

**The emergence of bilingual education in the Hong Kong pre-primary sector:
challenges in early language learning**

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One of the cascading effects of the Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy introduced by the Hong Kong SAR government in 1997 is that within 10 years of its implementation all kindergartens in Hong Kong have become 'bilingual'. The aims of this talk are three-fold. First, it analyzes the various forces that contribute to the emergence of 'bilingual' education in the Hong Kong pre-primary sector. Specifically, it addresses why a language policy originally targeted at secondary education would result in major irreversible implications in the Hong Kong early childhood setting. Second, this talk brings new information about the challenges that young Hong Kong children face in language learning through extrapolating insights obtained from a rich body of language profiles (in both Cantonese and English) of Hong Kong kindergarteners from various school settings. With empirical evidence on young children's developmental profiles in both their mother tongue and second language, it becomes possible to identify the learning needs of young children learning two languages. The final part of the seminar highlights three types of resources at the community, school and family level that seek to address the learning needs of our young bilinguals-to-be.