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The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong

By

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The University of Hong Kong

Faculty of Education

Bachelor of Education (Language Education) (Primary English)

Dissertation

May 2015
Declaration:

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a representation of my own work, and it has not been previously submitted to this University or any other institution in application for admission to a degree, diploma or other qualifications

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Abstract:

This study explores the effects of an immersion programme to Australia on pre-service English teachers who are from the Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. The experience of the pre-service teachers was examined in three aspects – language enhancement, cross-cultural awareness and pedagogical understanding. The sample was drawn from 10 participants and their experience reflected the benefits and drawbacks of the immersion programme. The immersion programme generally had positive effects on participants’ language enhancement and pedagogical understanding. It was most effective in raising students’ cultural awareness. But the programme also had limitations in terms of placement opportunities, class organizations and homestay arrangements. These findings will inform the improvement of immersion programmes as meaningful and significant experience for pre-service teachers’ professional development.
# Table of Contents:

1. **Introduction** .....................................................................................................................7-9

   1.1 Background of the study ................................................................................................. 7

   1.2 Background of the immersion programme to be examined ...................................... 7

   1.3 Objectives of the study .................................................................................................. 8

   1.4 Outline of the study ....................................................................................................... 8

2. **Literature Review** .............................................................................................................9-12

   2.1 General aims of immersion programmes ...................................................................... 9

   2.2 Benefits of immersion programmes .............................................................................. 9

   2.3 Drawbacks of immersion programmes .......................................................................... 11

3. **Methodology** ...................................................................................................................12-15

   3.1 Research questions ....................................................................................................... 12

   3.2 Participants of the study ............................................................................................... 13

   3.3 Instruments and procedures of data collection ......................................................... 14

   3.4 Data analysis ................................................................................................................. 14

4. **Findings and discussion** ..................................................................................................15-34

   4.1 Language enhancement ................................................................................................. 15-18

      4.1.1 Improvement in English ......................................................................................... 15

      4.1.2 Hindrance of the development of English ............................................................ 16

      4.1.3 Significant findings ............................................................................................... 17

      4.1.4 Implications to programme organizers ................................................................. 18
4.2 Pedagogical understanding .................................................................................................................................. 19-23

4.2.1 Implementing teaching strategies acquired from Hong Kong in the Australian context ........................................................................................................................................... 19

4.2.2 Implementing teaching strategies acquired from Australia in the Hong Kong context .................................................................................................................................................. 20

4.2.3 Significant findings ........................................................................................................................................... 22

4.2.4 Implications to programme organizers ......................................................................................................... 23

4.3 Cultural awareness .............................................................................................................................................. 24-27

4.3.1 Understanding of the Australian culture ......................................................................................................... 24

4.3.2 Understanding of other cultures ......................................................................................................................... 25

4.3.3 Significant findings ........................................................................................................................................... 26

4.3.4 Implications to programme organizers ......................................................................................................... 26

4.4 Major problems encountered ............................................................................................................................. 27-30

4.4.1 Racial discrimination ...................................................................................................................................... 27

4.4.2 Inconvenient transportation ............................................................................................................................ 28

4.4.3 Loss of money .................................................................................................................................................. 28

4.4.4 Conflicts with other pre-service teachers from Hong Kong ........................................................................... 28

4.4.5 Significant findings ...................................................................................................................................... 29

4.4.6 Implications to programme organizers ......................................................................................................... 29

4.5 Suggestions for improvements .......................................................................................................................... 30-34

4.5.1 Increase interactions with Australian students ................................................................................................. 31

4.5.2 Opportunities to teach in Australian primary schools ..................................................................................... 31
4.5.3 Selection of host families ................................................................. 32
4.5.4 All pre-service teachers going to the same host institute .................... 32
4.5.5 Courses should focus on teaching strategies ........................................ 32
4.5.6 Longer period of stay ........................................................................... 33
4.5.7 Significant findings ............................................................................. 33
4.5.8 Implications to programme organizers ................................................ 34

5. Conclusion .................................................................................................. 34-36

5.1 Summary of key findings ........................................................................ 34
5.2 Limitations of the study .......................................................................... 35
  5.2.1 Sample size ....................................................................................... 35
  5.2.2 Time lag ........................................................................................... 35
5.3 Future research ......................................................................................... 36

6. References .................................................................................................. 37-38

7. Appendices ................................................................................................. 39-71

Appendix 1- Interview questions ..................................................................... 39
Appendix 2- Interview transcriptions .............................................................. 40-70
Appendix 3- Audio recordings of interviews ................................................... 71
1. Introduction:

1.1 Background of the study

According to Byram (1994), a cultural dimension must be taken into account when learning a language. Teachers of foreign languages need to experience the cultures of the languages they teach in order to understand the process of learning a foreign culture which their students have to go through. They also need to experience the cultural contexts of the languages so that they can fully comprehend them. Therefore, pre-service language teacher education programmes in many countries include short-term international field experience programmes. During the international field experience programmes, pre-service teachers usually spend a short period of time studying and teaching abroad (Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006). Similar mandatory overseas immersion programmes have been initiated by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government for pre-service language teachers in Hong Kong. The aims of these programmes are to promote cultural exchange, enhance pre-service teachers’ language proficiency in an authentic language environment and expand their perspectives in using different instruction strategies in teaching the target languages (Lee, 2009). With the prevalence of these immersion programmes, it is essential to review their influence on pre-service teachers’ professional development so that programme organizers can design programmes that suit the needs of pre-service teachers.

1.2 Background of the immersion programme to be examined

In this research, the immersion programme that would be examined was a short-term immersion programme to Brisbane, Australia that lasted for 2 months from May to July. The programme was organized by the Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong. The participants are in Year 4 now, but they completed two out of four years of their teacher training programme at the University of Hong Kong when they participated in the immersion
programme and they were trained to teach English in primary schools. The group had 31 pre-service English teachers who were divided into two sub-groups with 17 of them going to Queensland University of Technology and 14 of them going to The University of Queensland. During the programme, they stayed with host families and they had courses concerning Australian pedagogy, aboriginal culture and sociolinguistics. They also had language enhancement courses, school visits to local Australian schools and excursions to different tourist spots. This programme was chosen to be the background of the study as little research has been done on the participants’ perceptions on this immersion programme and it would continue to be organized in the coming years.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this research project are as follows:

1. To identify the effects of the international field experience on pre-service teacher’s professional development from their perspectives;
2. To make recommendations to programme organizers in order to help enhance pre-service teachers’ international field experience.

1.4 Outline of the study

After this introduction, there would be a literature review analyzing the positive as well as negative impact of immersion programmes organized by institutes overseas and in Hong Kong. Then, there would be a part on methodology which explains information about the 10 participants of the study, the rationale of implementing qualitative research approach, the method of audio-recording interviews for data collection and the process of data analysis by comparing and categorizing participants’ responses into different themes. Following the methodology would be presentation of findings and discussions of their implications. There
would be extracts of transcriptions to illustrate participants’ responses and their comments would be presented according to five themes, which would be mentioned in the methodology. Implications to programme organizers when organizing similar immersion programmes in the future would also be derived in this section. This study would end with a conclusion, which summarizes the key findings of the research. Limitation of this study such as the small sample size as well as other research that can be conducted to inform programme organizers the value and drawbacks of immersion programmes would also be examined in the conclusion.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 General aims of immersion programmes

With the common practice of incorporating international field experience into teacher training programmes, much research has been done to investigate the value of this practice. Willard-Holt (2001) found that these programmes aim to help pre-service teachers reflect on their beliefs, habits and values as well as evaluate their teaching strategies and curriculum planning approaches. Trent (2011) and Lee (2009) also pointed out that another important aim of immersion programmes is language enhancement. They analyzed immersion programmes organized by Hong Kong institutes which aimed at strengthening pre-service teachers’ English proficiency. With these aims, most of the research indicated positive effects of immersion programmes but a few of them pointed out drawbacks of these programmes.

2.2 Benefits of immersion programmes

Short-term immersion programmes were noted to have had enhanced pre-service teachers’ professional development in multiple ways. Wilson (1987) argued that cross-cultural experience supports self-development. For example, Turkish pre-service teachers
who had been to an immersion programme to America experienced an increase in self-confidence (Sahin, 2008). Apart from increased self-confidence, Lee (2009) also documented that an immersion programme to New Zealand had other positive effects on the personal development of a group of pre-service English teachers from Hong Kong. The immersion programme promoted cognitive development of the pre-service teachers as they need to stay focus and pay special attention to derive meaning from native English speakers in Auckland. The programme also enabled them to develop their self-identify as an English teacher and a Hong Kong citizen.

Besides pre-service teachers’ personal development, international field experience also has positive impact on pre-service teachers’ professional development. Pre-service English teachers from Hong Kong reported that both the university in New Zealand and the environment, which included their host families, teachers as well as students they met in placement schools, were important sources they learned English from (Lee, 2009). Other than language development, Turkish pre-service teachers who went to America for immersion programme gained teaching experience through teaching whole units independently, experimenting with technology in learning and teaching, as well as applying theories they learned from Turkey into the American classrooms (Sahin, 2008). The group of pre-service English teachers from Hong Kong who went to New Zealand for immersion programme also experienced an increase in pedagogical understanding. They were able to acquire the teaching methodology and classroom interaction strategies from Auckland and reflected on the possibilities of implementing them in Hong Kong (Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2007).

Beyond the personal level, Sahin (2008) believed that these programmes help pre-service teachers develop awareness to global issues and experience a different culture. Wilson (1987) also pointed out that teaching is a cross-cultural encounter and that cross-cultural experience leads to global perspectives which are necessary for education. Jarchow et.
al. (1996) reported that pre-service teachers from America displayed an increase in awareness of other cultures and diminished ethnocentrism after participating in an overseas immersion programme. In another study, Pence & Macgillivray (2008) documented that American pre-service teachers who had been to Rome had more patience as well as empathy towards different cultures and their intercultural understanding was deepened. The pre-service teachers learned to appreciate and respect individual differences by being less prone to pre-judge students according to their cultural background, linguistic differences and even learning disability. Pre-service teachers from Hong Kong who went to New Zealand for immersion were exposed to the lifestyle and language of the host country and they understood the mindset of New Zealanders. With these understanding, some of the pre-service teachers realized that language and culture were inseparably linked (Lee, 2009).

2.3 Drawbacks of immersion programmes

Although international field experience has positive impact on pre-service teachers’ personal and professional growth, some negative experiences were identified in a few studies. In a study conducted by Gutierrez and Hunter (2012), the authors found that American pre-service teachers were emotionally isolated in and from the host culture in Costa Rica during an immersion programme. They were physically withdrawn from the culture because they were slow in processing in Spanish, which was a foreign language to them. According to Trilokekar & Kukar (2011), some pre-service teachers experienced racial discrimination during the immersion programme and this affected their interactions with students and outside the classroom setting. Other pre-service teachers also experienced a mismatch in principles between their pre-service courses and their teaching practicum during international field experience so they did not find the immersion programme useful (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008).
With the above benefits and drawbacks identified, it can be derived that the studies on the impact of immersion programmes is inconclusive, even though the benefits seem to outweigh the drawbacks. Since immersion programmes are costly, it is important for the programme organizers to identify the limitations of the programmes from the participants’ perspectives, rectify the problems, and enhance the immersion experience of pre-service teachers.

