

**Volunteering Literacies:
An Ethnographic Approach to Exploring the Literacy
Practices of Adult Volunteers on a Vocational Further
Education Programme and a Social Media Networking Site
in
an Aviation-Centred Uniformed Youth Group**

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**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of
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Abstract of thesis entitled:

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Literacy Practices of Adult Volunteers on
a Vocational Further Education Programme and
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Submitted by

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The first aim of this research is to better understand how the dominant and vernacular literacy practices of adult volunteers at an aviation-centred uniformed youth group in Hong Kong co-exist through a newly launched continuing education programme – a vocational qualification programme – and various types of texts in the volunteering context. Another aim is to explore how these volunteers’ self-generated literacy practices are shaped by new technologies, with a particular focus on a social networking site, Facebook.

The study is grounded in the framework of literacy as a social practice (Barton and Hamilton, 2012) and the community of practice (CoP) learning theory (Wenger, 1998). Literacy as a social practice theory reveals that reading and writing practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. Taking a CoP perspective, this thesis also views the uniformed group as a community sharing common knowledge, ideas and practices.

The research was conducted using a linguistic ethnographic approach. Based on the analysis of written texts, including assignments and texts related to volunteering work and multimodal texts on Facebook, interviews and participant observation, this study first reveals how the social practices surrounding these digital and print-based texts constitute the professional practices of volunteers and bring formal education into a nonformal education context. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the understanding of new practices in social media and other technologies, which will become more prevalent in volunteering and further education environments. The significance of literacy practices cannot be considered in isolation from their unique sociocultural context.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my original work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institute for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signature :  _____
Siu Yee HO

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List of Abbreviations

AAEP	Advanced Aviation Education Programme
ACC	Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps
ACO	Air Cadet Organisation, UK
AYP	Hong Kong Award For Young People
C Sqn	Ceremonial Squadron
C&C	Customs and Courtesies
CCF	Combined Cadet Force
Cdr	Commander
CGLI	City & Guilds London Institute
Comdt	Commandant
CTRB	Cadet Training Record Book
CVQO	Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation
DSVS	Disciplined Services Volunteer Scheme
FE	Further Education
GCGI	Graduateship
HE	Higher Education
HKACC	Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps
HKCEE	Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination
HKSAR / SAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HQ	Headquarters
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
IT	Information Technology
JN / JNCOTC	Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Training Course
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LCGI	Licentiateship
MCGI	Membership
NSS	New Secondary School
OC	Officer Commanding
OCTC	Officer Cadet Training Course
ODRC	One Day Refresher Course
OLE	Other Learning Experience
Ops Order	Operational Order
OT	Officer Trainee
OTTC	Officer Trainee Training Course
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
RAeS	Royal Aeronautical Society

RAF	Royal Air Force
Reg	Registry
RITC	Recruit Instructor Training Course
SNS	Social network site
Sqn	Squadron
Trg Gp	Training Group
UG	Uniformed Group
UK	United Kingdom
VGS	Volunteer Gliding Squadron
VQ	Vocational Qualification
VTC	Vocational Training Council
WOTC	Warrant Officer Training Course

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Adult volunteers in voluntary youth groups, youth uniformed groups (UG) or cadet forces – like people in schools and workplaces – spend a substantial proportion of their time writing and reading. By ‘writing and reading’, I am deliberately framing two types of practices as new literacy practices in an aviation-oriented UG: (1) assignment writing and student guidebook reading for a vocational qualification (VQ) programme and (2) the self-generated writing and reading of adult volunteers in both print and digital forms. My research aims to depict the combination of dominant and vernacular practices that occurs through a newly developed vocational programme in the volunteering domain. This volunteering domain is an important site for learning, not only for cadet members, who are all secondary students aged between eleven and twenty years, but also adult members who are either university students or employees. As Kerka (1998) notes, “Volunteer service is an important site of lifelong learning opportunities that benefit both individuals and society” (p.2). The process of becoming a member of this UG involves learning in a similar way to an apprenticeship (Wenger, 1998). The rise in digital technologies, especially social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook, has also led to thriving online literacies or computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a communal resource within the volunteering community. To provide a flavour of the range of literacy events in adult volunteers’ lives, I show five typical examples in Table 1.1, below.

Table 1.1 Typical Examples of Literacy Events in the life of the Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (known as the ‘HKACC’ or ‘the Corps’) adult volunteers

Imposed	Filling in an activity request form for a training camp
	Reading the health and safety regulations for a training camp
	Writing (i.e. typing) a NOTAM ¹ about a training camp on Facebook
	Preparing a reflective report in order to obtain a vocational qualification
Self-generated	Writing a shopping list for a recruits’ cadet training camp
	Commenting on photographs taken at a training camp on Facebook

Volunteers’ literacy events can be assumed to be ‘self-generated’ (Ivanič, 1998), as they are conducted voluntarily. In fact, as I will demonstrate, volunteering literacy events can also be a type of ‘imposed’ activity that are conducted in response to the

¹ NOTAM means ‘a Notice to Airmen’ – a notice prepared by an aviation authority to alert aircraft pilots of potential hazards along a flight route. Adult volunteers adopt this universal term in the HKACC context by referring to a notice, in either printed or digital format, to announce activity details within their units or the organisation.

external demands of the organisation and the awarding body. The HKACC in Hong Kong is a hybrid environment that has created one of the ‘new contexts of writing’ (Barton, 2012), as this research will show.

1.1 Motivation for the research

While extensive studies have been devoted to literacy in all kinds of compulsory education, higher education (HE) and further education (FE), few researchers have made voluntary youth organisations their research focus. There has been little exploration to investigate the nature of reading and writing in the domain of voluntary youth organisations in either Hong Kong or the United Kingdom that has captured my attention. So, one of my key interests in this research is to understand the synergy between literacy and volunteering. It is also important to explore the research on and practices of adult volunteers pursuing FE in terms of their use of literacies.

