

English Learning Initiatives: Language Companion Course

Crusher Wong (EDO)
Hebe Wong (ELC)



Outline:

- The background
- The Structure
- The Feedback
- The language support
- Some preliminary findings
- Implications



The Background:

Language requirements for some term-papers

- “We particularly want our students to **summarize** and **reflect** upon their comprehension of the materials we covered in the first few classes”
- “At this course level, students are expected to do good **literature research**, put up **examples backed by science**, and actually make it **interesting to read.**”



The Background:

The discrepancy

- Many students had difficulty doing as well in academic studies as their abilities suggested they should be able to do (Bruffee, 2008)
- General English language input may not be able to cater for the needs of students for their own discipline
- Course instructors were not trained to assess / give feedback on students' English proficiency



The Language Companion Course (LCC)

- Prof. Richard Ho:
 - “We need to provide an incentive for students to learn English... My dream is for each student to have one English coach.” (SCMP, March 3, 2007)
- Rationale:
 - An overall English Language Enhancement Framework was created to provide students an English learning environment in which they can have plenty of opportunities to improve their English skills.

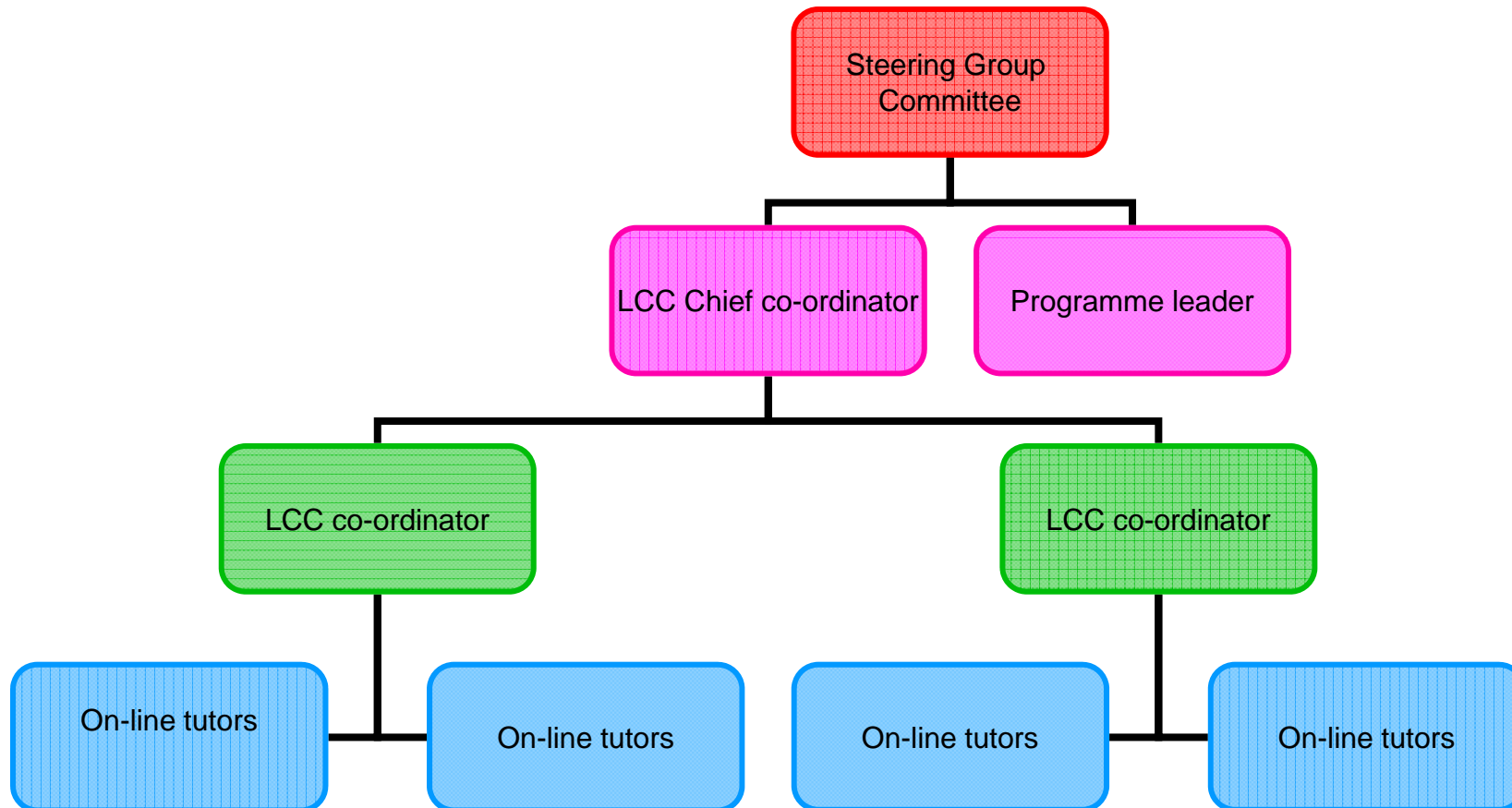


Objectives:

