

Reading Promotion through Literary Walk: A Case Study of the Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk Project

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Abstract:

This paper introduces a reading promotion programme for junior secondary school students in Hong Kong, namely Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk Project, jointly organized by the Hong Kong Literature Research Centre and the University Library System of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The authors use Literary Walk in Wan Chai District as a case study to analyse the effectiveness of this reading promotion programme through literary walk.

Keywords: Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk Project, reading promotion, literary walk, Chinese Language

1. Introduction

In the past two decades, literary walk as a way to promote reading was commonly used by various education and public institutions in Hong Kong. However, literature on the study of the effectiveness of reading promotion through literary walk is few. This paper introduces a reading promotion programme for junior secondary school students in Hong Kong, namely the Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk Project (輕鬆散步學中文) (hereafter called the Project) jointly organized by the Hong Kong Literature Research Centre (HKLRC) and the University Library System (ULS) of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The authors use Literary Walk in Wan Chai District, the first of the eighteen literary walks of the Project, as an example to elucidate the relationship between reading promotion and literary walk from the perspective of curriculum development.

2. Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk: A Brief Outline

The ‘Fun with Learning Chinese Language through Literary Walk’ is a two-year project which aims to promote literary reading to junior secondary school students, i.e. Secondary One to Secondary Three students, in Hong Kong. The Project is funded by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. In early 2013, the SCOLAR invited applications for the ‘Chinese Language Promotion 2013/14’ to promote ‘creative and meaningful activity to improve Chinese writing skills of primary and secondary students’. The HKLRC and the ULS jointly submitted a proposal of the Project in March 2013 which was subsequently accepted by the SCOLAR in July 2013.

Since the 1990’s, Lu Weiluan (盧瑋鑾), a renowned scholar and writer in Hong Kong and former Director of the HKLRC, put forward the idea of learning Hong Kong literature through literary walk. She believes that it is very important for students to have on-site learning experience in order to have a better understanding and appreciation of literary works. Building upon this concept, the Project is designed in such a way that literary walks will be conducted in every district of Hong Kong. ¹ A young writer is invited to serve as docent of each literary walk and to deliver a workshop right before the walk. After enrolling in a particular literary walk, the participants will receive a set of reading material on the district concerned selected by the docent. They are required to read the articles before joining the programme. This arrangement enables more interaction between the docent and the participants during the walk. The participants are also required to submit a piece of creative work after joining the the walk.

The first literary walk of the Project, Literary Walk in Wan Chai District, was held on 2nd November 2013 guided by a prolific young writer Liu Weicheng (劉偉成). In this paper, the authors use this example to investigate the effectiveness of literary walk in reading promotion.

3. Chinese Language Curriculum for Secondary School: Literary Walk and Chinese Language Learning

As part of the education reform in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau of the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region released a policy document on Chinese language learning titled *Chinese Language Curriculum Guide (Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary)* (hereafter called the ‘Guide’) in 2001. ² As stated clearly in the ‘Guide’, the

Chinese language learning comprises nine learning areas namely Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Literature, Chinese Culture, Morality and Affection, Thinking and Independent Language Learning. Among these nine learning areas, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking are four fundamental learning areas which can also facilitate learning in the other five areas.³ In other words, it is critically important for students to build up their knowledge and hone their skills in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking in Chinese language learning. Once they are competent in these four fundamental areas, the learning in the other five areas can be enhanced. (Figure 1)

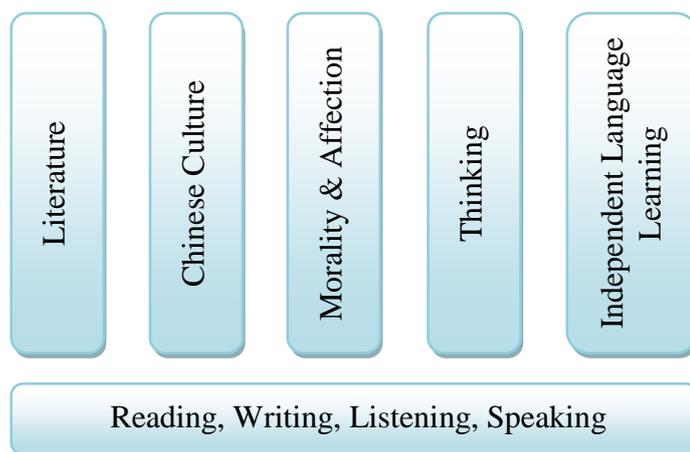


Fig. 1 Nine Learning Areas in Chinese Language

According to the ‘Guide’, the objectives of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking are:

- **Reading:** to enhance reading skills such as comprehension, analysis, experience and appreciation, etc; to master reading strategies; and to enjoy reading and do it diligently and seriously; increase the quantity and range of reading.
- **Writing:** to enhance writing skills such as conception, expression and creative writing, etc; to master writing strategies; and to enjoy writing and do it diligently and seriously.
- **Listening:** to enhance listening skills such as comprehension and evaluation; to master listening strategies; and to enjoy listening and do it seriously; expand the range of listening.
- **Speaking:** to enhance speaking skills such as conception, expression and response; to master speaking strategies; and to enjoy expressing and do it bravely, giving graceful response.⁴

As a matter of fact, reading, writing, listening and speaking are four major as well as fundamental areas not only in Chinese language learning but also in the learning of other languages as well. It is very important for junior secondary school students to master these skills as soon as they can. To this end, the mission of the Project is primarily aimed at enhancing the skills in these four areas of Chinese language learning of the student participants. On the day joining the literary walk, the participants have to attend a workshop delivered by the designated young writer. The students should be able to grasp a better

understanding of the content and style of the literary works after the workshop. Through face-to-face interaction with the young writer during the activity, the participants have the opportunities to improve their listening and speaking skills. After the literary walk, the participants are strongly encouraged to submit their creative writings to a wiki named Hong Kong Literary Landscapes developed for this project.⁵ The submitted works will receive comments from the designated young writer on the wiki direct. Through these interactive learning activities, the participants can enhance their reading, writing, listening and speaking capabilities.

There is no doubt that, literary works are excellent resources for language learning. The ‘Guide’ also indicates that student can appreciate the beauty of language and acquire the sense of truth through literature learning. This is exactly the reason why Literature is included as one of the nine learning areas of Chinese language. The learning objectives of the Literature, as stated in the Guide, are :

- to experience the pleasure of literature reading and appreciate the beauty of it;
- to develop aesthetic insight, attitudes and skills;
- to enhance language learning interest and proficiency through the delightful reading experience;
- to share the unique but common thinking and affections in works to strengthen interpersonal communication and mutual understanding, and inspire life experience.⁶

The Project is designed to spark an interest in literature learning among participants by reading and appreciating literary works in a relaxing and enjoyable environment. The participants of the Literary Walk in Wan Chai District were given five proses about Wan Chai so that they can have a better idea of the literary landscapes in this district. These proses are ‘Market’ (街市) and ‘Old District’ (舊區) by Chen Dejin (陳德錦), ‘Pawn Shop, Depositing my Youth’ (大押，我的青春典當) by Zhang Manjuan (張曼娟), ‘Goodbye, Red Bricks’(別矣紅磚) by Xiaosi (小思) and ‘Evacuating from Bomb Threat’(走警報) by Ouyang Naizhan (歐陽乃霽). Liu also introduced another article ‘Spring Garden Lane’ (春園街) by Dong Qizhang (董啟章) while walking through the Spring Garden Lane. On the day of the activity, Liu first introduced the relationship between the proses and the literary landscapes to be visited in Wan Chai. The major landscapes along the route and the corresponding works are:

- 1. Wan Chai Market:** ‘Market’ and ‘Old District’ by Chen Dejin
- 2. Spring Garden Lane:** ‘Spring Garden Lane’ by Dong Qizhang
- 3. Southorn Playground and Wo Cheong Pawn Shop:** ‘Pawn Shop, Depositing my Youth’ by Zhang Manjuan
- 4. The Methodist Church:** ‘Goodbye, Red Bricks’ by Xiaosi
- 5. Air Raid Shelter at Arsenal Street:** ‘Evacuating from Bomb Threat’ by Ouyang Naizhan (Figure 2)



Fig. 2 Literary Map of Wan Chai District

4. Evaluation and Feedback

The Project employs two methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme and to collect the feedback from the participants. First, the participants are required to complete a questionnaire on the format and content of the activities after each literary walk. Second, representatives of the participants and docents are invited to a focus group meeting after each semester to review the Project from a qualitative perspective.