As an active adult volunteer in a voluntary youth organisation since 2005, I realized that the HKACC is a fascinating research site or area right in front of me. In the HKACC, despite its volunteering nature, members from all groups, wings, squadrons, flights or units (the terminology for all sorts of departments and divisions within the organisation) have to observe regulations and guidelines and undergo systematic training, regardless of age, rank, gender or occupation. Adult volunteering can be assumed to be full of self-generating activities, though this is not always the case. As a matter of fact, the HKACC shares many of the features of schools, having curricula, assessments and regulations, and is a small-scale community that has activities imposed based on uniform regulations. “The distance between chevrons and shoulders can be defined and enforced more precisely than the procedures of academic grading or teaching” (Joseph & Alex, 1972, p.724). At the same time, the HKACC, similar to a workplace, has volunteers with long-term commitments “mirroring traditional long-term working relationships between employer and employee in the mainstream remunerated economy” (Lockstone, Binney, Holmes, Smith & Baum, 2010, p.436). It is expected that both workplace-like and school-like literacy practices of the participants can be examined in this unique context. This led me to focus my first research question on the literacy practices involved in volunteering and vocational qualifications, which will be explained in Section 2.7.

The reason for studying Facebook interactions stems from an interesting phenomenon at the beginning of my research journey: the synergy and dynamics among adult volunteers on a popular social networking site. Thanks to inspiration from Barton & Lee (2013), I reflected that it would be worth embarking on research to see how the literacy practices and interactions of adult volunteers extend from the physical world to the online world, and how their Facebook texts and conversations make a difference to volunteering activities. In fact, over 90 per cent of adult volunteers who join the VQ programme in the Corps are active users of Facebook, according to the records of the HKACC's Vocational Qualifications Unit (VQU). Using Facebook, volunteers also communicate with others who are outside this community of volunteers. This led me to focus my second research question on the literacy practices on Facebook, which will be explained in Section 2.7 as well.

The motivation of my research is that there can be systematic writing activities, practices and documentation involved in this volunteering community for training and assessment purposes. This volunteering community also forms its own community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) by being a joint enterprise and having mutual engagement and a shared repertoire. Volunteers who share the same concern or passion, in my case aviation education, regularly interact with each other both offline and online.

1.2 Research Setting and Background

As presented above, this thesis draws on evidence from the study of a specific domain – a voluntary organisation in Hong Kong. Details about the two-year-long data collection process in this volunteering domain will be included in this thesis; however, other domains of the everyday lives of volunteers, such as work and home, are beyond the scope of my research. This chapter will present the background and context of the current research in terms of societal, educational and volunteering aspects. Prior to the research findings being presented, I will provide an overview of the language and volunteering situation in Hong Kong.

1.2.1 Hong Kong as a ‘Two Written Codes, Three Spoken Languages’ society

Before examining the literacy practices of UG volunteers in Hong Kong, it is vital to explore the language pattern of the society. The current multilingual and multicultural characteristics of Hong Kong can be traced back to its complex background and history. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), before Hong Kong’s reunification with Mainland China in 1997, was a colony of the United Kingdom for 99 years. This SAR of the People's Republic of China was formed when Hong Kong was returned to Chinese sovereignty on 1 July 1997, under the unique principle of “One Country, Two Systems”. According to the Basic Law, the SAR’s constitutional document, despite being part of China, the existing systems in Hong Kong, namely education, capitalism, the political system and way of life, rights and freedoms can remain for fifty years.

The colonial influence actually shaped the current activities of both the general public and UGs across the city, such as Remembrance Sunday. As shown in Data extract 1.1 (an extract from Chris² Wong’s vocational writing, his so-called ‘thesis³’), the Ceremonial Squadron (C Sqn) of the HKACC is invited by the organizing committee of Remembrance Sunday to send representatives to “stand sentry” at this annual event. C Sqn, with the motto “Superbia, Precisions Et Professionum”, is the only unit to parade the HKACC Colours and perform public duties on behalf of the HKACC.

Data extract 1.1 Remembrance Sunday

14.4 Remembrance Sunday – In the United Kingdom, Remembrance Sunday is held on the second Sunday in November, the Sunday nearest to 11 November, which is the anniversary of the end of the hostilities of the First World War on that day, at 11 a.m., in 1918, to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in two World Wars and later conflicts.

I have forgotten when was the first time we were invited to stand sentry for the Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph in the Central of Hong Kong but I still can remember that



² All participant names and squadron numbers except David Harris and C Sqn (due to their unique roles in the VQ programme and HKACC respectively) in this thesis are pseudonym.

³ A thesis is an essay that displays the results of a candidate’s research against a predefined topic that has been chosen by the candidate himself/herself (Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, 2009).

we had empty hands to stand as sentry at the very beginning. Afterward, we carry our weapon to participate; we put it properly with similar to the armed forces to perform such duty. Apart from the colony of United Kingdom, Hong Kong had been involved into the Second World War, so that we have a ceremony to pray for the heroes at the Cenotaph. Giving a demonstration to the younger, Showing the sincerity to the heroes who fight for the peace, these may let the younger know what have to do for the senior.
(Chris Wong, p.21, Thesis, 2011)

The colonial influence also shaped the language repertoire of Hong Kong after the post-colonial period. Since the advent of the ‘Biliterate and Trilingual Policy’ (Tung, 1999) first advocated by the SAR government, the common mission of Hong Kong educators has been to raise students’ proficiency in two written codes, namely, written Chinese and written English, and three spoken languages, namely, Cantonese, Putonghua and English. This promotion of biliteracy and trilingualism still plays a role in contemporary society.

The first language being explored is Cantonese – ‘the vernacular language’ (Lai, 2001). It is a dialect widely spoken in the southern part of China, more precisely, in Guangdong province, and is the mother tongue of the great majority of Hong Kongers. Over 95 per cent of the Hong Kong population aged five and over can speak Cantonese according to a survey commissioned by the Hong Kong Government Census and Statistics Department in 2011 (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Proportion of Population Aged 5 and Able to Speak Selected Languages/ Dialects in Hong Kong (2011)⁴

<i>Language/ Dialect</i>	<i>Proportion of Population Aged Five and Over (%)</i>		
	<i>As Usual Language</i>	<i>As Another Language/Dialect</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cantonese	89.5	6.3	95.8
English	3.5	42.6	46.1
Putonghua	1.4	46.5	47.8

For research participants like Holiday Ho and Sam Tong, Cantonese is the language they grew up with from when they were born, so they do not have any difficulty in speaking it. At the same time, they generally commented that their

⁴ The figures exclude mute persons.

written Chinese left room for improvement, because spoken Cantonese is different from written Chinese (see Data extracts 1.2 and 1.3).

