview questions will be posed by *Team Member 1*, and notes are to be taken by *Team Member 2*)

   a) Introduction Questions:
      3. How long have you been studying at HKUST? What is your expected year of graduation?
      4. What do you consider your English level to be? (On a scale of 1-5 with 1 very bad, and 5 very good).
         1. What are your strengths and weaknesses (reading, writing, listening and speaking)?
      5. How long have you been involved in LEAP? How often have you participated in LEAP activities since joining?
   b) Core Questions:
      1. Do you think LEAP helps reinforce your English competency?
         --Which English skills does the program help reinforce the most (reading, writing, listening or speaking)?
         --Are there any particular activities you are interested in? Why?
         --Are there any particular activities you are not interested in? Why?
      2. What improvements do you think LEAP needs?
         --What is your opinion of the level of difficulty regarding the material covered?

3) **Closure Protocol**
   a) Ask the interviewees if they have any additional information, comments or questions.
   b) Thank the interviewees for their time.
   c) Send the interviewees a thank-you card the following day.