3. Methodology:

3.1 Research questions

This research is an exploratory study which aims at informing three research questions:

1. How did the international field experience facilitate language development of pre-service teachers?
2. How did the international field experience promote cross-cultural awareness of pre-service teachers?
3. How did the international field experience deepen pedagogical understanding of pre-service teachers?

In order to answer these research questions, a set of interview questions was designed and the data was analyzed qualitatively since there is still a need for more qualitative research which explores the impact of immersion programmes from the participants’ perspectives (Wilkinson, 1998; Willard-Holt, 2001). With reference to Coll & Chapman (2000), qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in detail and depth, which is appropriate for smaller number of people and cases. This section explains details about the participants of the
study, the instruments and procedures of data collection, as well as the method of data analysis.

3.2 Participants of the study

10 out of 31 pre-service teachers from the University of Hong Kong who joined the English immersion programme in Australia took part in the study. The participants consisted of 9 females and 1 male whose ages ranged from 22 to 25 years old, which also represented the overall age range of all the pre-service teachers who took part in the programme. The 10 participants were selected based on the university they attended during the immersion programme in Australia - 5 of them went to Queensland University of Technology and the other 5 went to The University of Queensland. Among the pre-service teachers who went to each university, the selection of participants to take part in this study was random.

Although the 10 participants had their education courses together in Hong Kong, their ethnicity and cultural background was diverse. One participant is a Vietnamese-Chinese and he went to international schools in Hong Kong before tertiary education. One participant is a Filipino-Chinese but she studied in local schools in Hong Kong. Another participant is a Korean who studied in Korean local schools until grade 11, went to Nanjing and studied in an international school afterwards and came to Hong Kong for tertiary education. One participant is an Indian who studied in a local school in Hong Kong with multi-ethnic students. The other 6 participants were all local Hong Kong citizens and they studied in local schools in Hong Kong. Prior to the immersion programme, 4 participants travelled to Australia before and the duration of stay was 1 to 2 weeks.
3.3 Instruments and procedures of data collection

The data was collected through an interview which contained 6 open-ended questions (see Appendix 1). The questions were designed to answer the research questions – question 1 investigated what the participants learned generally in the immersion programme; questions 2 and 3 examined the changes in participants’ pedagogical understanding during and after the programme; question 4 explored the participants’ awareness of other cultures during the immersion programme; questions 5 and 6 enquired into the major problems participants faced during the programme and the limitations of the immersion programme respectively. In addition to the designed interview questions, follow-up questions were also asked in the interviews in order to elicit more detailed answers from the participants.

Before the interview, the selected participants were asked to complete a consent form which explained the details of the interview process. All participants did not wish to be identified and thus pseudonyms would be used when extracting from their responses. The interviews were conducted in the mode of one-on-one and face-to-face at places where the participants found convenient. Each interview lasted for approximately 5 to 10 minutes and the interviews were audio-recorded. The tool for recording the interview was my mobile phone and the files were transferred to my computer. The computer is password-protected and all the data will be destroyed upon completion of this study. The recordings were transcribed into Microsoft word documents (see Appendix 2) and sent to the participants via e-mail to ensure that there were no misinterpretations of the interviews. All participants were satisfied with the transcriptions and they did not want to modify them.

3.4 Data Analysis

During the design of interview questions, the questions had already been classified into different themes according to the research questions, as mentioned in the previous
section. Therefore, participants’ responses were classified into five themes: 1) language enhancement; 2) pedagogical understanding; 3) cultural awareness; 4) major problems encountered and 5) limitations of the immersion programme, which were informed by the HKSAR government’s aims of initiating immersion programmes as stated in the introduction. After that, their answers to each question were compared - repeating ideas were grouped together to form a sub-theme; different but relevant ideas were also extracted to form other sub-themes. This process of data analysis is consistent with typological analysis, which data is categorized and grouped into different subsets according to some criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In the process of analyzing data for this study, the criterion for categorization is meanings conveyed by the participants. The method of analysis is also in line with the approach of data analysis proposed by Paull, Boudville & Sitlington (2013), which thematic analysis should be carried out by identifying recurring themes and patterns. Then, researchers can interpret the data and build theory based on the findings.

4. Findings and discussion:

4.1 Language enhancement

Different views were identified after analyzing the participants’ responses regarding what they had learnt generally in the immersion programme.

4.1.1 Improvement in English

3 participants reported that their English improved because they spoke in English with their host families and other locals in Australia. 2 of the participants pointed out that they learned how to communicate with their host families informally using colloquial English.
“Mm in general, I think we gained a lot of experience in um in communicating in English informally (Interviewer (I): Mnhm) because we were surrounded by um many English-speaking people.” (Natalie)

“The first is like from my family from my host family. I learned how to like to communicate with them and I also learned some um colloquial language from them.” (Julia)

Another participant commented that in particular, her English speaking and listening skills were enhanced after participating in the immersion programme.

“Generally, I think I have improved my English skills and that especially on speaking and listening which were um…not a focus in Hong Kong curriculum.” (Bethany)

4.1.2 Hindrance of the development of English

2 participants also mentioned factors that hindered the development of their English. One participant commented that the presence of her classmates from Hong Kong in the immersion programme and her host family’s inarticulate English were obstacles for her development of English.

“The 15 people we are always together and sometimes um we tend to speak to each other in Chinese. (I: Okay) So yea so I think that is a um big obstacle for me to develop my English further.” (Natalie)

“Another problem is that um my f… my host family is not really Australian (I: Yea) so um their English might not be like the official language, so um they’re not as fluent as I expected.” (Natalie)
“It’s a mix of English and Tagalog, so when I’m (I: Okay) when I’m there most of the time they speak in English, and then but sometimes they do throw in one to two Tagalog (I: Ah okay) words in it yea.” (Natalie)

Another participant tried to develop her English but she was dissatisfied with the limited opportunities of interacting with local Australian students in the host university, which she reckoned to be an important source of learning English.

“I tried to improve my English but then because we were isolated from the local students, (I: Oh yea) we didn’t have much experience in interacting with them so… (I: Mm)” (Christy)

4.1.3 Significant findings

From the responses of participants, it reflected that the immersion programme had value in enhancing pre-service teachers’ English, particularly in the areas speaking and listening to native English speakers. Lee (2009) also reported that pre-service teachers experienced improvement in English especially in the areas of speaking and listening. She documented that participants were able to learn English in informal contexts, which was consistent to 1 participant’s comment on her improvement in communicating with her host family using informal English. But in this study, 1 participant specifically stated that she acquired more colloquial English from her host family.

Participants reported a few factors that hindered pre-service teachers’ development of English, which included the presence of other classmates from Hong Kong, host family members not being native English speakers and lack of interactions with Australian students. All these factors were also documented in the findings of Lee’s research (2009), which was another study that investigated Hong Kong pre-service English teachers’ views towards an
immersion programme to New Zealand. Therefore, suggestions to programme organizers can be raised combining research results from the 2 studies.

4.1.4 Implications to programme organizers

The findings implied that programme organizers should consider how to encourage pre-service teachers to communicate in English even among themselves, given that it would be difficult to separate pre-service teachers during the immersion programme. Lee (2009) documented a similar situation in her study. She argued that it is normal for pre-service teachers to communicate in their first language as it promotes solidarity among them in a foreign culture. The solution she proposed is to ask participants to sign an agreement before the programme that they would only use the target language, which is English in this case, during the whole immersion programme and that both the home and host institutes have the responsibilities to remind pre-service teachers about the agreement.

Programme organizers in Australia should also revise the criteria of selecting host families. Perhaps the criterion of host family members speaking native and fluent English should be placed in a higher priority so that pre-service teachers would be exposed to native English and be able to learn English through interacting with their host family members. If English is not the first language of the host families, programme organizers can devise guidelines for them to speak in English when pre-service teachers are present in order to ensure that the value of learning English through host families is not neglected (Lee, 2009).

The findings also inform programme organizers about the importance of interactions between pre-service teachers from Hong Kong and Australian students in the host institutes. Since the immersion programme occurred from May to July, students in the two host universities were having their winter break and hence pre-service teachers from Hong Kong could not have any classes with the local students. To address this issue, programme
organizers from the host universities can consider inviting Australian students to join classes, school visits and excursions as mentors of the pre-service teachers during the immersion programme. The presence of local students with similar ages in an authentic and purposeful context can create opportunities for the pre-service teachers to use English more (Lee, 2009).

4.2 Pedagogical understanding

Participants had diverse experience and opinions towards the implementation of teaching strategies they learned from Hong Kong in the Australian context and the application of teaching strategies they acquired from the immersion programme to Hong Kong classrooms.

4.2.1 Implementing teaching strategies acquired from Hong Kong in the Australian context

All 5 participants who went to Queensland University of Technology expressed that they did not implement any teaching strategies they learned from Hong Kong in the immersion programme because they did not have opportunities to teach during the immersion programme (see Appendices 2A – 2E).

“Cus we were brought to some um schools to visit into classes but we have no chances to teach (I: Oh okay okay) in in the classroom.” (Cathy)

“Like because we didn’t have the chance to teach in Australia, so I didn’t really implement anything that I learned from Hong Kong.” (Rebecca)

Even though the other 5 participants who went to The University of Queensland also did not have the chance to teach in local Australian schools, they implemented various teaching strategies they learned from Hong Kong in a micro-teaching session in the host university (see Appendices 2F – 2J). 1 participant mentioned that she adopted activities such as matching as well as disappearing drill, and used realia during the session.
“Um…well although I didn’t really teach in a primary school, in local schools, but I have we have some like trial sessions with other international students. (I: Oh okay) So like practise our teaching strategies and stuff. So actually I my idea is like to um have some games with them, (I: Mmhm) which is taught by our professors in Hong Kong U. (I: Mmhm) And also we have oh for example I don’t know like matching stuff (I: Mm) and like the disappearing drill those stuff (I: Oh okay okay) So we tried to implement it. And also… the use of realia.” (Julia)

Another participant explained that she staged her lesson in the micro-teaching session according to the “pre, while and post” structure she learned in Hong Kong. She also implemented formative assessments that she acquired from Hong Kong in the session.

“The strategies I mainly adopt is like how we staged the lesson, like the pre, while, post, (I: Mmhm) and what to include in each of the section and how to do um formatively assess students along the way.” (Ivy)

4.2.2 Implementing teaching strategies acquired from Australia in the Hong Kong context

8 participants reported that they implemented teaching strategies acquired during the immersion programme in their teaching practicums in Hong Kong after they went back to Hong Kong. These included conducting online activities, playing games, providing an English-rich environment and adopting non-linguistic approaches in assessments.