Data extract 1.2 Holiday: ‘Chinese (Cantonese)⁵ was like inborn’

As for Chinese (Cantonese), since when I was young, it was like inborn because the first sentence spoken by my mother was in Chinese. It was very natural. However, when I started my study and writing, it was like another issue. Speaking and writing are two different things.

(Holiday Ho, semi-structured interview 1, 2014).

Data extract 1.3 Sam: ‘I think I can handle it well because it is my mother tongue’

I think I can handle it well because it is my mother tongue ... but I am better at speaking. I think my knowledge on Cantonese's origin and culture as well as my writing skill is not as good as my speaking skill.

(Sam Tong, semi-structured Interview 1, 2012)

The second language I am exploring is English as an international language (Lai, 2001; Pennycook, 1994), which is widely used in both public and private companies and social institutions, including a few youth UGs like the HKACC, due to the influence of Hong Kong’s colonial background. Using English as a lingua franca (Jenkins & Leung, 2013), HKACC members as well as other Hong Kong people communicate in English very often with other speakers who have a different first language. English still carries high respect in contemporary society, which means its social status remained unchanged after the handover of the sovereignty of Hong Kong to the “Chinese motherland” (Chu, 2003). On the other hand, the importance of English in the aviation industry has long been emphasized: “English has been generally accepted as a de facto medium of communication as a result of long time usage in this [aviation] industry. This is especially true with international airports and airlines” (Aiguo, 2007, p.122). HKACC adult volunteers generally get used to using English, see Data extracts 1.4 and 1.5 for examples.

⁵ The function of round brackets is to provide my explanation whereas the function of the square brackets is to add the hidden meaning of the authors or my research participants in order to make the sentences complete or grammatical. For instance, Holiday uses the term ‘Chinese’ here but she actually implies ‘Cantonese’. For her and other Hong Kongers, the labels ‘Chinese’ and “Cantonese’ are interchangeable.

Data extract 1.4 Jayden Ku: ‘[I] get used to it’

Winnie (The researcher’s Chinese name is ‘Siu Yee’, but she is known by her English name, ‘Winnie’, in this thesis): Do you think you are getting used to using English [reading and writing] in Government?

Jayden: yes, [I] get used to it. Since the aviation field is full of English. All sorts of notices, memos, manuals are all in English. As for Air Cadets, all documents like meeting minutes are all in English. So, [using English] is common.

Data extract 1.5 Sam: ‘I get used to write in English’

As for writing, email is a very important communication channel for us. Email in Hong Kong seems to have a strange phenomenon. English is commonly used by Hong Kongers in emails. Since I have to write memos in ACC, I get used to write in English.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012)

Similar comments made by Chris (Data extract 1.6) and Sam (Data extract 1.7) further illustrate that English is a common language in both Hong Kong and the voluntary community I examine in this research.

Data extract 1.6 Chris: ‘The major medium of instruction was English’ in the HKACC

In my old days, over 80% [of the documentation] was in English. Picking up a pen, using a paper, etc. all were in English.

All the assignments had to be submitted in English. As for lessons, of course some Cantonese words were used by Sir, but the major medium of instruction was English. Foot drills [practice] were all conducted in English for sure. Conversations were in Chinese [Cantonese]. This is the situation. I wanna say around 80% was in English.

(Chris Wong, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

Data extract 1.7 Sam: ‘All the learning materials were in English’

As for reading, lots of internal correspondences such as memos are in English. When I was a cadet, all the learning materials were in English too.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012)

However, in spite of its ubiquity, it is widely recognized that English can be a challenge for ESL learners. For example, in Data extract 1.8, Holiday recalls her first exposure to English when she started primary school. Actually, she started learning individual English words in kindergarten, but her journey to learn English officially commenced in primary school, where she learned sentence structure and

pronunciation.

Data extract 1.8 Holiday: ‘Learning English for the first time must be difficult’

Learning English for the first time must be difficult for me since I had to learn the basics such as vocabulary, grammar, etc. that I had never learnt before.

When I was in primary school, I had to start learning how to construct sentences and how to report to my teachers. I had to know how to pronounce the vocabulary in front of teachers so I looked up a dictionary. I had to start learning more vocabulary and the pronunciation situation, for example, ‘-tion’ is pronounced as ‘ʃən’, department’s pronunciation, etc. I started learning how to pronounce them.
(Holiday, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

Sam specified one further particularly challenging aspect based on his experience – comprehending certain sentence structures written by native English writers (see Data extract 1.9).

Data extract 1.9 Sam: ‘Reading comprehension in English [is my major concern]’

Winnie: If we go further on this point, can I ask more specifically whether your English proficiency has improved in specific aspects like pronunciation or reading comprehension in English while serving at the Corps?

Sam: Reading comprehension in English [is my major concern]. Some sentence structures are not used in Hong Kong but I sometimes don’t understand the correspondence or emails sent out by our UK partners since they are more standard in the UK but not common in Hong Kong.
(Sam, semi-structured Interview 1, 2012)

On the other hand, Chris also recalls his relatively unpleasant experience of answering exam questions in a second language that he was not familiar with during his cadet life, as shown in Data extract 1.10.

Data extract 1.10 Chris: ‘[English] was a bit difficult for me’

As for language (English), at that time, it was a bit difficult for me. When I was a cadet, I had to answer exam questions in English. The exam papers were in English. I had to re-exam for 2 to 3 times for some of the papers in order to pass. This is because of the language issue.
(Chris, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

In addition, Sam reckons that English is normally regarded as a classroom,

exam or work language in Hong Kong (see Data extract 1.11). There are opportunities for him to practise both writing emails and reading English newspapers, but not his listening and oral skills in Hong Kong. For example, chances to interact with foreigners in daily life in Hong Kong are relatively rare from Sam's point of view.

