

Translanguaging with E-Learning for NCS students learning Chinese History and Culture: A Case study

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Abstract: The Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) confirmed in 2017 that Chinese History became an independent core subject in the junior secondary curriculum. Non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students can also gain a deeper understanding of Chinese History and culture by studying Chinese History. The purpose of this study is to investigate how frontline teachers can use translanguaging with e-Learning to enhance NCS students' motivation in learning Chinese History and deepen their understanding of history concepts. The research team worked with the teachers to design the teaching materials and learning activities in a Hong Kong secondary school, then investigated the students' perception of the pedagogy by questionnaire, conducted interview with the teacher, and evaluated and reflected on the whole design of translanguaging pedagogy in the CSL Chinese History classroom. 80 NCS secondary school students (N = 80) at an average age of 14 years from two classes participated in this study. According to the teachers' feedback and the findings of the study, translanguaging with e-Learning in the Chinese History classroom has positive effects on NCS students' learning in Chinese History. Both pedagogical and theoretical implication on the design of translanguaging Pedagogy in the CSL Chinese History lesson are discussed at the end of this paper.

Keywords: *Translanguaging; Non-Chinese speaking students; Chinese as a second language; Multilingual education; Ethnic minority*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong is a predominantly Chinese-speaking community, but it is also a multilingual and multicultural environment. According to the census of 2021 (HKSAR 2021), for people age five and over in Hong Kong, 93.4% usually use Chinese (including Cantonese and other Chinese dialects) and 6.6% speak no Chinese. Although 87.1% can write Chinese and 66% can write English, others speak and write in languages such as Filipino, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Nepali, French and Spanish. Helping non-Chinese-speaking people, especially students to learn Chinese so that they can enter the mainstream of the community, has been a continual challenge for Chinese teachers and education departments.

With the implementation of Chinese History, it has become an independent core subject in the junior secondary curriculum since 2007. NCS students can deepen their understanding of Chinese History and culture through the study of Chinese History. However, the

Chinese language has long been considered a very difficult language to learn, particularly for those L2 students with an alphabetic language background (e.g. Loh & Tam, 2017; Shum, Zhang, Zhang, Ki, & Ng, 2012). Thus, Chinese proficiency has become one of the factors hindering NCS students' learning Chinese History in Chinese as a second language.

The term "translanguaging" was created by Cen Williams, a well-known Welsh educationalist, in the 1980s, for the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson (Baker, 2003, 2011; Williams, 1994, 1996). Garcia and Williams agree that translanguaging is a most effective means of learning, with Garcia arguing that translanguaging is important in a movement from relatively monolingual or separatist language practices in the classroom to the cognitive and communicative advantages of translanguaging (Garcia, 2009).

In view of this, this study attempts to design a translanguaging teaching model for teaching Chinese History in Chinese as a second language, incorporating e-Learning, to help NCS students learn Chinese History in Chinese as a second language. The main aims of the present paper are (a) to explore what the difficulties are for NCS to learn Chinese History in Chinese as a second language, (b) to identify the pedagogical functions of translanguaging with e-learning, and (c) to reflect on the ways in which teacher implement the concept of translanguaging for his specific purposes.

1.2 Research Questions

Language is integral to the learning of every subject, and every subject's language takes its cues from the subject. The pedagogical design adopted in this project, is based on NCS secondary students' Chinese proficiency and learning abilities. It aims to enable all NCS secondary students to learn Chinese History and culture, so they can have a more complete understanding of Chinese culture. It also provides training on the students' language abilities including speaking, reading and writing. Teaching activities were conducted through the translanguaging while teaching materials were designed with reference to the Adapted Framework of the Chinese History Curriculum (Secondary 1-3) (2019) (for Non-Chinese Speaking Students). The study's questions are as follows:

1. What are the difficulties for NCS students to learning Chinese History in Chinese as a second language?
2. Does translanguaging with an e-learning approach facilitate NCS students' learning of Chinese History and what are the perceptions of teachers and students about this pedagogy?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Translanguaging as pedagogical scaffolding

As a theoretical concept, translanguaging arose from a bilingual education context; García (as cited in García & Li, 2014) defines translanguaging as "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds," and mentions that it is "the discursive norm in bilingual families and communities" (p. 23). According to Li (2017), translanguaging has proven to be an effective pedagogical practice in a variety of educational contexts where the school language or the language of instruction is different from the languages of the learners.