“Okay um so far I think um what I’ve um acquired from the immersion is um they they input a lot of online resources (I: Mmhm) ah like Storybird or some programme like making some comics etc. (I: Mmhm) And then I have I’ve I actually implement this into my TP, (I: Mmhm) and I asked students to make comics or do their own edit
“For example there’re a lot of artwork displayed in their classrooms (I: Mmhm) in Australian classrooms. So I tried to… have my students to make to write ah for example…one lesson is I asked them to write their resolutions. So I asked them to write on the stars and sort of displayed them around the classroom.” (Julia)

“Mm…I think I think we I think I learned um how to use a more varied means to assess students. (I: Mm) Um especially I put a lot of non-ling linguistic elements in some worksheets (I: Okay) or some classroom activities.” (Vanessa)

2 participants pointed out that they did not implement teaching strategies they had learnt from the immersion programme in their teaching practicum in Hong Kong because of the differences in contexts, students, resources and curriculum. 1 participant commented that she did not have as many resources as teachers in Australia did and she did not have time to prepare the materials. She also mentioned that Hong Kong schools focus more on drilling when teaching students English but in Australia, teachers let students experiment with the language.

“Um not really, because the context is really different. (I: Mm) Cus Hong Kong um in Hong Kong although I don’t want to do it sometimes I have to focus on like drilling. (I: Mmhm) Yea whereas the lessons I saw were more more like hands-on experience (I: Okay) for the students. And then they have like a lot of resources in the classroom (I: Mm) like games and activities designed for them but I didn’t have those resources and then I didn’t have time to um plan all those.” (Christy)
“I didn’t really implement those things I learnt in Australia. (I: Oh) Because I think (I: Mmhm) because it’s like it’s students are different (I: Mm) and the context is different (I: Mm) so I think it’s really hard to implement the things that I learnt.” (Rebecca)

4.2.3 Significant findings

The findings showed that most participants acquired new teaching strategies such as using online resources, establishing language-rich classrooms as well as implementing assessments that include non-linguistic responses from the immersion programme and they were able to apply them to Hong Kong classrooms during their teaching practicum. In Lee’s study (2009), she documented that the pre-service teachers from Hong Kong reflected on the possibility of implementing the teaching strategies they acquired from Auckland. But in this study, besides reflecting on the feasibility of the teaching strategies the participants learned from Australia, they even practiced them during their teaching practicum in Hong Kong and they found the strategies useful.

However, there was one crucial factor that impeded pre-service teachers from implementing teaching strategies they learned from Hong Kong in the Australian context, which was the lack of opportunities to teach in Australian local schools. In Trent’s study (2010), he argued that the chance of pre-service teachers engaging with English language teachers who possess histories, repertories, and competencies of teaching very different from their own is vital in every international experience programme. Without working with local teachers in placements, the participants of this Australia immersion programme were unable to exchange ideas concerning pedagogy in Hong Kong and Australia with local English language teachers.
4.2.4 Implications to programme organizers

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson (2005) argued that a comprehensive understanding of teaching and identities as teachers requires attention to “identity-in-discourse” and “identity-in-practice”, which refers to the need to examine one’s identity as a teacher through practices and tasks. This implied that programme organizers should discuss with local primary schools in Australia the possibility of letting pre-service teachers from Hong Kong teach in the schools. Given the limited amount of time and differences in curriculum between Hong Kong and Australia, pre-service teachers can first observe several lessons in the schools. Then, they can co-plan and co-teach with English teachers in the schools so that they would be able to implement teaching strategies they acquired from Hong Kong in Australian classrooms and at the same time explore teaching strategies teachers use in Australia. The exploration of pedagogy in both Hong Kong and Australia can help pre-service teachers reflect on their identities as English teachers.

It is also evident from the findings that the course content in the two host universities was inconsistent. Even though all participants did not have the opportunity to teach in local Australian schools, the participants who went to The University of Queensland had a micro-teaching session which enabled them to practise the teaching strategies they learned in Hong Kong and obtained feedback from their lecturers in Australia. This implied that organizers of the immersion programme should provide similar learning opportunities to all pre-service teachers who joined the programme. The most ideal solution is to send all the pre-service teachers to the same host institute. Although it is understandable for the two host universities to have variations in course content, programme organizers can design core components that need to be covered during the immersion programme and micro-teaching sessions should be one of these components so that pre-service teachers can demonstrate their teaching strategies in Australia and receive feedback from Australian teachers in the host institutes.
4.3 Cultural awareness

Regarding cultural awareness, participants gained understanding of the Australian culture in different aspects. They were also exposed to the Australian culture as well as other cultures to various extents.

4.3.1 Understanding of the Australian culture

9 participants commented that their awareness of the Australian culture increased after the immersion programme. 3 of them specifically mentioned that they knew more aboriginal history and paintings. 1 participant even expressed that she gained knowledge concerning how the ancient Australian culture intertwines with the modern culture and how the Australian government have been treating aboriginal Australians.

“Um… I (giggled) um I think know ab more about aboriginal cultures, cus um I we have we had actually had a class on aboriginal cultures in ah in QUT. (I: Mmm) And ah and I think it’s interesting (giggled) and um it’s good to know the root of Australia (I: Mm) instead of only the modern Australia, but we also know about the old Australian culture. (I: Mm) So ah and how they mix together, how they blend in and how the the modern like the today’s Australian government caters um the aboriginal people in Australia. (I: Mm Mm okay) So it is quite interesting.” (Cathy)

“Um… yea I’ve learnt lot of things that about Australia, (I: Mm) like for example the aboriginal history, (I: Mm Mm Mm Mm Mm Mm) and the art in Australia.” (Rebecca)

2 other participants found out that Australians are open to people around them. 1 participant commented that Australians have generally established friendship with their neighbours, which is unusual for citizens in Hong Kong. Another participant also pointed out that Australians are not reluctant to talk to strangers.
“Ah I think it’s being open (I: Mm) to your neighbors. (I: Okay) I think that’s what that’s the major one cus I mean in Hong Kong, we really we rarely socialize with you know our neighbors.” (Jonathan)

“And um yea the one thing I was surprised was that they always say like they’re they’re not reluctant to speak to strangers.” (Christy)

I participant reported that the immersion programme did not help her understand the Australian culture more because she shares similar cultural background with her host family.

“Yea because um my host family they are actually Filipino-Australian so um I don’t think it’s a very genuine cultural exchange because I myself I’m half Filipino (I:Mm) yea and then um I don’t get many chances of um being in other Aus real Australian families’ culture (I: I see I see) so um yea I don’t think I get enough exposure on that.” (Natalie)

4.3.2 Understanding of other cultures

Apart from the Australian culture, 2 participants expressed that they gained knowledge of other cultures during the immersion programme because their host family hosted students from other countries and they interacted with other exchange students in the host university.

“I have also and through um because our families also host other students (I: Oh okay) for example a girl from Chili and from Shanghai and stuff, (I: Wow wow wow) so yes we can learn through chatting and then yea.” (Julia)

“Cus we did not only meet with Australians over there we (I: Mm) we had like where I was living had a Thai students (I: Oh okay) living with me in that homestay family,
4.3.3 Significant findings

The findings reflected that the immersion programme generally enabled participants to understand more about the Australian culture, particularly in the aspects of aboriginal history and paintings, as well as the openness of Australians to neighbours and strangers. This was inconsistent to Gutierrez and Hunter’s study (2012), which reported that pre-service teachers were emotionally isolated in and from the host culture. In contrast, the findings were consistent to the findings reported by Sahin (2008) that student-teachers gained insights of the host culture and lifestyle during an immersion programme. Apart from the host culture, the findings of this study showed that 2 participants were even exposed to other cultures since there were different exchange students in the host families and host universities.

1 participant reported that she did not gain understanding of the Australian culture at all as her host family shares similar ethnicity with her. This piece of finding was contrasting to both the findings presented by Sahin (2008) and Lee (2009) in their studies that host family was one of the important ways for pre-service teachers to interact with the foreign culture.

4.3.4 Implications to programme organizers

This implied that programme organizers should consider the cultural background of both the host family and the pre-service teacher while making homestay arrangements since the background of pre-service teachers can be diverse and each participant’s identity is complicated and varied (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). It is understandable that programme organizers might want the pre-service teacher to feel comfortable living with a host family
that shares similar cultural background with her, but this limited the participant’s exposure to the Australian culture and other cultures during the immersion programme.

4.4 Major problems encountered

Not every participant reported that they faced major problems during their stay in Australia. 8 participants expressed that they faced major problems during the immersion programme but 2 of them stated limitations of the programme instead of problems they encountered.

4.4.1 Racial discrimination

2 participants mentioned about racial discrimination in their responses. 1 participant faced racial discrimination during her stay in Australia and the other participant felt insecure during the programme because she of her race as an Asian.

“Um ah um one once when we went on the train to Gold Coast, ah we faced a discrimination. (Sounded anxious) Um cus I I think there were three young young people and then they were they were making fun fun of our Cantonese um conversation. (I: Oh okay) And then they were saying “Oh, ah Jackie Chan? Oh oh” and then something like they’re making fun of our Cantonese ah our conversation and then they thought we would we not we didn’t know English. (I: Okay) And then he’s kept on like making fun of us, and then they um humiliate us (I: Ah okay) and yea but we tried to ignore them and they just (I: Okay) go away.” (Cathy)

“I just feel like because I’m Asian, maybe people will do something to me. (I: Oh yea yea yea) I had that feeling so yea yea that was the major problem for me.” (Christy)
4.4.2 Inconvenient transportation

2 participants reported that the inconvenient transportation system in Australia was the major problem they faced during the immersion programme. One participant expressed that the interval of buses arriving at the bus station greatly affected her daily life.

“Oh maybe transportation. (I: Oh okay) Yea not…not… I think the transportation system is well-developed there. (I: Mmhm) But… it’s not very convenient. (I: Oh okay) So… I have to I remember that I had to either be um 50 or 45 minutes early (I: to to) for class, (I: for class, oh) or or 20 minutes late for class. Because the timetable the the bus timetable the schedule was horrible.” (Vanessa)

4.4.3 Loss of money

1 participant mentioned that the major problem she encountered during her stay in Australia was the loss of money in her host family.

“Um I lost some money (I: Oh no) in my host, (I: Okay) and it is quite a large amount, (I: Mmhm) it is nearly 10 thousand dollars in Hong Kong dollars, (I: Mmhm) and it was lost in my host family. So there maybe yea I have reported to the police, but um they couldn’t found who who stole it. So but there are some visitors to my host family (I: Oh so) during my visit, so (I: there are many possible suspects) yea there are many possibilities.” (Bethany)

4.4.4 Conflicts with other pre-service teachers from Hong Kong

1 participant reported that the major problem he encountered during the immersion programme was his relationship with his classmates. He had conflicts with other pre-service teachers from Hong Kong during his stay in Australia as they spent longer time with each other.
“Um I guess ah… friendship-wise (I: Mm) there might be conflict at times um you know like you probably you see them every single day (I: Mm) it’s not what you really do in Hong Kong.” (Jonathan)

4.4.5 Significant findings

Although the findings reflected that the major problems participants encountered during the immersion programme varied and some were personal problems, inconvenient transportation and racial discrimination were the more common problems faced by participants.