Data extract 1.11 Sam: 'I would say English is just for practical purpose'

As for English, for exam and study purposes. After school, it is used for work purpose. I would say English is just for practical purpose. As for English's origin, history and background, we don't care too much as English as second language learners. Besides, we only know the superficial meanings of English words but not the second meaning of words nor the spoken/ vernacular wordings since we are just ESL learners. We only know the meaning in written format.
(Sam, *semi-structured Interview 1*, 2012)

In fact, both Cantonese and English were granted official status as official languages of the city, by the government authority, before the colonial period. As Data extract 1.12 shows, Cantonese as a first language can be indispensable in people's personal lives from the points of view of its users. From Sam's viewpoint, people who speak in the same L1 have a closer relationship with each other.

Data extract 1.12 Comparison between L1 (Cantonese) and L2 (English)

L1 is a common language in our daily life as well as our mother tongue. Let's say, if you are able to meet someone who speaks the same language as you, you would have the feeling that you and him/ her know each other very well and you would think s/he is part of your family.
(Sam, *Semi-structured Interview 1*, 2012)

Cantonese is also like a language aid or tool in terms of English Language learning. For example, Holiday feels that, 'When we were young, we had to overcome lots of challenges when we transformed English into our mother tongue' (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 1*, 2014). Sam further explains how he made use of Cantonese during her learning experience, as shown in Data extract 1.13:

Data extract 1.13 Sam: 'Regarding pronunciation, (I) used some similar Cantonese words to write on top of the English words'

Generally, kids in Hong Kong started learning English from single words such as colours, numbers, etc. first. At the beginning, the learning environment is more relaxing. Also, we learn English with the support of Cantonese in the classrooms, let's say, "this is 藍 ('blue' in Cantonese), the English is blue", which is easier to remember and is more practical. Regarding pronunciation, (I) used some similar

Cantonese words to write on top of the English words so that it is easier to remember. When we were young, (teachers) didn't teach IPA. We didn't learn pronunciation officially. When we grow older, (teachers) started teaching how our tongues articulate sounds, what IPA is, etc.
(Sam, *Semi-structured Interview 1*, 2012)

However, the recognition of their social status in theory does not match with the Hong Kong linguistic reality: English is “more prestigious” (Lai, 2001) than Cantonese from the viewpoint of stakeholders (e.g. “The best students will learn English” (Choi, 2003)). Schools with English as the medium of instruction were labelled ‘elite’ by parents and students (Evans, 2002) before the language policy was fine-tuned in 2010.

The third language I investigate is Putonghua. As “the national language of the PRC” (Lai, 2001), Putonghua has been attracting an increasing number of speakers from Hong Kong since the reunification with China in 1997. With China’s emergence as a global economic and athletic power, Putonghua is expected to rapidly become another popular language, not only in the city but throughout the world. For example, Holiday had to use Putonghua ‘because of the requirement of my previous job. It is an international company, focusing on businesses in South China.’ She described her proficiency level of Putonghua: ‘the kind of Putonghua that both we understood each other but my Putonghua isn’t that native’ (*Holiday, Semi-structured Interview 1*, 2014). Holiday ascribed her difficulty in acquiring a native-like accent in Putonghua to the lack of Putonghua training during her primary schooling.

In fact, nearly half of the population (around 3.5 million people) in Hong Kong could speak Putonghua as a usual language as at 2011. As shown in Data extract 1.14, Putonghua is increasingly being used in more exchanges and communication with the Mainland.

Data extract 1.14 Putonghua is a more popular language now

Winnie: Which HKACC activities organized by you involve English more often?

Jayden: Nearly all of them. I didn't use Chinese at all at HKACC activities.

Winnie: How about the Shandong delegation visits? I can't remember if you were involved.

Jayden. Of course I was involved! I was speaking Putonghua. [I still remembered] my poor Putonghua proficiency, which let me burst into laughter in the hangar. I was even showing a quadcopter to the guests that day.

(Jayden, Semi-structured Interview 1, 2013)

The above data briefly illuminate two written codes and three spoken languages in the volunteering environment. I will return to this issue in Chapter 4.

1.2.2 Volunteering and Uniformed Groups

The term 'volunteer' used to refer to unpaid workers in the military environment five centuries ago. Nowadays, this term is no longer context-specific and is used to refer to any person who offers help, service or assistance to others without any obligation (Schugurensky, Duguid & Mündel, 2010). Volunteering refers to 'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause' (Wilson, 2000, p.215). In other words, volunteering is any service offered by individuals who, or organisations that, are willing to give their time and effort without monetary or material reward. Consider the picture below (Figure 1.1) and the following statement from the Facebook page of the South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (South East RFCA), UK:⁶ "Thank you to all those Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who so freely give up their own time... ."

Figure 1.1 Volunteers are priceless (South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association, 2015)



⁶ South East RFCA is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to offer support to Veterans, Reserve forces and Cadets in the South East region of the UK.

A sense of gratitude towards adult volunteers can be expressed to those from Hong Kong as well. The Volunteer Movement initiated by the Hong Kong government in a territory-wide programme to promote voluntary work managed to attract 120 million volunteers in 2013. The top five types of voluntary organisations in Hong Kong include educational organisations, religious bodies, social service organisations, hospitals and district service organisations. The HKACC theoretically belongs to the category of social service organisations, but realistically it involves elements of both social services and education, with a military tradition and customs as a backdrop.

The HKACC, the voluntary organisation I am going to explore, is one of fourteen youth UGs subsidized by the government in Hong Kong (please see Table 1.3 for a full list of UGs and Appendix 1 for a brief introduction to all UGs). To define UGs, Chui and Chan (2011) generally label them as “youth clubs outside school”. Chou’s (1999) description of UGs seems to be more specific and accurate, UGs are a type of voluntary organisation “with a strong culture that emphasizes discipline, self-development, cooperation, self-sacrifice, and leadership” (p.271). More than that, UGs are also one of six categories of programme operators which aim at “youth leadership development with “training strategies” running “youth leadership training activities for young people” in Hong Kong (Ngai, Cheung, Ngai & To, 2012). A UG in Hong Kong is a type of institution that desires to nurture youth leadership through five inter-related training domains, including personal, interpersonal, community, national and international aspects (Ngai et al., 2012), it is led by adult volunteers working outside the formal school curriculum.