Swain (2006) used the term *translanguaging* to describe the cognitive process of negotiating and producing meaningful, comprehensible output as part of language learning as a 'means to mediate cognition', that is, to understand and to problem solve (p. 97), and 'a

process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through learner's cognitive and affective engagements through languaging, whereby "language serves as a vehicle through which thinking is articulated and transformed into an artefactual form" (Swain, 2006, p. 97). Recently, the integration of translanguaging practices has been suggested as a way to provide a scaffolding approach to instruction (García & Sylvan, 2011). As such, some recent studies have demonstrated that using translanguaging in this way can contribute to reducing language learners' negative emotions and facilitating their engagement in learning tasks (Adamson & Coulson, 2015; Ahn et al., 2018). The current study is based on the hypothesis that students' L1 could be effectively deployed to provide scaffolding assistance in a CSL history classroom; hence, more studies that focus on classroom practice should be conducted.

The learning functions of Translanguaging

Developing Williams' conceptualization of translanguaging, Baker (2001, 2006, 2011) discusses some potential educational advantages to translanguaging, thus arguing for the importance of the concept as a pedagogical practice:

Firstly, translanguaging may help students to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter. Taking the idea of the Vygotskian "zone of proximal development" that further learning is based on stretching pre-existing knowledge, plus the idea that the interdependence of two languages enables cross-linguistic transfer (Cummins, 2008), it can be argued that translanguaging is an effective and efficient way of enabling this:

It is possible in a monolingual teaching situation, for students to answer questions or write an essay about a subject without fully understanding it. Processing for meaning may not have occurred. Whole sentences or paragraphs can be copied or adapted out of a textbook, from the internet or from dictation by the teacher without real understanding. It is less easy to do this with "translanguaging". To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and "digested". (Baker, 2011, p. 289)

The second potential function of translanguaging is that it may help students to develop competence (oral communication and literacy) in their weaker language, as it may prevent them from undertaking the main part of their work through the stronger language while attempting fewer challenging tasks in their weaker language. "Translanguaging' attempts to develop academic language skills in both languages leading to a fuller bilingualism and biliteracy" (Baker, 2011, p. 290).

Furthermore, studies also support that L2 ability and subject the idea that content learning can be developed

concurrently if a sensitive and strategic use of both languages is made in class (Maillat & Serra, 2009).

In light of the theories about the connection between translanguaging and thinking, cognising and knowledge construction, this study explores the thinking and learning process through translanguaging, which is a scaffolding practice that is used by NCS students in CSL History classrooms.

E-Learning for learning diversities

Given that E-Learning practice can often be more effective, supporting students who benefit more from a self-paced learning process. The E-Learning system at mLang will be supplemented with practical exercises and online assessment. Such a strategy has the possibility of diversifying learning materials, promoting self-paced learning and increasing accessibility without time and space limitations increased flexibility helps more NCS students grasp the information they receive. The multiple functions of the E-Learning system at mLang also facilitate teachers to access their NCS students with learning diversities. Keeping a close tab on students' progress. (Loh, E.K.Y., Sun, K.W., Ki, W.W., & Lau, K.C, 2020). Collaborative knowledge

Those who are physically unable to be present in a classroom can continue their learning of Chinese history through the tools of mLang. This will definitely enable NCS students to strengthen and consolidate their concepts of Chinese History.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted design-based research. A systematic but flexible methodology aims to improve educational practices and interventions through interactive analysis, design, development and implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually sensitive design principles and theories. (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Researchers conducted the study in a real teaching environment to understand how NCS students learn, develop pedagogical theories, and design teaching materials to enhance teaching quality.

Design-based research is composed of three levels: theory generation, product design and refinement (Cobb et al., 2003; Shavelson et al., 2003). It aims to promote the close collaboration between educational researchers and teachers. They build students' learning paths together to solve pedagogical issues so as to enhance learning effectiveness.

The research process included four stages: preparation, implementation, evaluation and promotion. The stages of preparation and implementation can be considered as research results and form an iterative cycle. The theoretical basis can then become more complete,

and the ecological validity can be ensured during promotion. To so doing, such design is conceived not just to meet local needs, but to advance a theoretical agenda to uncover, explore, and confirm theoretical relationships. (Barab & Squire, 2004).

3.1 Participants

Participants of this research included NCS students from a secondary school in Hong Kong. There were 2 Secondary one classes in total with 80 students per class (N=80), and one teacher who taught both Chinese and Chinese History. The student participants came from Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and India. This school uses English as the medium of instruction in non-language subjects to suit the students' needs. The teacher flexibly adopts translanguaging for students to acquire understanding in the subjects of Chinese History, on the principle that students are taught according to their abilities and in a progressive approach.

