

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS13/H11/14 <hr/> (please insert ref. above)
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**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL  
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR  
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)**

**Completion Report**  
*(for completed projects only)*

<p><b><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within <u>six</u> months of the approved project completion date.</li> <li>2. Completion report: within <u>12</u> months of the approved project completion date.</li> </ol>
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**Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)**

**1. Project Title**

Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong: Language Use and Impact on the Hong Kong  
Speech Community

**2. Investigator(s) And Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved**

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Ms. LI Cecilia Suet-sam Senior Lecturer	Department of English, Chu Hai College of Higher Education
Co-Investigator(s)		
Others		

**3. Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start Date	1 January 2015		
Project Completion Date	31 December 2016	30 June 2017	19 September 2016
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	24 months	30 months	19 September 2016
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 December 2017	30 June 2018	19 September 2016

**Part B: The Final Report****5. Project Objectives****5.1 Objectives as per original application**

1. Explore patterns of language use, language attitudes, and language awareness of Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong
2. Evaluate the role of Filipina domestic helpers in the English language learning experience of Hong Kong children, from the perspectives of the helper, the child, and the parents
3. Conduct a linguistic analysis to compare the Filipina domestic helper and the child's use of English
4. Determine whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helpers has structurally influenced the child's use of English

**5.2 Revised objectives**

Date of approval from the RGC: \_\_\_\_\_

Reasons for the change: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1.

2.

**5.3 Realisation of the objectives**

*(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

The Principal Investigator made use of 3 phases of research to fulfil the 4 research objectives.

**Phase 1 (Months 1-6)*****Questionnaire survey***

This phase of the project was conducted in the first 6 months of the project period. The Principal Investigator collected quantitative data from Filipina domestic helpers to investigate their language use patterns, language attitudes, and language awareness through the use of a 59-question survey administered to 140 Filipina domestic helpers at Statue Square in Central on two consecutive Sundays. The results indicated that the majority of the Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong use solely English to communicate with the family they take care of. They are aware of the existence of the different varieties of English, and of the accent that they use. They believe that it is very important to speak in English to the Chinese children at home, and most of them take the initiative to encourage the children to speak in English. A vast majority of them see their role very important in contributing to the English competence of the children. This phase of the project fulfils Objective 1 of exploring patterns of language use, language attitudes, and language awareness of Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong

**Phase 2 (Months 7-18)*****Semi-structured interviews***

Phase 2 of the project was conducted right after Phase 1 and it lasted for 12 months. The Principal Investigator made use of in-depth semi-structured interviews to gather views from helpers, children, and parents on the role of the helper in the English language learning experience of the child. 9 families with a standard membership of parents, a child, and a domestic helper were interviewed. The interviews were guided with a list of questions for each interviewee while the process of the interview was examined in a flexible and open-minded fashion. In this tripartite evaluation of the role of the helper in the language learning experience of the child, it was found that all three types of stakeholders hold a positive attitude towards the role of the helper. This phase of the project fulfils Objective 2 of evaluating the role of Filipina domestic helpers in the English language learning experience of Hong Kong children, from the perspectives of the helper, the child, and the parents

**Phase 3 (Months 19-30)*****Linguistic Analysis***

Phase 3 lasted for 12 months and was a microscopic linguistic analysis of the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helper and the child. A comparative study of their English was carried out to determine whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helper has structurally influenced the child's use of English in terms of phonetics and phonology, lexis, and syntax. 3 pairs of FDH/child's speech was collected in a period of seven days. The speech of the child was compared to that of the Filipina domestic helper taking care of him/her to determine whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helper has structurally influenced the child's use of English. It was found that no obvious correlation can be stated between the speech of the child and that of the helper. This phase of the project fulfils Objective 3 of conducting a linguistic analysis to compare the Filipina domestic helper and the child's use of English and Objective 4 of determining whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helpers has structurally influenced the child's use of English.

**5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date**

<b>Objectives</b> <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	<b>Addressed</b> <i>(please tick)</i>	<b>Percentage Achieved</b> <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. Explore patterns of language use, language attitudes, and language awareness of Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong	✓	100%
2. Evaluate the role of Filipina domestic helpers in the English language learning experience of Hong Kong children, from the perspectives of the helper, the child, and the parents	✓	100%
3. Conduct a linguistic analysis to compare the Filipina domestic helper and the child's use of English	✓	100%

4. Determine whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helpers has structurally influenced the child's use of English	✓	100%
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## 6. Research Outcome

### 6.1 Major findings and research outcome

*(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)*

The major findings of the project are summarised according to the 3 phases as follows:

#### ***Phase 1 Questionnaire survey***

The questionnaire survey results indicated that the majority of the Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong are aware of the existence of the different varieties of English, and of the accent that they use, showing a strong sense of language awareness. They believe that it is very important to speak in English to the Chinese children at home, and most of them take the initiative to encourage the children to speak in English. A vast majority of them are very involved in teaching the children English, and indeed see their role very important in contributing to the English competence of the children. This phase of the research results were presented in a recognised international conference in Kobe, Japan in May 2017.

#### ***Phase 2 Semi-structured interviews***

The in-depth semi-structured interview evaluated the role of the Filipina domestic helper in the English language learning experience of Hong Kong children, from the perspectives of the helper, the child, and the parents. Results show matching opinions from the three types of stakeholders.