The findings of 2 participants facing racial discrimination were partly consistent to the findings of a study conducted by Trilokekar and Kukar (2011). The authors did document that acts of racism occurred during the immersion programme. Some pre-service teachers reported moments of discomfort when experiencing racial discrimination and others who witnessed this also felt deeply uncomfortable. However in this study, when asked how to deal with racial discrimination and how she felt about the incident, the participant (Cathy) mentioned that she ignored the locals who were racist and she giggled along the way when recalling this incident. The differences in participants’ reactions towards racial discriminations reflected that programme organizers can utilize these experiences to help pre-service teachers construct their racial and cultural identities.

4.4.6 Implications to programme organizers

One major implication of the findings to programme organizers concerns racial discrimination. 1 participant (Cathy) reported that she faced racial discrimination during the immersion programme and another participant (Christy) felt anxious during the programme because she is an Asian. Both the incident of racial discrimination faced by Cathy and
Christy’s feeling of insecurity can be explained by the socio-political constructed hierarchy of race (Malewski and Phillion, 2009). In the incident of racial discrimination, the Australian teenagers believed that they are more superior to Cathy and her friends, who are all Asians. Even though Christy did not face racial discrimination during the immersion programme, she also made the assumption that Australians might discriminate her because they might think that they Asians are inferior. Although programme organizers may not be able to prevent participants from facing racial discrimination, organizers from the host institutes can organize a reflection session every Friday for pre-service teachers to share and discuss any problems they faced during the week so that participants may feel less stressed and anxious concerning the problems they encountered. If discovered that some participants faced discrimination, lecturers and other classmates can comfort them and they can discuss the ways of handling racial discrimination together.

Since 2 participants also expressed that the inconvenient transportation was the major problem they encountered during their stay in Australia, programme organizers can take the transportation network near the host families into account when making homestay arrangements. It is preferable that there is more than one bus to the host university or the interval of buses arriving at the bus station is not too long.

4.5 Suggestions for improvement

According to participants’ responses, they mentioned different areas that could have been improved in the immersion programme. The findings in this part serve as suggestions to programme organizers to make future immersion programmes better experience for pre-service teachers.
4.5.1 Increase interactions with Australian students

5 participants expressed that the immersion programme would have been a better experience if they had been given more opportunities to interact with Australian students in the host universities. Through these interactions, the participants can undergo cultural exchange and improve their English.

“I think it’ll be nice if we get more chances of interacting with the local students in Australia. (I: Mm) So we can um have more chances of doing some cultural exchange because we only I remember as I remember we only have one to two days where we can really (I: Meet them) and talk to those local students. Yea so I think if we have time to if they can extend that duration, it’ll be much better for us.” (Natalie)

“So if the purpose of this immersion programme is to improve is is to give opportunities for us to improve our English, (I: Mm) then we need more contact with local students so (I: Mm) maybe we have we can be like in some classes with the local students.” (Christy)

4.5.2 Opportunities to teach in Australian primary schools

3 participants pointed out that the international field experience would have been better if they had had chances to teach in local Australian primary schools.

“Definitely allow us like students to um be able to teach (I: Mm) ah in the local Australian schools. (I: Mm) I mean that’s really really really um important to us as teachers cus I think that’s one of the main points in going to in an immersion programme.” (Jonathan)
4.5.3 Selection of host families

I participant mentioned that careful selection of homestay families would improve the immersion experience. She reported that some pre-service teachers were being treated unfairly by their host families in terms of the meals prepared by the hosts.

“Um… um I think um homestays is one of the problem. It’s not maybe it’s not um with the QUT group, but I somehow I heard from the other groups um their homestays um they were bad (I: Mmhm) and they treated the the students um quite unfair. (I: Mmhm) Cus um they didn’t give them treat them very good meals. (I: Okay) They just give them cereal bars as um lunches or yup.” (Cathy)

4.5.4 All pre-service teachers going to the same host institute

I participant stated that the immersion programme would have been better if the class from the home university had not been separated into two groups. She believed that if the whole class had attended lessons together, this would have promoted stronger bonding among the pre-service teachers.

“So it’d have been even better if all 30 of us were together (I: Okay) instead of 15 and 6 yea 16 (I: Yea) something like that. (I: Okay) Yea I wish that could have happened. (I: Mm) I think it’ll make us stronger as a group, (I: Mmhm Mmhm) you know yea.” (Vicky)

4.5.5 Courses should focus on teaching strategies

I participant reflected on the courses provided by The University of Queensland and commented that the immersion programme would have been better if the courses were not focused on the Australian curriculum but teaching strategies that she can apply to Hong Kong classrooms.
“And the schools can also teach more about the teaching strategies in Australia, more than some curriculum stuff in Australia because we don’t found it quite related to us in Hong Kong context. So yup.” (Bethany)

4.5.6 Longer period of stay

I participant hoped that the immersion programme could be longer. She expressed that excluding the long weekends, which were designed by programme organizers for participants to explore around Brisbane or even Australia, the immersion programme was around six weeks, which she found it too short.

“Yea the long weekends. And ah well I’m not saying they’re a bad thing like I really love them and it’s a really valuable experience. But um it kind of shorten the time that we can do more about, learn more about teaching and actually education. (I: In the university) Yea so I think that 6 weeks is really pretty short, (I: Mm) and it’s better if we could lengthen it a bit.” (Ivy)

4.5.7 Significant findings

The findings reflected the 10 participants’ suggestions concerning how to make the immersion programme better. The issues of increasing interactions with local students and offering pre-service teachers with opportunities to teach in Australian schools were raised by most of the participants. Since these issues have been discussed in the previous sections together with the issue of selecting of host families, the suggestions of modifying course content and extending the duration of the immersion programme would be examined in the next section.
4.5.8 Implications to programme organizers

A participant pointed out that the pedagogy courses in the immersion programme focused too much on the Australian curriculum. She wanted to learn more about teaching strategies that Australian teachers use. Even though it is important for pre-service teachers to understand the education policies and curriculum of the host country, programme organizers can introduce more teaching strategies Australian teachers use in English classrooms to the participants. Then, course lecturers can ask participants to compare and contrast teaching strategies used in teaching native English learners in Australia and ESL learners in Hong Kong. They can also lead discussions and ask pre-service teachers to reflect on the feasibility of implementing these strategies in Hong Kong classrooms.

Another implication of the findings is the design of long weekends. Although the participant pointed out that long weekends enabled her to travel around Australia, she had less time attending courses in the host university and visiting Australian schools. Thus, programme organizers can consider eliminating the long weekends, add more lessons or school visits for participants and encourage pre-service teachers to stay behind after the programme ends so that they can travel at that time.

5. Conclusion:

5.1 Summary of key findings

This study identified the benefits and limitations of the immersion programme in promoting professional development from 10 participants’ perspectives.

The findings reflected that the programme had positive effects on pre-service teachers’ development of English and pedagogical understanding generally. The programme was most effective in raising participant’s awareness of the Australian culture.
However, participants pointed out major factors that impeded them from improving their English and implementing teaching strategies they learned from Hong Kong in the Australian context. The participants reported that the lack of interactions with local Australian students hindered their development of English. They also emphasized that the lack of opportunities to teach in Australian schools hindered their pedagogical understanding.

It has been identified that the major problems pre-service teachers faced during the immersion programme were inconvenient transport and racial discrimination. Many participants also expressed that to make the immersion programme a better experience, it is essential for programme organizers to create opportunities for them to interact with Australian students in the host universities and let them teach in Australian schools.

5.2 Limitations of the study

5.2.1 Sample size

Since only 10 participants were interviewed in this study, the sample size may not be representative enough to reflect the effects of the immersion programme on all participants’ professional development. The sample size can be increased, but the research method needs to be changed as it would be difficult to interview every participant who joined the programme. To cater for larger sample size, questionnaires can be used together with group interviews.

5.2.2 Time lag

Through interviews, participants’ opinions regarding the immersion programme were recorded but there was a lack of support for their claims due to time lag. The participants were interviewed approximately two years after the immersion programme ended. To solve this problem, it would be better if participants’ portfolios and reflections during the
programme were also analyzed. During the immersion programme, participants kept portfolios, wrote reflections about the school visits and the courses they attended. These serve as other possible sources to inform the findings of the study and the findings would be more accurate.

5.3 Future research

Since this study examined the effects of an immersion programme to Australia organized by the Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong on pre-service primary English teachers’ professional development, other research can be done in the programme organizers’ perspectives. The study may investigate difficulties programme organizers are facing and the findings can be compared with the findings of this study to maximize the positive impact of immersion programmes on pre-service teachers’ professional development in the future.
References:


LeCompte, M., & Preissle, J. (1993). Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational


Appendices:

Appendix 1- Interview questions

1. What did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

2. Describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia.

3. Describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme in the previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong.

4. How do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

5. Were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they?

6. In what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?
Appendix 2 – Interview transcriptions

Appendix 2A – Interview Transcription of Natalie

Interviewer: I
Participant: P

I: So thank you for being my participant. Um, I’m currently working on a project about the effects of international field experience on shaping pre-service teacher’s perception in becoming an English teacher in Hong Kong. That is us, okay?

P: Mmhmm

I: So ah I know you’ve you went to Australia for an immersion programme 2 years ago, right?

P: Mmhmm, yea.

I: So how do you think um about the immersion programme? Like what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: Mm in general, I think we gain a lot of experience in um in communicating in English informally (I: Mmhmm) because we were surrounded by um many English-speaking people. But um one thing that I wasn’t too satisfied with was that um because we are always together, the whole class. (I: Mm) The 15 people we are always together and sometimes um we tend to speak to each other in Chinese. (I: Okay) So yea so I think that is a um big obstacle for me to develop my English further.

I: Mm I see I see. Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia? If you have the opportunities, like do you have any opportunities to do so?

P: Um I don’t think we have a lot of opportunities in trying our teaching strategies in Australia because um during the um school visits, we’re really just visiting. (I: Okay) And we’re um more of our role is more like an observer instead of a teacher (I: Mmhmm) so yea I don’t think we get many chances of doing that.

I: So how about um maybe can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies that you learned from the immersion programme in the previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong?
P: Mm well last year, I did a lot of games with the class. (I: Mmhm) And yea some of the games that I’ve learnt from Australia would be like “Show and Tell”, um um shared reading and um dramatizations of some topics and the students pretty enjoy the sessions, especially on drama, yea. (I: Okay)

I: Um so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Mm um I think with immersion programme um in terms cultural awareness I don’t think it’s that effective. (I: Mm Mm) Yea because um my host family they are actually Filipino-Australian so um I don’t think it’s a very genuine cultural exchange because I myself I’m half Filipino (I:Mm) yea and then um I don’t get many chances of um being in other Aus real Australian families’ culture (I: I see I see) so um yea I don’t think I get enough exposure on that. (I: Okay)

I: So were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? And um what were they (P: Mm) if you had any problems.