3.2 Data collection

Our research team collaborated with the teacher to design teaching materials for Chinese History with reference to the translanguaging with E-Learning approach. Both the teacher and students' perceptions about the learning materials and E-Learning will be elicited through the Student's reflection questionnaire. An Interview with the teacher was also conducted.

The entire research process includes: (1) design/redesign; (2) implementation; (3) evaluation; and (4) Promotion. Details of each stage are listed in Figure 1

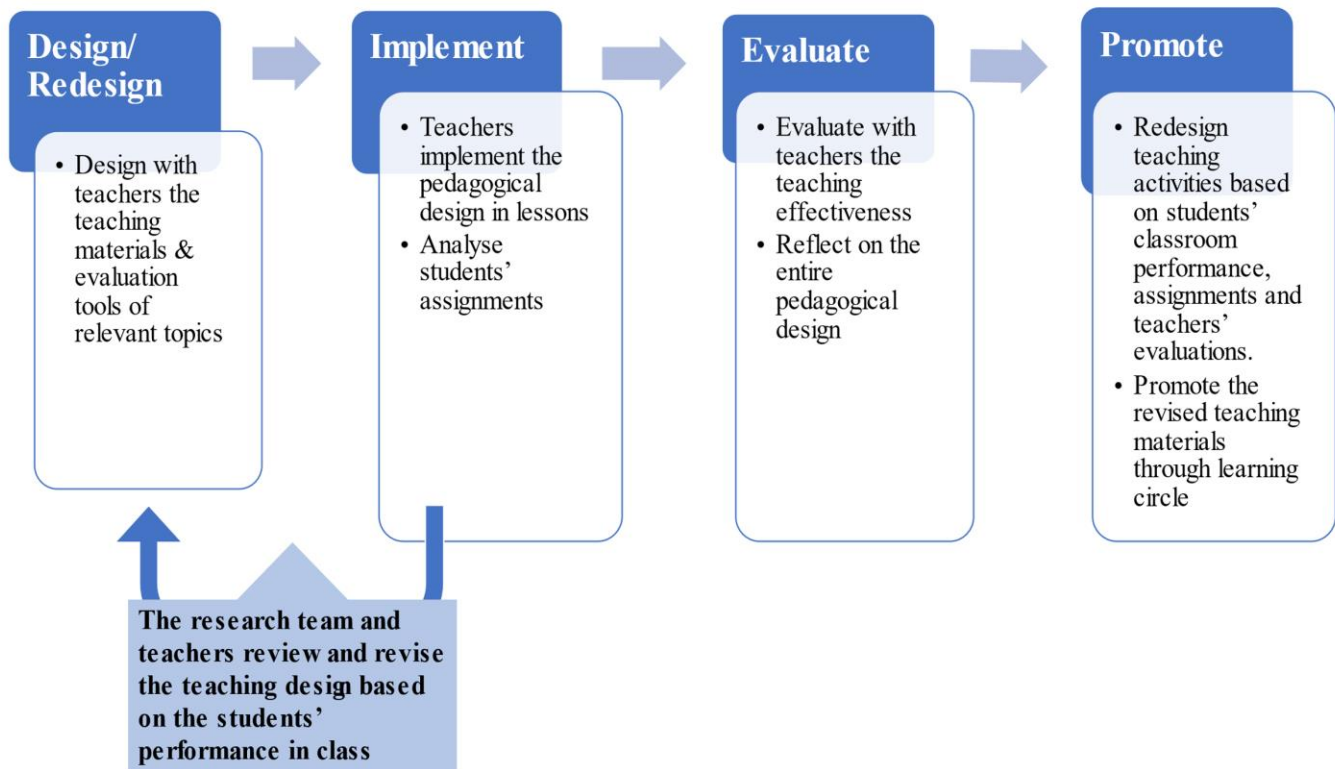


Figure 1: Research process of this study.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Student's Questionnaire

An online questionnaire had been sent to 80 students from two classes, and there are 68 students had been finished the questionnaire.

Semi-structured interview

After completing the research, we conducted a semi-structured interview. Sets of questions about the impact of translanguaging with E-Learning approach upon CSL students' understanding of history concepts as well as their learning motivation were constructed for the interview. The researchers did not strictly follow a formalized list of questions but asked more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than following a straightforward question and answer format. The interview lasted for approximately one hour. One Chinese History teacher was invited for the interview.