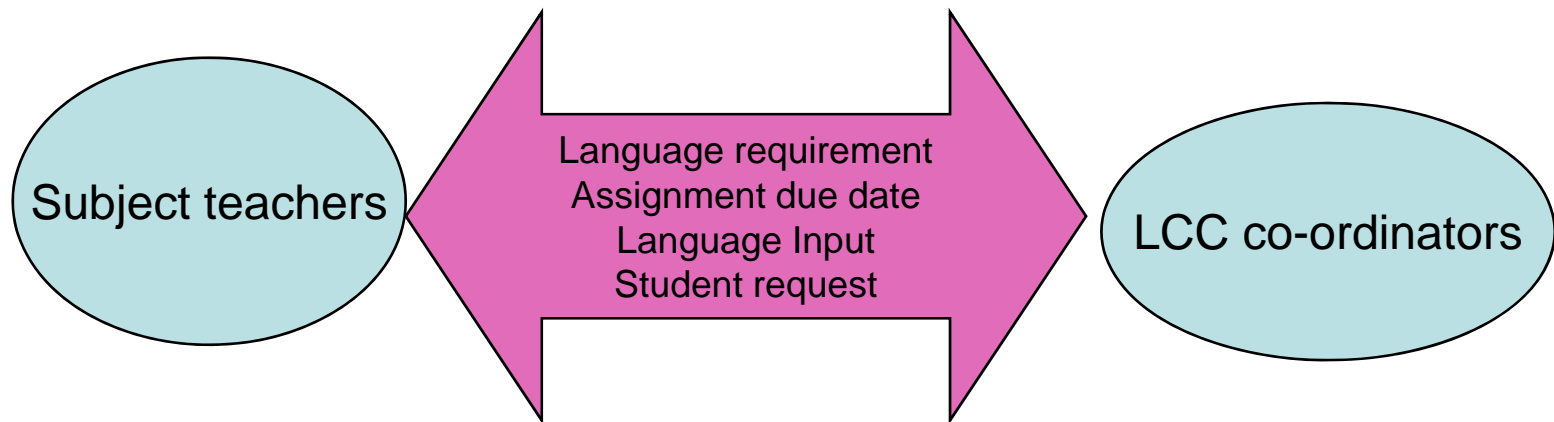
- An **e-learning** platform was provided to assist students
 - To write **accurately** and **coherently** and to correct their own errors in the assignments
 - to improve their English writing ability **within their own subject discipline** and to enhance their motivation in writing
 - To develop **autonomy** in English language learning
- Students learn to write and write to learn



The Structure:



Collaboration between academic departments and LCC



Recruitment & Standardisation of on-line tutors

- Inductions:
 - Local tutors: Face to face induction
 - Overseas tutors: on-line video induction
- Standardisation:
 - All scripts marked by on-line markers were read by two experienced markers for quality assurance
 - Guidelines for tutors and students were posted on Bb



Sem A 2008/09 – Language Tutor

| Location | Source | No. of Tutors |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Hong Kong | English Language Centre, CityU | 8 |
| | Individual Tutor | 3 |
| Australia | The University of Sydney | 33 |
| Canada | The University of British Columbia | 6 |
| USA | Brigham Young University | 9 |
| | Individual Tutor | 3 |
| New Zealand | Individual Tutor | 1 |
| Spain | Individual Tutor | 1 |
| United Kingdom | Individual Tutor | 1 |
| | Total: | 65 |

Sem A 2008/09 - 9 LCC Courses

| Group | Course Code/Title | Instructor | No. of Students |
|--------------|---|-------------------|------------------------|
| ELC | AIS2020 Introduction to Sociology | Dr Catherine Chiu | 35 |
| | EE 3003 Electronic Product Design | Prof Henry Chung | 92 |
| | FB2500 Management Information Systems I | Dr Ron Kwok | 831 |
| USYD | AP3243 Laboratory 2A | Dr H F Cheung | 49 |
| | BCH1048 Life Sciences | Dr S H Cheng | 92 |
| | BST20326 Construction Management | Dr Arthur Leung | 66 |
| | CTL3210 Electronic Publishing | Mr Ian Chow | 36 |
| | MS3301 Service Operations Management I: Design of Service Delivery Systems | Ms Sandy Wong | 73 |
| | SS2029 Basic Sociology | Mr Stephen Ma | 126 |
| | | Total: | 1400* |