Table 1.3 List of voluntary uniformed youth groups subsidized by the Hong Kong government (to the best of my knowledge at 18 Jan 2015)

1	Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps
2	Hong Kong Adventure Corps
3	Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps
4	Hong Kong St John Ambulance
5	Scout Association of Hong Kong
6	Hong Kong Girl Guides Association
7	Auxiliary Medical Service Cadet Corps
8	Civil Aid Service Cadet Corps
9	Hong Kong Red Cross
10	The Boys' Brigade Hong Kong
11	The Girls' Brigade Hong Kong

12	The Hong Kong Road Safety Association
13	Junior Police Call
14	Hong Kong Army Cadet Force

In addressing the societal challenges resulting from a lack of uniform group (UG) activities in primary and secondary schools, the Education Department (now the Education Bureau) decided to work on policies to foster the all-round development of students. The authority implemented a proposal made in the Government's annual policy address in 2000 and launched the UG scheme for local primary and secondary school schools in 2011. This was the first move to bring "extra-curricular activities" (Stevenson, 1994) or "youth clubs outside school" into educational organisations and expand district-based UGs to become more school-based (see Data extract 1.15). In other words, the "one student one uniform" campaign was widely launched across local secondary schools in the city.

Data extract 1.15 Bringing Uniformed Groups into Schools

Justification

3. One of our education reform proposals is to offer more life-wide learning opportunities for our students in order to foster their all-round development. UGs provide students with opportunities to learn through participation in a wide range of activities, for example, expedition and orienteering. They also offer participants the unique experience of discipline and team-building. Participation in UGs is widely recognised by the education sector as one of the most effective ways to foster students' all-round development.

Discussion document for the financial committee, Education Department [FCR(2001-02)18], p.2, 2001

UGs became part of the compulsory Other Learning Experience (OLE) initiative in the New Secondary School (NSS) curriculum from 2009 onwards. Under the NSS academic structure, students are expected to benefit from a more diversified learning experience in their six years of secondary education in order to meet the needs of a 'knowledge-based economy' (Education Bureau, 2009). OLE is one of three elements in the NSS that has the goal to enhance the whole-person development experiences of senior secondary (Secondary four to six) students in the areas of Moral and Civic Education, Community Service, Career-related Experiences, Aesthetic Development and Physical Development (Education Bureau, 2010). Some examples of OLE activities in these five areas at the HKACC will be described in the next section.

1.2.3 Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps

The Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (HKACC) has historically close ties and friendship with the UK Air Cadet Organisation. The HKACC is the only UG in Hong Kong that specializes in aviation education and has the aim to help young people to develop to become responsible citizens and also to encourage and assist local people to contribute their efforts, services and resources in the development of civil aviation. The core values of the HKACC are reflected in Data extract 1.16.

Data extract 1.16 Vision, Mission and Core Values of the HKACC

Vision The HKACC seeks to sustain and enhance its excellence as the premier aeronautical minded youth organisation to serve the Hong Kong community.
Mission The HKACC is committed to serving the Hong Kong community by constantly endeavouring to: (a) Develop the qualities of leadership, self-reliance and initiative; (b) Develop character, good citizenship and a love for the home country; (c) Develop an interest in aviation in general; and (d) Encourage members to take an active interest in aviation throughout their life.
Values Largely relying on voluntary efforts, the HKACC is committed to upholding the following values as its guiding spirit: Honesty, Justice, Tolerance, Discipline, Initiative and Loyalty
Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps [HKACC] (2013)

All UGs have their own unique features; nevertheless, they all share the common goal, which is to create an environment that promotes self-development, leadership training, disciplinary training and ranking systems for teenagers (Chou, 1997; Chou, 1999; Wong, 1998). Through uniforms and ranking systems, adult volunteers who are aged 21 or over from different professions can organize progressive training programmes for youth members ranging from 11 to 20 years old outside the formal school curricula, as explained by Sam: ‘All of the officers and adults are actually volunteers and need to sacrifice their own personal times in providing services to the Corps and young person’ (*Sam, reflective report, 2010*).

Like the curricula of formal aviation training schools such as the Civil Aviation School in Turkey (Sullivan & Girginer, 2002) and the Civil Aviation University of

China (Wang, 2007) that have a focus on aviation knowledge training to prepare students for possible future service in the local aviation industry, the Corps also aims to develop young people to become responsible citizens in society. A central feature underlying our training curriculum and day-to-day correspondence, written in English, in the Corps is that “English has been generally accepted as a de facto [universal] medium of communication as a result of long time usage in this [aviation] industry” (Wang, 2007, p.122).

Apart from having a prime focus on aviation education, another notable feature of HKACC training is that it is military-like. The HKACC follows a ‘military system’ because ‘Hong Kong Cadet Services have semi-military background, cadets should demonstrate smart soldier *[sic]*⁷ like manner when their turn out in the cadet lifetime’ (Chris, thesis, 2010).

My study was carried out in the HKACC where Cantonese is widely spoken by the vast majority of Corps members, including my research participants, as their first language, and where English is the official language of written correspondence as their second language and enriches the literacy practices of volunteers. For instance, meeting minutes, guidelines and operational orders that are circulated are all written in English while all meetings and operations are conducted in Cantonese.

In view of the increasing annual numbers of adult volunteers in Hong Kong, from my observations and according to figures announced by the government, there has been a significant growth in adult volunteers pursuing FE in the volunteering context but limited relevant research. Therefore, it is useful to study adult volunteers more, especially how they use literacies, how they present themselves to others and how they account for their literacy practices. Table 1.4 summarizes the relevant figures for both the UK and Hong Kong.