Students' assignments

Students' assignments (written worksheets) were collected upon completion of the activities for in-depth text

analysis. Their works were evaluated with reference to assessing their understanding of historical concepts and how well they performed in Translanguaging related activities.

4. Implementation of Translanguaging with e-Learning approach in CSL Chinese History classrooms

This study primes that translanguaging with an e-learning approach in the CSL Chinese History lessons has the following functions of scaffolding:

- 1) Easy-to-read text, suitable for GCSE/GCE Chinese level.
- 2) Providing a QR code in Cantonese for reading aloud to facilitate self-learning.
- 3) Illustrations with a glossary beside the text to help students understand the meaning of the text.
- 4) A QR code with audio clips is available for students to preview and revisit the text
- 5) An English translation of the text is available.

6) A picture is provided alongside the text to help students understand how the historical concepts are organised in Chinese and historical contexts.

As NCS students need more support in Chinese as a second language classrooms, based on the above scholars' studies on the pedagogy of translanguaging, this study tried to design teaching materials using translanguaging with E-Learning. One of the major features is translanguaging with the E-Learning approach, so that NCS students can have greater language support in learning Chinese History (see Figure 2).

For example, before teaching the topic of "The impact of the two Han dynasties on cultural exchanges between China and the West" in Chinese History, the teacher facilitated NCS students to learn the structure of the text

and the relevant grammar and vocabulary in Chinese Language to consolidate their language skills and prepare them for reading and writing Chinese History texts. This is to strengthen students' language skills and to prepare them for reading and writing Chinese History texts.

In addition to the scaffolding of translanguaging the research team had designed the assessment tools with the teachers (See Figure 5). The e-platform with translanguaging enabled NCS students to complete tasks in spoken Chinese easily, which undoubtedly increased their self-efficacy in using Chinese to learn Chinese history and their confidence in expressing themselves in spoken Chinese as compared with the paper-and-pencil assessment.

簡易版

漢武帝的武功對西漢國力發展的影響

QR Code: 漢武帝的武功的影響 (簡易版)

現象確認
Phenomenon

漢武帝的武功對西漢國力發展有下面的影響：
Development of Western Han
influence

後果一
Outcome 1

國土大大擴張
Expanded the territory

首先，在國土方面，漢武帝
National land

北打匈奴，又用力發展東、西、南面的國土，令漢朝國土大大擴張。此外，在外交方面，武帝派張騫出使西域，打開中西交通的道路。
expanded Diplomatic

圖片來源
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han%E2%80%93Xiongnu_War



圖片來源
<https://www.chiculture.net/0126/html/b10/0126b10.html#>



Figure 2: Chinese History teaching materials with E-Learning approach



Figure 3: The E-Learning assignment submitted by NCS students: Electronic card

5. RESEARCH RESULT

5.1 Findings related to the first research question

The first research question explores the difficulties of NCS students in learning Chinese History in Chinese as a second language and here are the comments from the class teacher:

Lack of interest in learning Chinese history due to cultural differences

According to the teachers' interviews, NCS students' motivation to learn Chinese History was affected by ethnic and cultural differences:

"I think the first difficulty for NCS students to learn Chinese History in Chinese is that they are not interested in Chinese History because they do not have an identity, maybe they think they are Filipino, Indian or Pakistani, why should they learn Chinese History? So they will feel a sense of distance and therefore have less motivation to learn."

Students have difficulties in expressing the concepts of Chinese history due to their limited Chinese language proficiency

Apart from the culture difference, Chinese deficiency is another challenge for NCS students learning Chinese history at the level of understanding and expression, following are the comments from teachers:

"The second challenge is that their stronger language is English and Chinese is their second language, so using a second language, an unfamiliar language to learn a language that they are not very interested in is exactly where the problem lies. Therefore, using Chinese to learn Chinese History is a challenge for NCS students because most of what they have learnt is at the GCSE level in Chinese, and it is very difficult for them to express what they have learnt in Chinese. Therefore, it is a challenge for NCS students to learn Chinese History entirely in Chinese because most of them have learnt Chinese at GCSE level, so it is very difficult for them to express what they have learnt in Chinese."

Of course, some students have higher Chinese language proficiency and it is easier for them to keep up with it; however, if some students have lower Chinese language proficiency, even though they may have understood a little bit of the content, it would be another problem for them to express it, and this is what I think is the challenge for them to express what they have learnt in Chinese in Chinese Language and History."