P: Yea like what like what I’ve said before, um because there’re 15 people who went on an immersion together we’re always together, (I: Mm) yea that’s why it limits my chances of practising my English. Another problem is that um my f… my host family is not really Australian (I: Yea) so um their English might not be like the official language, so um they’re not as fluent as I expected. (I: Yup) Yea and then um the third um the third problem is that ah we just don’t get a lot of chances to interact with the locals at school because everyone is on holiday (I: Oh yea true true true because we went there in summer) (P: Yea).

I: Um you mentioned about your host family being um Filipinos do they speak English in I mean among themselves or they speak they speak other languages like Tagalog (P: Um) (I: Or) …

P: It’s a mix of English and Tagalog, so when I’m (I: Okay) when I’m there most of the time they speak in English, and then but sometimes they do throw in one to two Tagalog (I: Ah okay) words in it yea.

I: So um in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience? (P: Mm) Do you have any suggestions for that?
P: I think it’ll be nice if we get more chances of interacting with the local students in Australia. (I: Mm) So we can um have more chances of doing some cultural exchange because we only I remember as I remember we only have one to two days where we can really (I: Meet them) and talk to those local students yea so I think if we have time to if they can extend that duration, it’ll be much better for us. And ah it’ll also be good if the 15 people are separated into different classes instead of all coming together in one big class. (I: Okay) (P: Yea) (I: Okay)

I: So thank you for your time and this is the end of our interview.

P: You’re welcome

I: Thank you.
Appendix 2B – Interview Transcription of Jonathan

I: So thank you for being my participant um for the project I’m currently working on (P: Mmhm no problem) which is “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong.” So I know you went to Australia for an immersion programme um 2 years ago. (P: Yup, correct) Okay so what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: Um… I guess the main the main thing that I learned was um to you know communicate with ah foreigners (I: Mm) well you know in this context probably our ah host family, (I: Mmhm) um the neighbors around us, (I: Mmhm) and like you know really get along with everyone around you (I: Mmhm) um yea that’s basically it, the main parts of it.

I: Okay so um in other than communication skills (P: Mmhm) um maybe um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you learned from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Ah to be really honest, I don’t think ah there was the opportunity (I: Mm) the chance to (I: Yea) um teach in Australia because maybe due to the limited amount of time and also um the the limited amount of visits that we had to schools, we really didn’t we probably observed more than we teach. (I: Okay) So… yup.

I: Um so how about um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you learned from the immersion programme um to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong?

P: Ah well the um education in Australia they really stress on group work, um on you know reading as a group, reading as a whole, speaking a lot (I: Mmhm) and um everything coming from the student themselves rather than the teacher, so I guess that’s what I did more of so when I in my TP, well ah the TP after um (I: the immersion programme) the immersion programme, ah I really tried to instead of being teacher-focused teacher-centered, (I: Mmhm) it was more um student-led (I: Mm) and um you know you try to you you put yourself into the students’ shoes, (I: Mm) and you really tried to see how you can help them how you can optimize their ah learning ability (I: Mmhm) ah ah opportunities sorry not abilities ah their opportunity um so yea I think really putting myself into their shoes, seeing how they would learn and which aspect would benefit them most, which method of learning. (I: Okay) (P: Mmhm)
I: Um so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Well… um… well because I’m from quite a diverse um ah culture, (I: Mmhm) ah I think I um I don’t think how should I say this ah I I learn how to appreciate more (I: Mmhm) about other values and their beliefs, um but at the same time I really don’t think um you know I learned a lot from the other culture cus it’s kinda similar to what I am exposed to um in my everyday life. (I: Mm)

I: So how about um in particular the Australian culture, (P: Mmhm) do you have any um new knowledge about the Australian culture?

P: Ah I think it’s being open (I: Mm) to your neighbors. (I: Okay) I think that’s what that’s the major one cus I mean in Hong Kong, we really we rarely socialize with you know our neighbors (I: Yea our neighbors) and ah I mean Australia you have like functions and like parties and just community. (I: Mm) There’s a sense of togetherness you know (I: Yup) I think that’s what I gained from that.

I: Alright. So um were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? So if if there were major problems, what were they?

P: Um I guess ah… friendship-wise (I: Mm) there might be conflict at times um you know like you probably you see them every single day (I: Mm) it’s not what you really do in Hong Kong. I mean it’s really fun to do that as well but sometimes you really get to understand how people are like (I: Mmhm) once you were meeting them every single day for you know like 8 hours a day or even longer. (I: Mm) Um other problems, I think that’s the reason the major one that I I had personally. (I: Mmhm) Ah another problem would be… um… there’s not a lot my host mum did quite a lot of help did she did quite a lot for me so (I: Okay) there wasn’t really a lot of problems I faced.

I: Alright. So… um in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved (P: Mmhm) to make it a better experience (P: Ah for one) in the future?

P: Definitely allow us like students to um be able to teach (I: Mm) ah in the local Australian schools. (I: Mm) I mean that’s really really really um important to us as teachers cus I think that’s one of the main points in going to in an immersion programme. It’s not just about you being immersed in the Australian culture, (I: Mm) but it’s also since you’re gonna be a
teacher, you should be able to have the opportunity to see what it’s like to teach outside of your own comfort zone. (I: Like different learners) Yea different different learners different countries and you know you step outside of your own comfort zone because (I:Mm) you’re not using well for some people you’re not using your L1 language, (I: Yea) you’re using your L2, so you get a chance to practise you also get a chance to see how they view your teaching. (I: Mm) And that’s not just for the students but for teachers. And also another thing that we could do was um you know in terms of the lessons that we had, (I: Yea) I guess instead of just a lot of like pedagogy (I: Mmhm) work, there could be more exploration as as to how you can improve as a teacher, (I:Mmhm) um more practical things. I mean I’m not saying it’s not practical, but ah yea there definitely could be more like tasks like projects like kind of like research sort of stuff. (I: Okay) Um yea.

I: So do you mind telling me um what kind of um lessons (P: Mmhm) did you have back then in the immersion programme? (P: Um) In the university?

P: We had a reading literacy programme (I: Mmhm) I guess, um and there was also the history (I: Okay) of Australia (I: Yea) um there were er… there were other ones like oh ah linguistics, and also um um what was Heidi’s one? Um I don’t remember her one ah something about um I I’ve I I can’t remember it was drama something about drama, um yea but yea that was kind of it.

I: So what you’re saying is um the courses the university provide can be more practical (P: Mm definitely yes) in the sense for student-teacher (P: Definitely yup yup yup) like pedagogic strategies and…

P: Yea yea yea more pedagogic strategies um but definitely definitely more and also like it’s how I think what I want from them is like how Australian teachers would see Hong Kong teachers and how they would change certain parts like certain aspects of our teaching. (I: Mm) You know so basically it’s like when Australia meets Hong Kong like when the two cultures collide and what we can do like the the what we can do to improve both sides of our teaching. (I: Okay ) Yea.

I: So thank you for your time.

P: No problem.
Appendix 2C – Interview Transcription of Christy

I: Hello.

P: Hi

I: Um thank you for being my participant. Um I’m currently working on the project – The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong. So I know you went to Australia about 2 years ago for immersion programme right? (P: Okay yea it’s long time ago.) (Both giggled) So um what did you learn from the immersion programme?

P: Ah actually ah we went there for our English development, (I: Mmhm) but then I think it was more about cultural exchange, (I: Mmhm) maybe not even exchange we just learned um we just we were just exposed to um the (I: Australian) yea Australian culture (I: Mmhm) and I think that was pretty much it. I tried to improve my English but then because we were isolated from the local students, (I: Oh yea) we didn’t have much experience in interacting with them so… (I: Mm)

I: Oh so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you learned from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Actually in Australia we didn’t have cus I went to QUT (I: Mmhm) and we didn’t have experience in um to teach ah kids there we just had observation only. (I: Okay) Mm.

I: So how about um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong?

P: Previous teaching practicum… okay…(I: Like in year 3 and year 4) Ah… (I: After you went to Australia)

I: Did you try any teaching strategies that you learned from the immersion programme?

P: Um not really because the context is really different. (I: Mm) Cus Hong Kong um in Hong Kong although I don’t want to do it sometimes I have to focus on like drilling (I: Mmhm) yea whereas the lessons I saw were more more like hands-on experience (I: Okay) for the students. And then they have like a lot of resources in the classroom (I: Mm) like games and activities designed for them but I didn’t have those resources and then I didn’t have time to um plan all those. (I: Yea yea) So I don’t think I did I did I don’t think I tried any. But um I
liked the lessons um that I observed in I don’t know the name, the summer summer (I: Summerville) Yea Summerville (I: Oh yea) Yea the music lessons. (I: Yea yea) So I’m thinking how I can implement those um like fun elements (I: Okay) in my teaching (I: Okay) Mm.

I: So um how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Other cultures… Ah well actually cus it was my first time living actually staying in an English-speaking country (I: Mmhm) for a long time, (I: Yea) not long but yea still for a considerable amount of time, and um yea the one thing I was surprised was that they always say like they’re they’re not reluctant to speak to strangers. (I: Oh okay) So I didn’t really know how to react. (Both giggled) But then at the bus stop, when I saw strangers coming to me, I didn’t know oh should I say hello or should I just stay silent or am I being rude or not. (I: Oh) Yea so I have to consider all those and sometimes it was quite stressful, (I: Mmhm) because I don’t know the norms (I: Oh yea) of the um place. But then as time go went by, I got used to it (I: Mm) and um I could experience the family culture (I: Yea) in Australia as well, cus I stayed with the host family (I: host family) yea and they had two children so I could see how the parenting styles are different. (I: Oh yes okay) Mmhm.

I: So were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia?

P: Um…well the transportation was a bit inconvenient, (I: Mm) but it was okay. Um the major problem I think many of us have experienced the feeling of insecurity. (I: Yea) Yea (I: Okay) because um it was quite scary actually the village I stayed was became really really dark even at six and (I: Mm) and then I was afraid that um no even though no one does any harm to me, (I: Mm) I just feel like because I’m Asian, maybe people will do something to me. (I: Oh yea yea yea) I had that feeling so yea yea that was the major problem for me. (I: Mm)

I: Um so in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: I think as I mentioned before, we didn’t have any like much contact with the local students. (I: Mmhm) So if the purpose of this immersion programme is to improve is is to give opportunities for us to improve our English, (I: Mm) then we need more contact with local students so (I: Mm) maybe we have we can be like in some classes with the local students. (I:
Mmhm Mmhm ) Oh mm rather than having it like having classes (I: With our own classmates) with our own classmates. (I: Mm) Yea so it’s it’s not really effective. Mm.