The Schedule

| Date | Student Action | LCC Tutor Action |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Sept-23- 2008 | Start drafting assignment. | Open LCC Blog. |
| Sept-25-2008 (2345) (First Submission Deadline) | <u>Post first draft of assignment.</u> | |
| Sept-25-2008 (2345) -- Sept-28-2008 (2345) (First Feedback Deadline) | } 72 hrs turnaround | Comment on first draft. |
| Sept-28-2008 (2345) | Check the blog for feedback. Start drafting second draft. | |
| Sept-30-2008 (2345) (Second Submission Deadline) | <u>Post second draft of assignment.</u> | |
| Sept-30-2008 (2345) -- Oct -3- 2008 (2345) (Second Feedback Deadline) | } 72 hrs turnaround | Comment on second draft. |
| Oct -3- 2008 (2345) | Check the blog for feedback. Start writing final version. | Create Assignment Drop Box. |
| Oct -6 2008 (2345) (Assignment Deadline) | <u>Submit final version to assignment drop box.</u> | |
| Oct -6 2008 (2345) -- Oct 10-2008 | | Collect and grade the final version. |

The feedback

| Kinds of feedback | Comment Bank | Genre Bank | Marks |
|-------------------|--|--|--|
| Given on | Drafts | Drafts | Final version of assignment |
| Language focus | Grammatical accuracy & essay coherence | Language requirement for assignments of individual courses | Grammatical accuracy & essay coherence |

The Feedback:

A) The Development of the Comment Bank

| Levels | No. of items on the Comment Bank (Pilot 1) | No. of items on the Comment Bank (Pilot 2) | No. of items on the Comment Bank (Pilot 3) | No. of items on the Comment Bank (Pilot 4) |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|
| Word | 9 | 17 | 18 | 34 |
| Clause | 17 | 31 | 32 | 15 |
| Paragraph | 0 | 9 | 14 | 14 |
| Academic Style | 1 | 2 | 2 | 13 |
| Total | 27 | 59 | 66 | 76 |



The Present Comment Bank

Comment Bank

Please Select:

Word Level Clause Level

Paragraph Level Style

Word Level [top](#)

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Article missing [01] | Copy... |
| Article unnecessary [02] | Copy... |
| Article - wrong article [03] | Copy... |
| Noun needed - (Part of speech incorrect) [04] | Copy... |
| Noun - gerund [05] | Copy... |
| Noun - uncountable [06] | Copy... |
| Noun - countable [07] | Copy... |
| Pronoun Missing [08] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - agreement between demonstrative pronouns and nouns [09] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - wrong use [10] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - unclear reference [11] | Copy... |
| Adjective needed - Part of speech Incorrect [12] | Copy... |
| Adjective Comparative / Superlative form [13] | Copy... |
| Adverb needed - Part of speech Incorrect [14] | Copy... |
| Verb needed - Part of speech Incorrect [15] | Copy... |
| Verb - subject-verb agreement [16] | Copy... |
| Verb - Modal missing [17] | Copy... |
| Verb - Modal wrong use [18] | Copy... |
| Verb - active voice [19] | Copy... |
| Verb - passive voice [20] | Copy... |
| Verb - ing form (progressive) needed [21] | Copy... |
| Verb - To-infinitive [22] | Copy... |
| Verb - bare infinitive [23] | Copy... |
| Verb - participles [24] | Copy... |
| Verb - missing [25] | Copy... |
| Verb - present simple [26] | Copy... |
| Verb - past simple [27] | Copy... |
| Verb - present perfect [28] | Copy... |
| Verb - past perfect [29] | Copy... |
| Verb - transitive [30] | Copy... |
| Verb - intransitive [31] | Copy... |
| Preposition - missing [32] | Copy... |
| Preposition - wrong use [33] | Copy... |

Local intranet

<http://lc.xsy.cityu.edu.hk/edolcc/200809/LC C/CommentBank.asp>



Giving feedback on the drafts

This is the second part of the electronic product design. In the first part, we have design a product and build it up. In this part, we were going to design another circuit product whether it is work^[045] (There are two verbs in one single clause) or not.