5.2 Finding related to the second research question

The second research question aimed to investigate whether translanguaging with E- Learning approach can facilitate NCS students' learning of Chinese History as well as the teacher's perceptions on this pedagogy. After the completion of the research, the researcher invited the teacher for the semi-structured interview. In the semi-structured interview, the teacher reflected that Translanguaging as scaffolding has following functions:

5.2.1 Understanding the Conceptual knowledge of Chinese History

According to the teachers' comments, NCS students were easier to make meaning of the historical concept with the translanguaging e.g., expressing the impact of the passage of the two Han Dynasty to the West. Following is the comment from teacher:

“On the other hand, for the conceptual knowledge, it is undeniable that because our schools use English to study Chinese history at the beginning, it is undeniable that it is simpler to learn in English because all the terms they have learnt in English already which help them easily to cope with the knowledge of this subject, for example, if they had known the “emperor of Han”, they could know that it is Emperor Wu of Han, and that Zhang Qian was an envoy to the Western Regions and so on, and that is a lot more convenient for NCS students to use English to learn.”

5.2.2 Facilitating the learning and expression of historical concepts

It was found that teacher was able to incorporate Translanguaging to help students grasp important historical concepts before assigning e-learning tasks. For example, in teaching historical events and figures, teachers used pictures and English explanations in order to ensure that NCS students have comprehensible input and incorporate *relevant scaffolding with Translanguaging*. Following is the comment from the teacher:

“We will use both Chinese and English in our explanations, otherwise it will be very difficult for NCS students. For example, if there is a term about Chinese History that is described in Chinese, NCS students cannot understand it, and even if we repeat it again, it will not help. Therefore, when we teach Chinese History, we do not deliberately avoid English. Chinese is a common language of instruction, but if students cannot understand the content of the pictures, or if we are teaching a term from history, such as what items were brought to China from the Western regions, we will still use English. Because if they learn in English, they may be able to do so, for example if they are given one question with a few guidance in English they will able to answer the question. However, if they learn Chinese history in Chinese, it may take more time for students to understand the historical concepts and express these concepts in Chinese.”

5.2.3 Enhancing students' self-efficacy in learning Chinese History

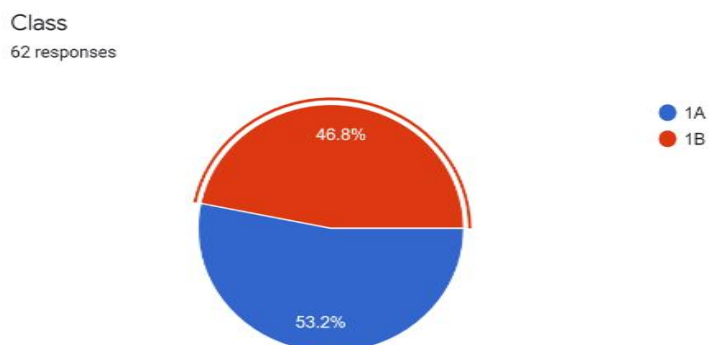


Figure 4: Result of Students' questionnaire

*Coding scheme: Strongly agree= 5; Agree =4; Disagree=2; Strongly disagree=1

According to the student's response, of the mastery of Chinese History language definitely enhances their self

-efficiency of the Chinese assessment, since the e-platform checks students' accuracy in translating and

pronouncing Chinese and English sentences. It is a step-by-step construction process, starting from the design of the simplest word cards to the final oral presentation. The key point is to encourage students to try it out first, starting

from the novice level to the deepest level, from words to sentences and finally to reports, which is also a learning process. Developing this ability will help them to express their historical concept in formal assessment more easily.

The mastery of Chinese History language prepares me better for the unit test.

62 responses

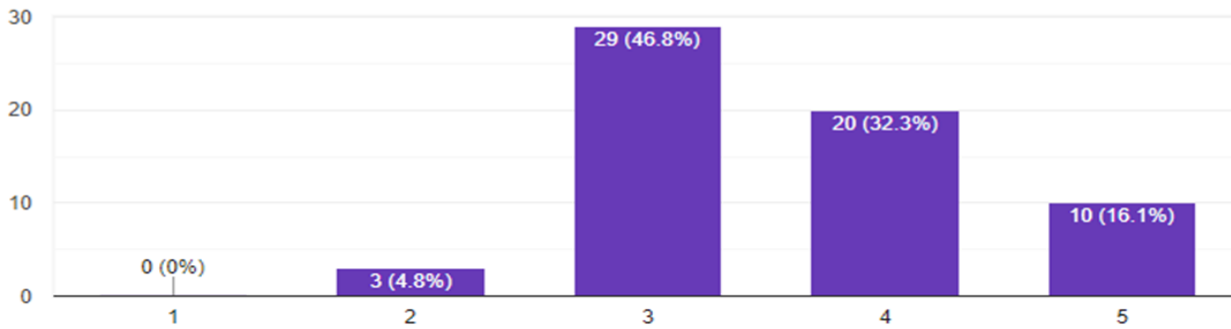


Figure 5: Distribution of respondents' learning efficiency according to mastery of subject language