I: Okay, so this is the end of our interview. Thank you.

P: Thank you.
Appendix 2D – Interview Transcription of Cathy

I: So thank you for being my participant um in the project of um about “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong.” So I know you went to Australia for an immersion programme about 2 years ago (P: Yea) right? (P: Yea) Um so what did you learn from the immersion programme?

P: Um I think I learn about um um Australian cultures and also some um how to ah learn language teaching strategies (I: Mmhm) in um implementing in language classrooms especially to um lower forms. (I: Mmhm) (P: Mmmh)

I: So um can you describe how you implement teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Um I think during the immersion, we lack opportunities to implement what we have learnt in Hong Kong (I: Mm) into Australian classrooms.

I: What do you mean by you lack the opportunities?

P: Cus we were brought to some um schools to visit into classes but we have no chances to teach (I: Oh okay okay) in in the classroom.

I: So you just observed?

P: Yea we just observed. (I: Oh okay) Mm.

I: So um maybe according to your observations, can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme to the previous teaching practicum (P: Ah ) in Hong Kong?

P: Okay um so far I think um what I’ve um acquired from the immersion is um they they input a lot of online resources (I: Mmhm) ah like Storybird or some programme like making some comics etc. (I: Mmhm) And then I have I’ve I actually implement this into my TP, (I: Mmhm) and I asked students to make comics or do their own edit ed edition editing on their stories or (I: Mm) according um um base on the online resources.

I: So do you find it effective? Like…

P: Ah… Yea they ah um students find it’s quite interesting cus (I: Mmhm) it is online, it’s ab all about computers. (I: Okay) They’re exciting excited about computer things yea. (I: Okay)
I: So um how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Um… I (giggled) um I think know ab more about aboriginal cultures, cus um I we have we had actually had a class on aboriginal cultures in ah in QUT. (I: Mmhm) And ah and I think it’s interesting (giggled) and um it’s good to know the root of Australia (I: Mm) instead of only the modern Australia, but we also know about the old Australian culture. (I: Mm) So ah and how they mix together, how they blend in and how the the modern like the today’s Australian government caters um the aboriginal people in Australia. (I: Mm Mm okay) So it is quite interesting. (I: Mm okay)

I: Um so were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they?

P: Um ah um one once when we went on the train to Gold Coast, ah we faced a discrimination. (Sounded anxious) Um cus I I think there were three young young people and then they were they were making fun fun of our Cantonese um conversation. (I: Oh okay) And then they were saying “Oh, ah Jackie Chan? Oh oh” and then something like they’re making fun of our Cantonese ah our conversation and then they thought we would we not we didn’t know English, (I: Okay) and then he’s kept on like making fun of us, and then they um humiliate us (I: Ah okay) and yea but we tried to ignore them and they just (I: Okay) go away.

I: So were they um local Australians or…

P: I think they’re local Australians. (I: Ah okay) And then they they were um playing skateboard on the train also so they they are so naughty. (I: Oh okay) They are naughty boys. (Giggled)

I: So um in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience for the future in the future?

P: Um… um I think um homestays is one of the problem. It’s not maybe it’s not um with the QUT group, but I somehow I heard from the other groups um their homestays um they were bad (I: Mmhm) and they treated the the students um quite unfair. (I: Mmhm) Cus um they didn’t give them treat them very good meals. (I: Okay) They just give them cereal bars as um lunches or yup. Ah yea. (Giggled)
I: So… thank you for your um time and um I hope that your suggestions can be beneficial to future research on the immersion programmes in Hong Kong.

I&P: Thank you.
Appendix 2E – Interview Transcription of Rebecca

I: So thank you the participant of my project titled “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development”. Um so the first question I would like to ask you is… What did you learn from the immersion programme in in general, what did you learn?

P: Okay I think in general, first I learned more about Australia like the culture (I: Mmhm) and um I have the chance to study it um study about sociolinguistics (I: Mm) so because we don’t have such courses in Hong ah in HKU, (I: Mmhm) so I think it’s quite special (I: Mm) and a quite interesting course. (I: Mm) And I think um ah…I also learned more about Eng something related to English, (I: Mm) and ah we got the chance to visit the school in Australia, (I: Mm) so we have the chance to know more about the school and children and students in Australia. (I: Mm okay)

I: So you talked about you had the chance to visit schools in Australia, so um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia, like to the schools in Australia?

P: Like because we didn’t have the chance to teach in Australia, so I didn’t really implement anything that I learnt from Hong Kong.

I: Okay so you didn’t have the chance to teach (P: Yea yea yea) you just went there and observed (P: Yes) And okay. So how about the other way round, can you describe how you implemented um teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme in Australia to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong?

P: Um… I have learnt some like special teaching strategies in Australia but like during my teaching practicum, I didn’t really implement those things I learnt in Australia. (I: Oh) Because I think (I: Mmhm) because it’s like it’s students are different (I: Mm) and the context is different (I: Mm) so I think it’s really hard to implement the things that I learnt (I: Mm Mm Mm Mm) in the… ah in the trip.

I: Is it because um those students in Australia they are native English speakers like their first language is English (P: Yea) but for Hong Kong students they’re ESL learners (P: Yea) so you really can’t implement (P: Yup) the strategies. (P: Yup) Okay I see.
I: Um so how about in terms of cultures, how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Um… yea I’ve learnt lot of things that about Australia, (I: Mm) like for example the aboriginal history, (I: Mm Mm Mm Mm Mm) and the art in Australia, (I: Mmhm) and cus I I stayed in a Australian family, (I:Mm) so I also like learn more about Australia by talking with them. (I: Okay)

I: Um were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they?

P: Mm… it’s lucky that I didn’t have any major problem (I: Mmhm) there.

I: So everything was smooth? (P: Yea) The host family was good, (P: Yea) the courses are that I you think they were (P: fine) fine? (P: Yea) Okay.

I: So even though there were no major problems for you, in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: Mm I think it’s better to give us to the chance to really teach in the Australian school, (I: Yea Mmhm) like maybe we can like ah have a co-planning session with the teachers (I: Mm Mm) or with just ourselves. (I: Mmhm) And then we can co-teach um ah ah like a lesson (I: Mmhm) or yup so I think it would be better if we can teach in Australia.

I: Mm that will be a better experience. (P: Mm)

I: Okay. So thank you for your time and thank you very much for being the participant.

P: Thank you.
Appendix 2F – Interview Transcription of Julia

I: So thank you for being my participant um for the project titled “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong”. Um… so…you went to Australia for an immersion programme 2 years ago?

P: Yes, right.

I: Um which university did you went did you go to?

P: The University of Queensland.

I: Um… so… um in general, what did you learn from the immersion programme in Australia?

P: Um basically, there it can be divided into 2 parts. The first is like from my family from my host family, I learned how to like to communicate with them and I also learned some um colloquial language from them (I: Okay) because they are basically local Australians. (I: Mmhm ) So I also developed a very good relationship with them. (I: Mmhm) And in school, I actually learned about like how they teach students, (I: Mm) because um yea for example like specific teaching techniques, (I: Mm) like the I don’t know like finger referencing.

I: What’s finger-referencing?

P: Is it like that… how to stuck your fingers together, how to…

I: Oh to pronounce…help pronounce…

P: How to help pronunciation.

I: Oh… okay okay okay.

P: Yup. And also…wow that’s the thing I remember the most actually. (Both giggled) And also you learn about like Australian cultures (I: Mm) and stuff. So we have developed um more more knowledge towards that aspect I think. (I: Yea okay)

I: So it’s basically um Australian culture, (P: Yea) some pedagogy, (P: Mmhm) and your relationship with your host family. (P: Yes) Oh great.

I: Um so… can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?
P: Um…well although I didn’t really teach in a primary school, in local schools, but I have we have some like trial sessions with other international students. (I: Oh okay) So like practise our teaching strategies and stuff. So actually I my idea is like to um have some games with them, (I: Mmhm) which is taught by our professors in Hong Kong U. (I: Mmhm) And also we have oh for example I don’t know like matching stuff (I: Mm) and like the disappearing drill those stuff (I: Oh okay okay) So we tried to implement it. And also… the use of realia. (I: Yea yea yea okay) Yea, yea. So that’s what I tried to implement. (I: Okay)

I: Um so… can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme um to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong? Like after you came back.

P: Okay… so um… from what I’ve learnt, for example there’re a lot of artwork displayed in their classrooms (I: Mmhm) in Australian classrooms. So I tried to… have my students to make to write ah for example…one lesson is I asked them to write their resolutions. So I asked them to write on the stars and sort of displayed them around the classroom (I: Oh okay) so as to build their confidence and motivation. (I: Okay) And also the finger-referencing that I talked about. I also used it to teach my students pronunciation. Yup. (I: Oh it’s very good)

I: Um… so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Well of course there is because we have a lot of um sessions going to for example like museums. (I: Mmhm Mmhm) So we have taught learnt about paintings, learned from paintings their cultures (I: Okay) and their ideas. And also, um… what’s the question sorry…

I: Like apart from Australian culture, if you have encountered any other cultures, you can also comment on that.

P: Oh…of other cultures… Um actually my host dad is an American. (I: Oh okay) So that’s why I have also and through um because our families also host other students (I: Oh okay) for example a girl from Chili and from Shanghai and stuff, (I: Wow wow wow) so yes we can learn through chatting and then yea. (I: Okay) Awesome. Yup.

I: Um… so were there any major problems that you encountered or any difficulties during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they?
P: Um actually I don’t find lot of difficulties because people are nice, they are really helpful to me. (I: Mmhm) And then um what I learn is were also very useful, (I: Mmhm) and I can really apply it to my teaching practice. (I: Okay) But one of the difficulty may be um the arrangement of school visits, (I: Oh okay) because one of the school didn’t ah or I think they misunderstood the date we came to visit (I: Okay) to be another day. So they didn’t make (I: arrange) arrange…(I: Yea okay) Yup… so that’s why we couldn’t actually teach in that school. (I: Oh okay) And we could only like observe um I think senior level senior form’s lessons instead of like the lower form lessons (I: Um okay) that we targeted. Yup. (I: Okay)

I: Um…so in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: Um… I reckon that because all of the students in our class are actually our classmates in Hong Kong U, (I: Mm) back in Hong Kong U, so that’s why we can’t really like cultural exchange our cultures (I: Mm Mm Mm) or really learn from others through interaction with (I: Okay) other international students. (I: Mm) So I think we can have classes more often with um students or even we can have lessons with the local students. (I: Mm) We can join the lessons as well. Yup. (Mm okay) And… for I think for excursions, it will be good enough. (I: Mmmh) But I think um we can have more school visits and we can really teach in the schools (I: Not only observe) instead of observing. (I: Oh okay) Yea because the teachers didn’t they basically will let us observe their students doing their stuff, (I: Mmhm) but um we also we were not given like sufficient time to ask questions. (I: Oh okay) Yea we can we only have that sharing session but it after our observations, (I: Mm) um there might be too limited time for us to really (I: Raise questions) reflect on and raise questions. (I: Oh okay) Yea.