The following analysis is based on the evaluation and feedback on the Literary Walk in Wan Chai District. There were altogether 22 participants. They all completed the questionnaire after the literary walk. Liu and six student representatives attended the first focus group meeting held on 11th January 2014. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the content of the workshop and logistics of the literary walk while the second part evaluates the effectiveness of the literary walk. The result of the first part in the questionnaire shows that all participants could understand the content of the workshop. A student commented in the questionnaire that ‘the docent’s presentation was easy to understand’. Regarding time allocation, 68.2% of the participants considered the 3-hour literary walk as ‘appropriate’ while 22.7% and 9.1% as ‘too long’ and ‘too short’ respectively. For the length of the route, 72.7% of the participants agreed that it was ‘appropriate’ while 22.7% and 4.5% as ‘too long’ and ‘too short’ respectively (Figure 3).

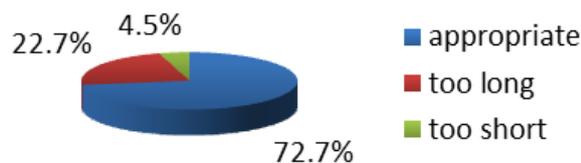


Fig.3 Feedback on the Length of the Route

Regarding the reading material, all participants agreed that ‘Market’ and ‘Old District’ by Chen Dejin were easy to understand. 95.5% of the participants considered the works of Zhang Manjuan, Xiaosi and Ouyang Naizhan were easy to understand. Only 4.5% of the participants commented that these three proeses were ‘too difficult’. In the focus group meeting, the student representatives agreed that they were given sufficient time (two weeks) to read the selected proeses. They also suggested that different genres of works should be included in addition to prose. And more classical literary works could be recommended to the participants too.

In the second part of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. The highest rating is 5 and the lowest is 1. The first question asks if the literary walk is able to meet the objectives of the programme. The ratings are: 5 (4.5%), 4 (68.2%) and 3 (27.3%), which indicate that the literary walk can fulfil the objectives of the programme. The second question asks if the content of the literary walk matches the themes of the programme. The ratings are: 5 (31.8%), 4 (50%) and 3 (18.2%), which also show that the content of the literary walk aligns with the themes of the programme. On the performance of the docent, more than 90% of the participants gave either 5 or 4 ratings. That means they were very satisfied with the performance of the docent. In the focus group meeting, the student representatives agreed that the literary walk provided a very good on-site learning experience so that they could understand the literary works more easily. The overall ratings of the programme are: 5 (31.8%), 4 (59.1%) and 3 (9.1%), which are very encouraging results. (Figure 4)

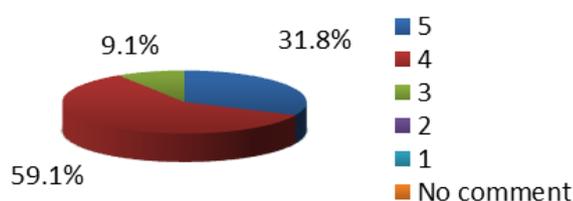


Fig. 4: Overall Ratings of the Literary Walk in Wan Chai District.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the authors use the Literary Walk in Wan Chai District of the Project as an example to elucidate the argument that literary walk can help improve the Chinese language proficiency especially in the five learning areas namely Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and Literature. According to the results of the questionnaire, it is very clear that junior secondary school students in Hong Kong were very receptive to use literary walk as a method to learn Chinese language. In the focus group meeting, the student representatives agreed that the Project could arouse their interest in learning Chinese language through literary walk.

Acknowledgments

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References

- ¹. Hong Kong is administratively subdivided into 18 districts in three major geographic areas: Central and Western, Eastern, Southern, and Wan Chai districts in Hong Kong Island; Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin, and Yau Tsim Mong districts in Kowloon and New Kowloon; and Islands, Kwai Tsing, North, Sai Kung, Sha Tin, Tai Po, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, and Yuen Long districts in New Territories.
- ². The Guide was originally published in Chinese under the title 中國語文課程指引（初中及高中）. The English text of the ‘Guide’ in this paper is a translation of the Chinese version.
- ³. See the Guide . <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/chi-edu/curriculum-documents/secondary-edu2011.html> .
- ⁴. Ibid.
- ⁵. See Hong Kong Literary Landscapes: <http://hkliteraryscenes.wikidot.com/> .
- ⁶. See the Guide . <http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/chi-edu/curriculum-documents/secondary-edu2011.html> .