Table 1.4 Figures for Uniformed Youth Groups and Vocational Qualifications in the HKACC and CVQO

Hong Kong	Youth members of UGs supplied by the Home Affairs Bureau (excluding adult members)	134,900 (Financial Services and Treasury Bureau [FSTB], 2013).
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⁷ *Sic* is used to indicate unconventional spelling or usage by the original author(s).

Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (HKACC)	Youth members (i.e. cadet members)	3,263 (HKACC, 2013)
	Adult members	1,588 (HKACC, 2013)
	Adult members who have registered for VQ qualifications since 2009	67 (Vocational Qualifications Unit, Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, personal communication, 1 January 2015)
	Adult members who have gained VQ qualifications since 2009	37 (Vocational Qualifications Unit, Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, personal communication, 1 January 2015)
CVQO	Adult members who have gained VQ qualifications since 2006	7,000 (Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, 2013)

At the time of the research, thirty-seven adult volunteers had obtained a VQ with an average of ten per year at 1 January 2015. All of them had five to ten years of active service and spoke Cantonese as a first language, with English as a second language. With respect to the socio-economic circumstances of the adult volunteers involved in my study, to my knowledge, they can be considered to be middle class, because all the expensive uniforms and most Corps activities are self-financed. The adult volunteers have multi-faceted professional backgrounds, such as veterans from military organisations, pilots, aircraft engineers, air traffic controllers, business executives, lawyers and discipline force officers, which contributes to the wide range of insights into voluntary tasks and projects, assignment topics and Facebook posts.

These adult volunteers, comprising both ‘newcomers’ and ‘oldtimers’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991), draw upon ‘funds of knowledge’ (Moll, 1994) within the organisation. The definitions of ‘newcomers’ and ‘oldtimers’ relate, respectively, to those who have not and have been cadet members before becoming adult volunteers. The relationship between these two types of volunteers matches the key concept of ‘apprenticeship’. When volunteering, newcomers first learn by doing, with the guidance of old-timers, thus a process of learning and knowledge transfer exists. Those newcomers have to follow one of the following schemes before they can officially become a member of the CoP: either pre-entry training (viz Officer Cadet Training Course (OCTC), Officer Trainee Training Course (OTTC), Warrant Officer Training Course (WOTC), Recruit Instructor Training Course (RITC)) or the direct

appointment route (e.g. the Disciplined Services Volunteer Scheme (DSVS)) (see Data extract 1.17 and Appendix 2 for details).

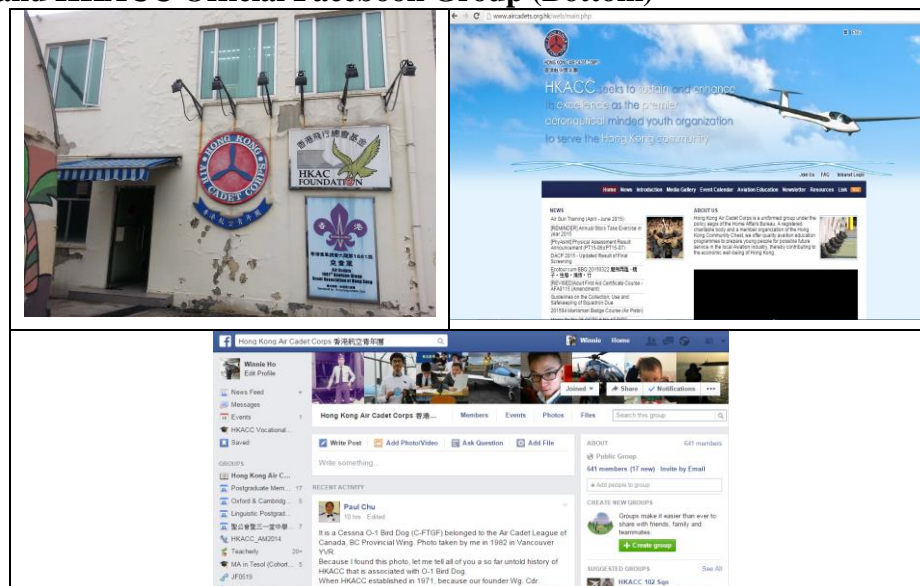
Data extract 1.17 Direct appointment of uniformed Senior Members

The Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps has a long history of attracting to its ranks suitably qualified individuals with the required technical, disciplined/ auxiliary force, military or uniform group background for appointment as directly appointed senior members, without requiring the appointees to go through the normal basic training (*viz* Officer Cadet Training Course, Warrant Officer Training Course, Recruit Instructor Training Course). The Headquarters reckons that such direct appointments should continue to be made as and when the opportunity arises to broaden the knowledge base of the Corps and to bring in new talents to fill management, supervisory, instructional and specialist positions.

Guidelines for the direct appointment of uniformed Senior Members, HKACC [A001/402 amended], p.1, 2003

As a volunteering community, HKACC forms its own ‘CoP’ (Wenger, 1998) by having joint enterprises, mutual engagement and a shared repertoire. Volunteers who share the same concern with or passion for aviation education regularly interact with each other offline and online. Using Facebook, volunteers also communicate with others outside this community of volunteers. My research participants’ literacy events take place in both offline and online contexts: ranging from HKACC Headquarters in Hong Kong and the HKACC Official Website to the HKACC Facebook group administered by the Information Technology Service Unit (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Online and offline contexts of the HKACC: the entrance to the HKACC Headquarters Building in Hong Kong (Left), HKACC Official Website (Right) and HKACC Official Facebook Group (Bottom)



1.2.4 Vocational Qualifications Programme

Since 2001, there has been a growing number of VQ qualifications governed by the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organization (CVQO) – the sole body responsible for overseeing vocational qualifications in management for volunteers for uniformed groups in the UK. The CVQO's VQ qualifications refer to the various levels of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the disciplines of leadership and management, which are equivalent to A-level and academic degrees at the foundation, bachelor and master levels for adult volunteers. These qualifications were introduced to the HKACC in 2009 and to a few other UGs across Hong Kong in recent years. All VQs offered by the HKACC have been mapped against international official standards set by three internationally recognized awarding bodies, namely, the City & Guilds London Institute (CGLI), the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and Pearson (UK), in the disciplines of leadership, music and management and are equivalent to various academic qualifications. In other words, VQs in the HKACC have already undergone a process of accreditation in which the certification of competency, authority or credibility is ensured as part of quality assurance. VQs enable volunteers to gain recognition for community service they have been doing all along as members of the Corps by topping that up with written work in the format of either a portfolio, a thesis or reflective report submitted to an acceptable standard.