I: So…do you have anything else to add?

P: Um no.

I: Okay. So that’s the end of the interview. Thank you.

P: Okay. Thank you.
Appendix 2G – Interview Transcription of Bethany

I: So thank you for being my um participant um for my project on “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong”. So um I know that you’ve um you went to an immersion programme in Australia 2 years ago right?

P: Yup.

I: Um so…what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: Generally, I think I have improved my English skills and that especially on speaking and listening which were um not a focus in Hong Kong curriculum. And then I learnt more about the Australia because of the culture of them and then the history of them. (I: Mm) And I think that those things are quite valuable because we don’t have much time to stay in every travel to other countries I mean (I: Oh okay okay) so this immersion programme is a valuable time.

I: So you think that um staying in Australia in 2 months is more (P: Yea) preferable than travelling (P: Yea of course) to Australia. Okay (P: Because you can’t stay in Australia for 2 months) ah in other circumstances. (P: Yea) Okay.

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies that you learned from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Um I think we had um applied what we have learnt in Hong Kong U and some ah educational pedagogy in in the micro-teaching in Australia. Because in the ah university in Australia, they provided some opportunity for us to teach, and some school visits so that we make ah apply what we have learnt into that context. (I: Okay)

I: Um so… any in any strategies in particular that you can think of? Or…

P: Um… um um we have we have implement we have learnt how to um organize the class, (I: Mmhm) organize a lesson, and then try to run it smoothly and how to make it more um how to say… more… flexible to the students, so that we can apply them in the um (I: Okay) university context. (I: Okay)

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme um to your previous teaching practice in Hong Kong?
P: Oh yea. We have learnt some games, how to teach a lesson with games in Australia. And then some um how to teach phonological with your fingers. (I: Okay) And then it is quite useful in Hong Kong I mean for the students in Hong Kong because they love games. (I: Okay) And it’s really useful to teach what you have to teach them. (I: Okay)

I: Um so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Contribute to the other knowledge of culture… (I: Mm)

I: Like how um how um does the how did the immersion programme helped you to be more aware of other cultures? Maybe Australian culture or even other cultures in Australia?

P: Oh yea. We have been aware and critically analyze the history of Australia because it is quite special, um ah it is a bit like Hong Kong so we can compare Hong Kong and Australia context and then we can critically review the consequence of some invasion of other cultures. (I: Mmhm) And then yea it is something like that.

I: Um so were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? So if so, what were they?

P: Um I lost some money (I: Oh no) in my host, (I: Okay) and it is quite a large amount, (I: Mmhm) it is nearly 10 thousand dollars in Hong Kong dollars, (I: Mnhm) and it was lost in my host family. So there maybe yea I have reported to the police, but um they couldn’t found who who stole it. So but there are some visitors to my host family (I: Oh so) during my visit, so (I: there are many possible suspects) yea there are many possibilities.

I: Um so in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: Um I think the university can organize more school visits so that we can um look at the local culture. And the schools can also teach more about the teaching strategies in Australia, more than some curriculum stuff in Australia because we don’t found it quite related to us in Hong Kong context. So yup.

I: So um you said that you want the schools in Australia to teach more about the curriculum and pedagogical um strategies…
P: I want them to teach more about the classroom strategies, how to manage the class, instead of teaching curriculum stuff (I: Oh okay) because we don’t find it quite related to us.

I: Okay so they focus on the curriculum in Australia and (P: Yea yea yea) instead of some universal teaching strategies. (P: Yea yea) I see I see.

I: So um thank you for your time, and this is the end of our interview.

P: Thank you.
Appendix 2H – Interview Transcription of Ivy

I: So thank you for being my participant um for the project titled “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development”. So um you went to Australia for an immersion programme, right?

P: Yes.

I: For 2 months?

P: Yup.

I: So um you went to UQ?

P: Yes.

I: With um half of the class?

P: Yea.

I: Okay. So what did you ah what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: I think um it gives me a chance to look at like different styles of teaching, like from the more Western kind of thing. Because like from my previous practicum, it’s still more influenced by the Confucian heritage, like beliefs. (I: Mm) And then now it actually helps us to give us give us a platform to actually have field experiences as well as like um hearing from the lectures there in Australia, (I: Mmhm) to like um share how their different their some of their pedagogies and different ways of teaching. (I: Mm)

I: So... um most of the things you learnt um mainly they’re about pedagogies right?

P: Um… you mean the like the whole experience right? (I: Yea yea)

I: Well… apart from like the teaching side, the pedagogical side, I think um as for myself, (I: Mmhm) yea I think um I get to look at more about different cultures, (I: Mm) cus I think um Australia is a… is a country? Yea (P: Yea) with different ah very mix a mixture of cultures yea. (I: Mm) That’s the word I have to say. And um I think ah living with a host family is another very important part of this whole experiences, (I: Mmhm) yea just interacting with locals. (I: Mm… contribute to? Like?) I think it’s not just about practising English, but um
looking at their cultures and how you accommo like um adapt to it, (I: Mm) and exchanging ideas and our practices and stuff (I: Mm) about like daily lives. (I: Okay)

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Um… I think um… well we did’t get to teach a lot back during the um immersion programme. But the times we have is um I think I mainly ah the strategies I mainly adopt is like how we staged the lesson, like the pre, while, post, (I: Mmhm) and what to include in each of the section and how to do um formatively assess students along the way. (I: Mm)

I: Did you really get to teach students there?

P: Ah… I would say co-teach a bit, (I: Oh okay) like for a few of the lessons. But most of the time we are observing. (I: Okay) And we also do peer teaching (I: Oh okay) inside the university. (I: Okay)

I: So you had little experience of teaching a class in Australia?

P: Yup.

I: Okay, I see.

I: Um so how about um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme um to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong? Like when you are back to Hong Kong?

P: Um… cus some of ah well well on the one hand, most um no some of the stuff covered in the immersion programme actually like um it’s the same as what we’ve learnt back in Hong Kong U. (I: Mmhm) But um we also gained new insights, yea from from the um lesson observations in within the local primary schools, as well as um from the professors in UQ. Um one of them is about how you teach vocabulary at the different stages (I: Mmhm), and um it’s not just presenting it, but you have to model it and how you actually model it and um the sound-letter awareness, how to you how do you raise that to the students. (I: Mm Mm)

Yea and then ah one very… I remember that we have a we conducted um a peer teaching session with um a group of Korean students. (I: Oh okay) Yes, together. And then like we work in different groups, and then um we go out in in pairs or in threes, and then we teach a certain topic as assigned by the professor to the class. And um I think it is a very good way to
learn… ah…like we we actually got feedback from the lecturers and from our classmates and it helps us to improve our own teaching. (I: Mm)

I: So you you had interactions with Koreans in Australia?

P: Yup.

I: Were they students in UQ as well? Or…

P: Ah no. They are coming over, they are second language learners of English as well.

I: Oh so they’re another um another group (P: yea another group) of students coming to…

P: But they are trying to learn like like learn to teach English as a second language and they’re second language learners as well themselves. (I: Oh okay)

I: Um… so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures? You may to comment um on like cultures apart from Australia, if you mentioned it…

P: Ah… I think the the major part is like um it’s about Australia. (I: Mm) Cus um with my host family, with um not with the students in UQ cus we don’t get to interact them with them a lot. (I: Mm) But ah I think mostly with my um host family, and then as well as when we go travelling around, (I: Mnhm) the pe the people we met along the way. And ah…about the cultures, (I: Mm) you mean I comment on their cultures?

I: Um…you can comment how the immersion programme um helped you experience (P: Oh…Okay) the Australian culture.

P: Ah…(I: Or other cultures.) Oh well yea okay. I got it, sorry. (Both giggled) Yea so um it’s about first of all is the host family, cus you actually get to live together with them and interact like very (I: Mm) at a very… very close proximity. (I: Mm) And so you actually know like their some of their um values, beliefs. I remember there um there are a few times that I I actually chatted with my host mum about education, how their their beliefs about they should educate the kids, the kind of freedom that they should have it’s like let them to explore around the surroundings. (I: Mm) Yea she even told me that in their in her kid she sent her kids to a school that allows them to climb trees and (I: Oh) set up like funfairs and (I: Mm) like a mini society. (I: Mnhm) Yea and help to run things. They higher senior form students will be the ones more like the administrators while the younger ones will be like helping with
logistics (I: Oh okay) and stuff. So for that we I can see that like um in in Australian culture, they um value that kind of exploration a lot. (I: Mm) And I think it’s something we can bring back to Hong Kong. (I: Yea, certainly)

I: Um so were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they?

P: Ah… I won’t say they are problems but um if ah I think some of the room for improvements I would say, is like um well for my host family they are very good, it’s but then one problem is like they are very busy, both both the host mom and the the dad, and also the kids. So um…(s) at the beginning I expect I get more time to interact with them, like sometimes well hang out in weekends or stuff. (I:Mm) But ah we don’t really get to do that until the day I leave. (I: Aww) Yea and then another limit like room for improvement I would say is um cus um we don’t we we go as a group, and we study…we stay in a classroom with the classmates from Hong Kong U as well, so we didn’t really get to interact or have classes with um local students and ex like have intellectual or what any kind of exchanges with them. Not really possible. So I think um it’s something that could be improved.

I: Okay. Um so apart from interacting I mean gaining more interactions with Australian students, um in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience? Like any administration arrangements, or like other kinds of …

P: Ah… I think it’s mainly just the one I just mentioned. And ah if possible, I think a longer time would be better. (I: Longer period) Cus we don’t actually have 8 weeks I think. (I: Mm) We just have ah 6 weeks. And um some some of the time they actually fit in the what do you call that like weekend…like they set up like holidays for us (I: Yea okay) like even on school day so as to allow enable us to go out to some other places. (I: Oh long weekends) Yea yea long weekends, sorry forgot the name (I: It’s okay) Yea the long weekends. And ah well I’m not saying they’re a bad thing like I really love them and it’s a really valuable experience. But um it kind of shorten the time that we can do more about, learn more about teaching and actually education. (I: In the university) Yea so I think that 6 weeks is really pretty short, (I: Mm) and it’s better if we could lengthen it a bit. (I: Okay)

I: So… that’s the end of our interview. (P: Okay) Thank you.

P: Thanks.
Appendix 2I – Interview Transcription of Vanessa

I: So thank you for being my participant on the project titled “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development”. Um… so I know you’ve been to Australia for an immersion programme (P: 2 months) 2 months 2 years ago right? (P: Yea) Um so can you do you mind telling me um what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: Um…in general, I think I know more about other cultures. (I: Mm) Um…especially… ah things about the aboriginals in Australia. (I: Mmm) About their history, and about maybe a little bit about um people’s habits there.

I: Oh so um do you have a formal course from ah provided by UQ? (P: No) ah about the aboriginals or the host family told you (P: Ah) about um their cultures.