We called the testing product 'test jig'. Test jig includes two parts. One is the box, another^[010] (Please check the difference between ANOTHER & THE OTHER. The box is use^[020] to fix the product while doing^[076] ^[032](Who is doing the test? To avoid telling the doer, which is not important in a lab report, and it is awkward passive either, you can use a preposition instead) the testing process, the circuit will do various things^[073] (Do you mean PERFORM SOME FUNCTIONS?) to test. As this part has included in the lab report, I will share what I learnt in the follows^[004] paragraph.

Like the previous one, we needed to buy components to build up^[033] ^[001]circuit. The only difference between that part and this part is we have to decide what we use in this test jig. In the previous part, we knew exactly what components we need to use, so we do not need to worry about buying wrong kind of components. In fact, I can design the circuit well first, we can reduce a large portion of risk to buying^[023] wrong components.

Another thing we learnt is how to etching^[023] the PCB board manually. We were shocked when we knew the PCB etching room has been closed for decoration. We had to use two boards in order to finish the project. We consult the professor's and the technician's opinions and learnt how to do it manually. Finally, we can finish it.

This part looks like the Discussion section to me but it does not have the proper style and structure for the Discussion.

Comment Bank

Please Select:

- Word Level Clause Level
 Paragraph Level Style

Word Level [top](#)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Article missing [01] | Copy... |
| Article unnecessary [02] | Copy... |
| Article - wrong article [03] | Copy... |
| Noun needed - (Part of speech Incorrect) [04] | Copy... |
| Noun - gerund [05] | Copy... |
| Noun - uncountable [06] | Copy... |
| Noun - countable [07] | Copy... |
| Pronoun Missing [08] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - agreement between demonstrative pronouns and nouns [09] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - wrong use [10] | Copy... |
| Pronoun - unclear reference [11] | Copy... |
| Adjective needed - Part of speech Incorrect [12] | Copy... |
| Adjective Comparative / Superlative form [13] | Copy... |
| Adverb needed - Part of speech Incorrect [14] | Copy... |
| Verb needed - Part of speech Incorrect [15] | Copy... |

Student Viewing Comments on the draft

This is the second part of the electronic product design. In the first part, we have design a product and build it up. In this part, we were going to design another circuit to test the product whether it is work[045] (There are two verbs in one single clause) or not.

We called the testing product 'test jig'. Test jig includes two parts. One is the box, another [010] (Please check the difference between ANOTHER & THE OTHER.) is the circuit. The box is use[020] to fix the product while doing [076] [032](Who is doing the test?To avoid telling the doer, which is not important in a lab report, and it is awkward to use passive either, you can use a preposition instead) the testing process, the circuit will do various things [073] (Do you mean PERFORM SOME FUNCTIONS?) to test the circuit. As this part has included in the lab report, I will share what I learnt in the follows[004] paragraph.

Like the previous one, we needed to buy this test jig. In the previous part, we knew we can design the circuit well first, we can

Another thing we learnt is how to etch in two boards in order to finish the project.

This part looks like the Discussion section to me but it does not have the proper style and structure for the Discussion.

Word Level

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Comment | Verb - passive voice |
| Explanation | You need to put the verb in the passive voice .The subject is unknown or unimportant. Often used in scientific writing. |
| Examples of Wrong Use | We two students calculated the results |
| Correct Use | The results were calculated. |
| External Links | http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/verbs/voice.htm |



The external links

H

HOME

C

CONTENTS

G

GLOSSARY

I

INDEX

S

SEARCH

| Active Voice | Passive Voice |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| [1] Paul congratulated David | [2] David was congratulated by Paul |

Passive constructions are formed using the PASSIVE AUXILIARY *be*, and the main verb has an *-ed* inflection. In active constructions, there is no passive auxiliary, though other auxiliaries may occur:

Paul *is* congratulating David
Paul *will* congratulate David
Paul *has* congratulated David

All of these examples are active constructions, since they contain no passive auxiliary. Notice that in the first example (*Paul is congratulating David*), the auxiliary is the progressive auxiliary, not the passive auxiliary. We know this because the main verb *congratulate* has an *-ing* inflection, not an *-ed* inflection.

In the passive construction in [2], we refer to *Paul* as the AGENT. This is the one who performs the action of congratulating David. Sometimes no agent is specified:

David was congratulated

We refer to this as an AGENTLESS PASSIVE

Exercise

Are the following constructions active or passive?