5.2.4. Acquiring more Chinese vocabulary with E-Learning approach

Refer to the data of student's questionnaire, NCS students have more confidence in completing their Chinese History assignments. Since the e-platform encourages students with different Chinese language abilities to use the audio recording function with

Translanguaging, together with the reading aloud training, to progress from the initial vocabulary level to sentence and finally to the whole text level, which is conducive to the acquisition of students' Chinese vocabulary

I can learn some useful Chinese words from mLang.

62 responses

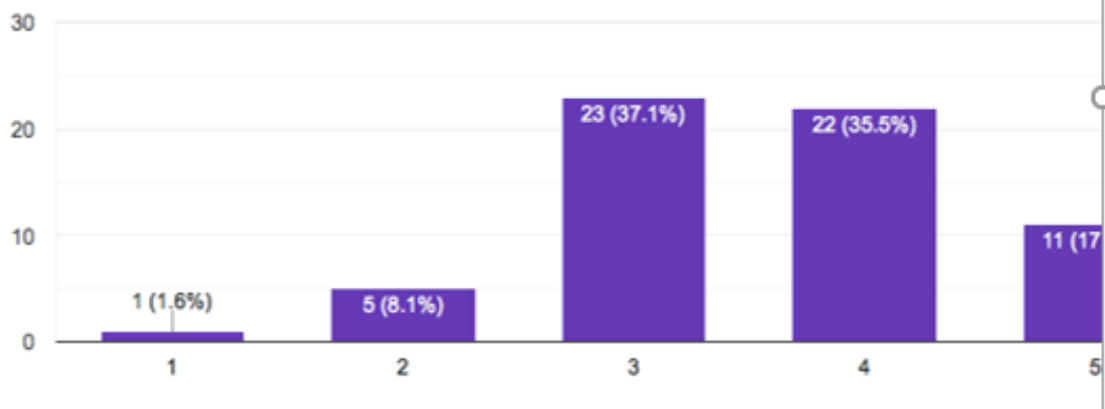


Figure 5: Distribution of respondents' Acquisition of Chinese word by E-Learning approach

6. DISCUSSION

The current study was an attempt to explore the function of translanguaging with the E-Learning approach on NCS students learning Chinese History and the result revealed that NCS students were more confident in reading aloud in Chinese with this teaching approach, such as the use of oral recording to illustrate the impact of the two Han dynasties on the electronic platform, and they generally preferred the use of electronic word and phrase cards as an assessment task to paper and pencil examinations.

In view of this, the research team suggests that a Translanguaging teaching model should be combined with E-Learning as an online assessment tool. This will not only enhance the motivation of NCS students to learn Chinese History in Chinese, but also cater for their learning diversities, and facilitate Chinese History teachers to assess their performance and progress in a more flexible way.

This study exemplifies the way in which translanguaging can offer more learning opportunities such as oral recording and making electronic cards. Translanguaging empowers NCS students as minority speakers by considering the students' multilingual and multimodal repertoire as a whole. According to the result, translanguaging can be an important pedagogical tool for NCS students, for this reason, utilization of translanguaging pedagogies is recommended because they leverage the NCS students' multiple repertoires in learning content based subjects such as History and Science.

7. CONCLUSION

The present paper aims at discussing the design of implementation of translanguaging with E-Learning approach in Hong Kong Chinese History lessons in order to identify different functions of translanguaging and to reflect on the ways in which teachers use it to serve their specific purposes. Regarding the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy, design-based research offered the necessary support for teachers to progressively operationalize the concept of translanguaging for their own context. Further researches suggested with different design-based approach in several setting owned by the teachers themselves, which may be a way to promote translanguaging pedagogy in Multilingual classrooms.

LIMITATION

The present study is subject to several limitations. It adopted a single case and investigated the impact of translanguaging with a small number of CSL students for a short period of one year. Generalizing the findings to other school contexts is not possible. Therefore, it is

recommended that the scope of future study be extended to a larger group of NCS students and their teachers, so as to examine the impact of translanguaging on a wider range of student groups for a longer period of time.

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