P: Not really, but I think we discussed a lot either in class or at home (I: Mmm Mmm) about aboriginal people because it’s part of their history. (I: Oh okay) So it’s inevitable to talk about them. (I: Okay, I see)

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Um we had a micro-teaching…I think with once or twice. (I: Mm) And I think…

I: So you’re teaching students at school or your own classmates?

P: My own classmates. (I: Oh okay okay) We we were pretending (I: Oh To be teaching) (both giggled) Yea. And… what what particular aspects…

I: So did you use any teaching strategies you learnt from our programme in Hong Kong U to conduct that micro-teaching then, in Australia?

P: Um maybe a little bit about relating, um a little bit about um increasing interaction (I: Mhm0 in class, (I: Mmm) and about about material design as well because we designed a chapter for assessing students’ reading ability. (I: Oh okay okay)

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme in Australia to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong?
P: Mm…I think I think we I think I learned um how to use a more varied means to assess students. (I: Mm) Um especially I I put a lot of non-ling linguistic elements in some worksheets (I: Okay) or some classroom activities.

I: So so um like the assessments turn out to be not base on paper and pen? In instead you use many non-linguistic elements to assess them?

P: Yea more visual and more actions. (I: Oh okay) Kinesthetic, yea.

I: Okay, so more diverse assessment methods. (P: Yea) Okay, good. Um so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures? Like apart from maybe ab Aus um aboriginals or Australian cultures, did you encounter any cultures? Or like how would you feel after yea experiencing the Australian culture? (P: In terms of) Anything. Like food, lifestyle, um… (P: giggled) yea, their history, yea anything you want to comment on.

P: Maybe their lifestyles. (I: Mmhmm) I think they’re more laid back in Australia (I: Yea) compared compare to ah… Hong Kong. (I: Mmhmm) And…actually… after after experiencing a different…ah…different types of life, (I: Mmhmm) I actually prefer (I: living) living in Hong Kong. (I: Oh Oh) Because it’s it’s more suitable for me. (I: Oh I see I see) So I think I’m more open-minded in (I: Mm Mm) yea because before the immersion I was always thinking oh that’s so stressful and then and then that’s a lot of things to do. But (I: Mm) after the immersion, I do appreciate that people in different parts of the world have um different habits or (I: Yea) lifestyles. But I think there is no there is no best lifestyle. (I: Yea) It but I only choose one that is (I: Suits) suitable for me. (I: Yea, okay)

I: Um were there any major problems that you encountered during your stay in Australia? If so, what were they? Any problems?

P: Major problems? I…I can’t remember any.

I: Oh so you don’t have any. Like your stay in Australia was pretty (P: Yea) yea pretty smooth and (P: Yea very very smooth.) Oh okay.

I: So… so um

P: Oh maybe transportation. (I: Oh okay) Yea not…not… I think the transportation system is well-developed there. (I: Mmhmm) But… it’s not very convenient. (I: Oh okay) So… I have to
I remember that I had to either be um 50 or 45 minutes early (I: to to) for class, (I: for class, oh) or or 20 minutes late for class. Because the timetable the the bus timetable the schedule was horrible.

I: Oh so the bus like (P: Yea) the bus came like (P: Once) 30 minutes (P: No no) later?

P: Once… once yea ah once an hour (I: Oh) or something like that. (I: Okay Okay) And I didn’t live near the train station.

I: Oh that’s why you can only take the bus.

P: Yea. (I: Oh, I see)

I: So in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: Mm…I think we should be given more opportunities to interact with other students in the university as well. (I: Oh yea yea) Yea not only be given ah lessons with our classmates. (I: Our class. Oh, Okay)

I: Um… so…so you want to have more interactions with the local students there?

P: Yea, local students. Not necessarily local students, maybe international students. That will be fine.

I: But um… but this is because it’s their sum… winter break there? (P: Yea) So…one improvement may be we have to con reconsider the time of going to Australia. Do you think so?

P: Mm, yea I think so.

I: So ah are there any um other recommendations? Or improvements that you want to make?

P: Mm…I I can’t think of any.

I: Okay then. If so, this is the end of the interview. Thank you.

P: Thank you.
Appendix 2J – Interview Transcription of Vicky

I: So thank you for being um my participant and I’m currently working on the project about “The effects of international field experience on pre-service teachers’ professional development in Hong Kong”. So I know you went to Australia um 2 years ago for an immersion programme right?

P: Yes, I did.

I: Um so what did you learn from the immersion programme generally?

P: Ah there were lot of things like um I think the most important one was not to ah make assumptions about your students because ah over there we were like new ones and ah I think somewhere our teachers who were teaching us assumed that we’re not gonna be as good and they were kinda surprised then um yea they made the classes more challenging for us, so that even though we were already like you know more like fluent in speaking English, but then they were pushing us forward. (I: Okay) So they altered their lessons accordingly. (I: Mmhm) And you know it was fun. We didn’t find it easy or we didn’t find it repetitive to what we’re doing in Hong Kong. (I: Okay) So…it was great that way.

I: Um so can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from Hong Kong to the international field experience in Australia?

P: Ah the only thing I can think of at the moment is ah… the micro-teaching that we did because we had some experience ah teaching in Hong Kong, so it was easier to plan how we’re gonna teach over there.

I: Mm (P: Yea) so you implemented strategies you learnt (P: Yea teaching strategies) like planning…

P: Planning, yea how to plan, and you know what they need, or ah maybe designing your materials related to that, what you’re gonna give, when you’re gonna give, so I think that one came naturally because we’ve done it over here. (I: Okay)

I: So um can you describe how you implemented teaching strategies you had learnt from the immersion programme to your previous teaching practicum in Hong Kong? Like the one you did last year?
P: Okay, okay yea. So um when were in U ah UQ ah we had a Russian class. (I: Mm!) And the the teacher did not use ah any other language, no English, no anything. (I: Only Russian?) Yea only Russian. (I: Oh) So… and that was her way of telling us that you know this is sec second language, (I: Mmhm) and you I’m not using your mother tongue, (I: Mmhm) and I’m still teaching you, and you’re able to learn! Cus by the end of the lesson, we all did gain something out of it. (I: Oh… interesting) You know, so…ah I was able to use that ah it motivated me to not use any Chinese or you know any other language to help prompt students because I wanted to try my best to do it in English (I: Mmhm) fully, completely in English. So we like I had a lot of um like visual aids, (I: Mmhm) and ah you know ah ah yea just pictures and words that were easier, or like asking friends to help each other just to get the meaning of what I’m saying (I: Mm) completely in one language. (I: Mm Mm) Yea it made me feel like it’s not impossible. (I: Oh) You don’t have to translate things to Chinese or something. (I: Mm) Yea.

I: Um so how do you think your experience in Australia contributed to your knowledge of other cultures?

P: Ah… ah I think it was really nice because like it did contribute a lot. Cus we did not only meet with Australians over there we (I: Mm) we had like where I was living had a Thai students (I: Oh okay) living with me in that homestay family, and um someone from Mexico, and then in UQ as well we had people from Korea and um ah where else ah… oh there was one more place, ah… (I: giggled) Korea and (I: Russia?) Not no no not Russia. Yea may I don’t know, (I: giggled) but another foreign place. (I: Okay okay) I don’t know why, this is so weird. I I should know it, yea I’ll tell you if I find it out. (Both giggled)

I: Um so were there any major problems that you encountered your your stay in Australia?

P: Major problems… (I: Mm) Um… ah… I mean it’s kind of weird cus (I: Mm) ah… it’s um it wasn’t really I wouldn’t call it a major problem. (I: Mm) In fact it helped me um grew as a person because like in my homestay family, ah like the family wasn’t ah like a family family. They were like (I: Mm) ah yea just 2 people living (I: Oh okay) and kind of stuff. (I: Okay) So and like there were fights and stuff (I: Wa) like you know in the middle of dinner and then like (I: Ah) yea so it’s it was like something I had never imagine (I: Yea) sitting by you know. So it’s a little weird so I don’t know but you know, it just helps me um accept the fact (I: Mm) that you know stuff like that happens instead of running from it. But I think as individuals, both my homestay parents were really good people. I got along separately with each one (I:
Mm) instead of like I don’t care (I: giggled) what their um relationship was with each other. (I: Mmhm) So I think… yea as long as I was able to keep my like not judge (I: Mm) yea I wouldn’t take sides ofcourse, (I: Yea, sure sure) and you know both of them would come back and like you know try to explain themselves, I’m gonna go like you don’t need to, (I: Mm) it’s okay, it’s really your thing and like don’t worry, (I: Mm) like just to make them feel that I’m not (I: Judging) judging. Yea (I: Yea) and that I’m still happy and it’s okay yea it’s not affecting me in a negative way and like I’m not yea yea so I think that was something um I think at at a point I did feel unhappy about it, but then the fact that we went with some of my other classmates, (I: Mmhm) so I was able to like you know feel like at home still and I think you know there’s ah… and the u the ones from the university was also really good, so it helped me overcome what I was going through (I: at home) at my homestay. (I: Yea Okay) Yea and they helped me come out of it and like not feel (I: bad about that) too bad about it yea. (I: Okay) Cus that never happens in my Hong Kong family, (I: giggled) and like we’re like really super close, so yea.

I: So um in what ways do you think the immersion programme can be improved to make it a better experience?

P: Um…to make it better, I think the part that where our class was divided into two (I: Yea) was not nice. (I: Mmhm) Cus um like I get along really well with the half of the classmates (I: Mm) that were with me, (I: Mmhm) and I wish there was like a bigger class. (I: Mm) And even as a bigger class like ah that would forces to break our groups instead of like keep keeping it the same like how we are (I: Mm) like even in Hong Kong, we’re like you know we have our own groups that we sit with or something, so I was hoping that when we cus it was it was done really well when we went to Australia, ah we weren’t always with our group, we were like one big group because we were the ones who knew each other, (I: Mm) and like everything else was new to us. So it’d have been even better if all 30 of us were together (I: Okay) instead of 15 and 6 yea 16 (I: Yea) something like that. (I: Okay) Yea I wish that could have happened. (I: Mm) I think it’ll make us stronger as a group, (I: Mmhm Mmhm) you know yea.

I: So um do you have anything else to add on?

P: Ah… yea I think overall like it was life-changing experience, a journey to figure myself out because um… ah I think I was being more caring towards people and (I: Mm) like ah I’ve I don’t get the chance to do that over here like I’m always the one pampered or something. (I:
Mmhm) So over there I was actually ah taking care of you know my other classmates or something and like just (I: Mmhm) it’s just it’s really nice and it reminded me of how ABC camps used to be in our secondary school (I: Mm) where they would send you as a whole class to go to a camp where you’re like you know team-building (I: Mm) or something like that. So that was something that ah the immersion programme reminded me of.

I: Okay. So thank you for your time and that’s the end of our interview. Thank you.

P: Thanks.

I: Thank you.
Appendix 3 – Audio recordings of interviews