My research focuses in particular on the written language of participants in the CGLI's Senior Awards programme, a VQ programme launched in the HKACC between 1 October 2009 and 16 August 2013.⁸ The Senior Awards programme is a series of practical learning programmes that directly relate to specific roles and tasks of adult volunteers for the HKACC first, then other youth organisations later. In the context of the HKACC, all adult members are eligible to apply for this VQ programme depending on their rank and post within the organisation (Table 1.5).

⁸ The label "VQ Programme" will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the City and Guilds Senior Awards programme for adult volunteers in the HKACC.

Table 1.5 City & Guilds Senior Awards Programme

No.	Qualification	Level (National Vocational Qualification, UK)	Study route	Eligibility
1	City & Guilds Licentiateship (in Youth Leadership and Training)	4 (comparable to a Foundation Degree)	Reflective Report or Portfolio Route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a minimum of five years in the HKACC Commissioned Officer, Sergeant Instructor or Instructor DSVS = one year's service plus rank (Sergeant or equivalent)
2	City & Guilds Graduateship (in Youth Management and Training)	6 (comparable to an Honours Degree)	Reflective Report, Portfolio Route or Thesis Route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a minimum of ten years in the HKACC Commissioned Officer or Warrant Officer DSVS = one year's service plus rank (Station Sergeant or equivalent)
3	City & Guilds Membership (in Strategic Youth Management)	7 (comparable to a Master's Degree)	Synopsis and Thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a minimum of ten years in the HKACC Squadron Leader or Warrant Officer with an established or co-opted Wing or Regional role DSVS = one year's service plus rank (Superintendent or equivalent / Station Sergeant or equivalent)

The Senior Awards programme resembles a top-up programme after the completion of a structured training programme, and practical work which is the volunteers' community service. The Reflective Route, regardless of the level of study, is for officers or instructors who went through OCTC, OTTC or RITC, while the Portfolio Route welcomes applications from DSVS. For example, most newly joining adult members undergo normal basic training (see Appendix 3 for the syllabus of the OCTC as an example) to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their supervisory role at unit level. In short, by accumulating the requisite service experience and completing certain written assignments, adult volunteers can gain internationally recognised vocational qualifications in the subject areas of Training, Leadership and Management.

The final assessment for the programme is based on a written reflective account of issues arising in community service as well as personal experience in leadership

and management in an UG context, thus demonstrating competency in relation to the award criteria (see Appendix 4 for the award criteria of City & Guilds Level 6, Graduateship in Youth Management and Training – Reflective Report as an example). Such vocational writing can be regarded as autobiographical. Instead of paying too much attention to a volunteer's childhood or cadet life, writing an autobiography focuses on their struggles, challenges, triumphs and achievements as managers or leaders within the voluntary organisation. All adult volunteers who opt to join the Senior Awards programme are allowed to submit this final assessment within a two-year period. In many cases, the adult volunteers involved in my research found that they were not able to finish their written work at an early stage of their candidature, but rather at a later stage.

These details reinforce the Senior Awards programme in the UG context being 'a textually mediated social world' (Barton, 2001a), since no members can avoid the plethora of VQ guidebooks, memoranda, regulations, guidelines, forms, e-mails, training materials and other documents that assist them with handling training activities as well as writing their VQ assignments.

Using the Senior Awards Programme, in particular the newly launched educational programme at a youth UG in Hong Kong as an example, my study argues that traditional print-based literacies still serve as the foundation of digital literacies in contemporary digital societies (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). The continuing changes to literacy in the information era mean, nevertheless, that new technologies are indispensable to our volunteering lives. Understanding literacy practices in both online and offline contexts can provide insights into curriculum design in all UGs.

1.2.5 Blurred Boundary Between Formal and Nonformal Education in the Volunteering Domain

The permeability of the boundary between traditional and new education is a concern. The official launch of the VQ programme in HKACC in 2009 marked the beginning of redefining 'nonformal education'. The traditional distinction proposed by Coombs & Ahmed (1974) between formal education and nonformal education, with graded and hierarchically structured schools and non-credit bearing programmes developed by youth groups as respective examples, is no longer valid (La Belle,

1982), because the boundary between formal and nonformal education has become blurred in many settings, such as my own contemporary research context.

Schools and universities are typical examples of formal education, in both Hong Kong and internationally. Formal education refers to an education system having the characteristics of ‘institutionalised’, ‘chronologically graded’ and ‘hierarchically structured’ (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974, p.8). Academic qualifications ranging from certificates, diplomas and degrees, including associate, bachelor’s, master’s and doctorates offered by academic institutions, are accredited and recorded by the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications and Credit Framework in Hong Kong and the UK, respectively.

The main scope of my research is to investigate the redefining of ‘vocational education’ at the FE level instead of the traditional secondary or apprenticeship level. In Hong Kong, vocational education traditionally refers to vocational training programmes, which have long been offered by two institutions: the Vocational Training Council (VTC) or the CGLI (with a local office in Hong Kong), with a more HE- or FE-oriented focus, respectively. The VTC has been a leading provider of vocational education and training (VET) in the disciplines of Business, Design, Science, Tourism, Education and Engineering and Information Technology, with students ranging from secondary school leavers to post-secondary students, since 1982, while the City and Guilds is the oldest British awarding body and the largest provider of vocational awards and qualifications in curriculum areas such as Beauty, Business, Languages, Catering, Hairstyling, Management, Education/ Training and Engineering since 1996. VQ qualifications are no longer restricted to professional development during people’s careers, they now extend to include the volunteering world. Figure 1.3 is primarily concerned with the current formal and nonformal education situation in Hong Kong.