The parents believed that the presence of the domestic helper provides an English speaking environment for the child. The child can practice his/her English by talking to and playing with the helper on a daily basis. Most of them stated that their child has improvement in English listening and speaking, and is more confident in speaking English in class and with foreigners. The Filipina domestic helpers thought that they have contributed to the English learning of the child saying that they provide an environment for the child to learn English and give him/her chances to speak English at home. Most of them also thought that they are or may be teachers outside of school to the child. The children claimed that they speak better English and feel more comfortable to speak English than their classmates who do not have a domestic helper at home. This phase of the research results were presented in a recognised international conference in Singapore in June 2017.

#### ***Phase 3 Linguistic Analysis***

The microscopic linguistic analysis was a comparative study of the speech of the child and that of the helper to determine whether the English spoken by the Filipina domestic helper has structurally influenced the child's use of English. The analysis was focused on the three aspects of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. After an in-depth analysis of the speech data, it was found that no correlation can be made between the speech of the child and that of the helper. It was observed though that these children are able to enunciate properly, employ relatively complex grammar structure, and command a wide range of vocabulary.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action  
(Maximum half a page)

In Phase 3, it was observed that children in the care of a Filipina domestic helper exhibited a high level of English competence, in terms of phonetics, syntax, and lexis. They are able to enunciate properly, employ relatively complex grammar structure, and command a wide range of vocabulary. From the limited data, however, it is difficult to assert a correlation between this competence and the presence of a Filipina domestic helper at home. Based on the inconclusive, yet rich and abundant and most importantly revealing findings in Phase 3, the Principal Investigator sees the potential and indeed need to further develop the research to look at the linguistic influence of Filipina domestic helpers on the English language competence of Hong Kong children. The Principal Investigator proposes the following:

***Control Group Design Experimental Study – Picture Description Task***

To determine whether Filipina domestic helpers contribute to L2 English acquisition of Hong Kong children, a picture description task can be designed to evaluate the English language ability of children in the care of a helper and those without using the control group design.

To ensure that the experimental group and the control group are comparable as far as possible in every respect except for the factor of whether they have been in the care of a Filipina domestic helper, it is proposed that 10 Grade 3 primary school students of the same school be recruited for this experiment. 5 of the participants should be or had been in the care of a Filipina domestic helper at some point in their life, who form the experimental group; and the other 5 who have never been in the care of a Filipina domestic helper form the control group.

Participants in these two groups will be given a picture, and they will describe the picture or tell a story in the picture in 1 minute. These oral narratives will be recorded and sent to two primary school teachers, who will rate the performance of these participants in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

It is proposed that a t-test be run on the scores of the experiment group and the control group to see if significant results are yielded. This potentially serves as a pilot study. Significant results will justify a full scale research.

**7. Layman's Summary**

*(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)*

Filipina domestic helpers have had a significant presence in Hong Kong since 1974 when the first group of helpers arrived and started working in the territory after the implementation of the Labour Code in the Philippines. For more than 40 years after the first group of Filipina domestic helpers arrived at Hong Kong, very limited research has been done on their impact on the linguistic dynamics in the Hong Kong speech community. This project looked at the role Filipina domestic helpers play in the language learning experience of Hong Kong children. It was found that Filipina domestic helpers are aware of their role in the English language learning experience of Hong Kong children, and indeed contribute to the process of language acquisition. It was further found that children in the care of a Filipina domestic helper exhibit an advanced command of the English language in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. This paves the way for further research to ascertain the relationship between this competence and the presence of a Filipina domestic helper at home.

**Part C: Research Output****8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

*(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)*

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the institutional repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						

**9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered**

*(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)*

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the institutional repository (Yes or No)
May 2017 Kobe, Japan	Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong: Language Use and Impact on the Hong Kong Speech Community	The Asian Conference on Language Learning 2017	No	Yes	Yes	No
Jun 2017 Singapore	Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong: Language Use and Impact on the Hong Kong Speech Community -- An exploratory study of Hong Kong families that hire Filipina Domestic Helper	Tenth Global Studies Conference	No	Yes	Yes	No

**10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning**

*(Please elaborate)*

As an incentive to engage students in research activities, Phase 1 of the project was linked to the teaching and learning activities of a *Sociolinguistics* class the Principal Investigator taught. The course was offered as programme elective for students undertaking the Bachelor of Arts in English for Professional Communication (BAEPC) at Chu Hai College of Higher Education. As the methodology used in the first stage of the project was relatively straight forward, the Principal Investigator saw it as a good opportunity for students of *Sociolinguistics* to have a first try on conducting sociolinguistic research. Students participated in writing the questionnaire, conducting the pilot, revising the questionnaire, conducting the actual study, and discussing and interpreting the results. This research experience not only enriched the learning of the students, but also the teaching of the Principal Investigator.

**11. Student(s) Trained**

*(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)*

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation

**12. Other Impact**

*(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)*

Linking Phase 1 of the research to the teaching and learning of the course *Sociolinguistics* was an invaluable experience for the Principal Investigator. As it was the first try for a lot of students on conducting sociolinguistic research, the Principal Investigator had to guide the class along the entire research process. This gave the Principal Investigator an opportunity to revisit the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs), and Assessment Tasks (ATs) of the course, enhancing the quality of the course in the subsequent intakes.

**13. Public Access Of Completion Report**

*(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)*

<b>Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access</b>	<b>Reasons</b>



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THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)**

**Completion Report - Attachment**  
*(for completed projects only)*

**RGC Ref. No.:** UGC/ FDS13/H11/14

**Principal Investigator:** LI Cecilia Suet-sam

**Project Title:** Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong: Language Use and Impact on  
the Hong Kong Speech Community

**Statistics on Research Outputs**

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (Please specify)
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project [or conference]		2			