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Jane decided to cancel the party | <input type="radio"/> Active <input type="radio"/> Passive |
| 2. The lecturer was impressed by your essay | <input type="radio"/> Active <input type="radio"/> Passive |
| 3. Your horse is walking on our | <input type="radio"/> Active |

Done



Student Usage rate of external links (Sem B, 07-08)

| External links | Usage rate |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Word choice | 100% |
| Preposition | 63% |
| Countable / uncountable nouns | 56% |
| Articles | 44% |



Student feedback on the external links (Sem B, 07-08)

- “The collocation website is the most useful for me because it teaches me how to use compound words which I have never learned before.”
- “The on-line dictionary is most useful for me because the explanation of words is very clear, including an illustrative sentence, forms in singular and plural and so on.”



B) The Genre Bank : Qualitative feedback

- aligned with language requirements for the assignment
- enhances students' awareness of the language requirements for their own discipline
- helps students to develop their writing ability to fulfil the language requirements of their own discipline



Qualitative feedback

e.g. Writing a lab report for EE 3003

| The student is able to | Not Evident | Emerging | Consolidating | Mastery |
|--|-------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| 1.put down appropriate sections for the lab report | √ | | | |
| 2. develop each section fully | | | | |
| 3. organize different sections coherently | | | | |
| 4. Use appropriate verb tense in different sections of the lab report | | | | |
| 5. use passive constructions effectively to introduce evidence or opinions | | | | |
| 6. cite scientific literature appropriately | | | | |
| 7. adopt proper academic style | | | | |
| 8. express ideas concisely | | | | |

Qualitative feedback

My CityU Teaching & Learning Content Collection Univ. Services (Staff)

We called the testing product 'test jig'. Test jig includes two parts. One is the box, another [010] (Please check the difference between ANOTHER & THE OTHER) is the circuit. The box is use[020] to fix the product while doing [076] [032](Who is doing the test?To avoid telling the doer, which is not important in a lab report, and it is awkward to use passive either, you can use a preposition instead) the testing process, the circuit will do various things [073] (Do you mean PERFORM SOME FUNCTIONS?) to test the circuit. As this part has included in the lab report, I will share what I learnt in the follows[04] paragraph.

Like the previous one, we needed to buy components to build up [033] [01]circuit. The only difference between that part and this part is we have to decide what we should use in this test jig. In the previous part, we knew exactly what components we need to use, so we do not need to worry about buying wrong kind of components. In fact, I learnt that if we can design the circuit well first, we can reduce a large portion of risk to buying[023] wrong components.

Another thing we learnt is how to etching [023]the PCB board manually. We were shocked when we knew the PCB etching room has been closed for decoration. We have to etch two boards in order to finish the project. We consult the professor's and the technician's opinions and learnt how to do it manually. Finally, we can finish it.

This part looks like the Discussion section to me but it does not have the proper style and structure for the Discussion.

| The student is able to | Not Evident | Emerging | Consolidating | Mastery |
|--|-------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| 1. put down appropriate sections for the lab report | √ | | | |
| 1. develop each section fully | √ | | | |
| 1. organize different sections coherently | √ | | | |
| 1. Use appropriate verb tense in different sections of the lab report | √ | | | |
| 1. use passive constructions effectively to introduce evidence or opinions | √ | | | |
| 1. cite scientific literature appropriately | √ | | | |
| 1. adopt proper academic style | √ | | | |
| 1. express ideas concisely | | √ | | |



The Language Support

- Tutorials
 - a) prior submission:
 - ❑ language requirements of the term-paper
 - b) after-1st submission /after 1st assignment
 - ❑ top 10 common errors
- Writing workshops
 - ❑ tailored –made for individual courses



Student Feedback form on Writing Workshop

Name of the workshop: _____

Date: _____

Please rate:

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

This workshop is useful. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The instructor is well prepared. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. I would like to know more about
Writing skills after attending the
Workshop. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

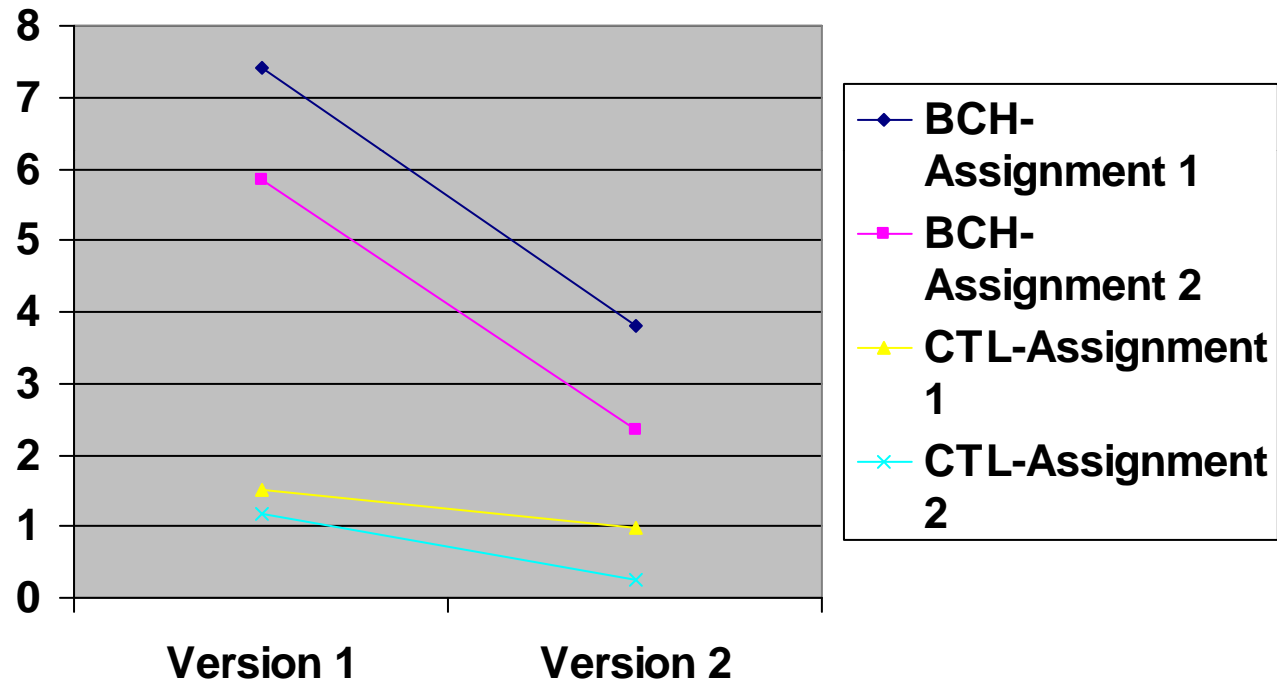
4. Do you have any suggestions or comments?

Student feedback on writing workshops (e.g. FB 2500)

| | 17/9-PU | 19/9-PC | 23/9-PU | 24/9-PC | 26/9-SC | 8/10-PU | Total |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Q1 | 5.2 | 5.1 | 5.8 | 4.8 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.3 |
| Q2 | 5.9 | 5.7 | 6.3 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 5.5 | 5.8 |
| Q3 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 6 | 5.8 |
| No. of Ss registered | 27 | 30 | 14 | 13 | 19 | 8 | 111 |
| No. of Ss showed up | 18 | 22 | 6 | 7 | 12 | 2 | 67 |
| Show-up rate | 66% | 73% | 43% | 54% | 63% | 25% | 58.5% |
| Q return-rate | 100% | 95% | 100% | 86% | 100% | 100% | 97% |

*PU- paragraph unity
 PC- Paragraph coherence
 SC- Sentence clinic

Some preliminary findings:



Comparison of error rates between BCH and CTL students in two assignments

Common errors of students

e.g. BCH students

| Top 5 Common errors | Assignment 1 | Assignment 2 | Assignment 3 | Assignment 4 | Assignment 5 | Assignment 6 |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Singular / Plural | Singular / Plural | Article | Subject-Verb agreement | Word choice | Singular / Plural |
| 2 | Article | Article | Singular / Plural | Word choice | Singular / Plural | Word choice |
| 3 | Word choice | Word choice | Preposition | Preposition | Article | Tense shift |
| 4 | Part of Speech | Preposition | part of Speech | Article | Preposition | Preposition |
| 5 | Subject-Verb agreement | Subject-Verb agreement | Spelling | Singular / Plural | Punctuation | Article |

Implications & Recommendations

- The LCC is another important initiative for English Learning in CityU
- The success of LCC depends on close collaboration between departments



Implications & Recommendations (Cont'd)

- More effort can be exerted to
 - arouse students' awareness of requirements of the academic genre of their own discipline
 - provide additional comments on discipline specific linguistic features
 - help students to foster an interest in becoming a life-long language learner

• ~Thank you~



Thank You !