Figure 1.3 Overview of the Formal and Nonformal Education Situation in Hong Kong (at 1 January 2015)

Formal Education	Academic Path		Junior Secondary Education	Senior Secondary Education (with the 'Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education' at Secondary 6)	Post-secondary Education	Further Studies
	Level of Academic Qualifications		Secondary 1–3	Secondary 4–6	Certificates, diplomas and degrees, including associate, bachelor's etc.	
		VTC		Diploma in Vocational Education	Higher Diplomas and degrees, including associate, bachelor's etc.	
Nonformal Education	Level of Vocational Qualification	HKACC	ILM Level 2 Award and BTEC Level 2 Diploma		City & Guilds Senior Awards (until 16 August 2013) / Professional Recognition Awards (from 16 August 2013) and ILM Level 3 Award	
	HKACC members' approximate age range:		12–14	15–17	18 and above	

1.2.6 Two Internet Generation Tools – E-mail and Facebook as Examples

It is widely agreed that the Internet and other associated technologies have become part of human life (e.g. Barton and Lee, 2013; McMillan & Morrison, 2006). A revelatory case shown in Data extract 1.18, reported by an online newspaper ("Essential elements", 2015), highlights the unique features of the current digital generation. In the past, the three essential elements of human survival were 'Air', 'Water' and 'Food'. However, a newspaper article included an image widely circulated on the Internet recently in which a secondary school student filled in the

blanks with ‘Android’⁹, ‘WhatsApp’ and ‘Facebook’, respectively, in a Liberal Studies examination. My argument in this section, and in much of the chapter, demonstrates the importance of technology in contemporary society.

Data extract 1.18 Facebook instead of Food becomes one of three essential elements for human survival (“Essential elements”, 2015)



Std:- III
Time:- 1 hour
Marks:- 50

General Knowledge

1. Fill in the blanks

Three essential elements of human survival are

(a) Android (b) WhatsApp (c) Facebook

People’s face-to-face communications and interactions have extended into cyber worlds to form Internet-based technologies and social networks. Adult volunteers are no exception as they too have engaged in five major types of ‘communicative channels and text types’ (Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna, 2014) in different decades: letter, electronic mail (email), Facebook, Computer-based Messenger and WhatsApp. Adult volunteers function in a world where technologies are changing the ways in which they make meanings, interact and engage with each other. Figure 1.4 reveals the heavy reliance on various types of communication technologies in the HKACC community.

Figure 1.4 Timeline of Selected Communication Technologies within the HKACC

	Letter	Email	Facebook	Computer-based Messenger	WhatsApp
1970s					
1980s					
1990s					
2000s					
2010s					

⁹ Android is a mobile operating system developed by Google for touchscreen mobile devices such as smartphones.

Communication technologies have played different roles in different decades within the HKACC. Letters, as the prime example of print texts, used to be the core communication technology, starting in the 1970s, though letters have largely been replaced by emails in the past twenty years. Letter writing only occurs on rare occasions nowadays, including official recruitment letters for flag sellers for the HKACC Flag Selling Day, for example. Traditional letters, or ‘snail mail’, became somewhat more endangered in the 2010s when letters became more digitized, as now we tend to send scanned letters to others electronically.

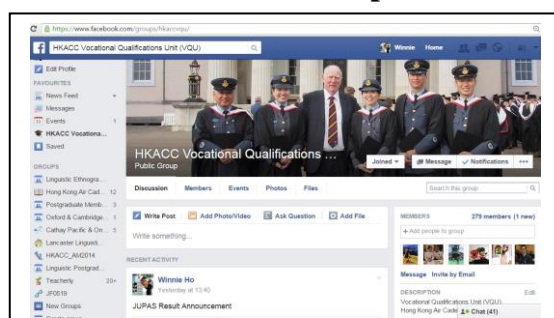
Computer-based Messengers, like MSN Messenger and Yahoo Messenger, were a popular way of chatting and transferring big files among adult volunteers during the 1990s–2000s. Facebook Messenger emerged in the 2010s as part of Facebook’s functionality. WhatsApp, a Smartphone application for mobile instant messaging, has formed a newly emerging “social network” (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). From my own experience, WhatsApp has become increasingly important in enhancing the mutual communication of HKACC members and sometimes takes over the function of emails in terms of spreading information more quickly. However, in view of the limitation of data access for the time being, the scope of my study is limited to two major types of participants’ digital literacies: Email and Facebook.

Email has been a key channel for official communication with volunteers, who come from all walks of life and different geographical locations, since 1993. Thanks to the prevalence of computers and the advancement of Internet technology, all writing tasks can be completed with a simple click in front of the monitors on our desktop computers or even the screens of our smartphones nowadays. All online activities can be conducted anywhere, without any restrictions on the setting.

Apart from this traditional type of computer-mediated platform, adult volunteers make good use of Facebook as a relatively less official communication platform, but a commonplace one among our volunteers since 2007. It is common practice for each HKACC unit to have its own Facebook page or group, such as the “Vocational Qualifications Unit (VQU), Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps” (see Figure 1.5 which shows an image of five of our graduates attending a CVQO Graduation Ceremony at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, in 2014). This kind of Facebook page or

group also allows flexibility in information sharing, since the administrator can set the page or group to either private or public. Facebook's active users exceeded one billion around the world in October 2012 (Facebook, 2012) and reached 1.39 billion in 2015. Approximately 745 million active users log on to Facebook using their mobile devices every day ("Facebook says", 2015). As of July 2014, Hong Kong has 4.4 million Facebook users ("Hong Kong", 2014). Ho (2011) also found out that around two-thirds of university students are "addicted to Facebook".

Figure 1.5 Example of A Facebook Public Group



The majority of the aforementioned communication technologies have become portable and digital, thus volunteers can now get access to email, Facebook, Computer-based Messengers and WhatsApp wherever and whenever they go, as long as their mobile phones are connected to the Internet or WiFi.

1.3 Researcher's Role

The entry and establishment of the researcher's role has long been an important concern in ethnographic research (Gold, 1958; Wilson, 1977). I have been dedicated to ensuring that I minimize the distance between the researcher, myself, and my participants and maintain a nonthreatening environment during the data collection process. Nonetheless, in spite of having the advantage of being an 'intimate insider' researcher, as an ethnographer, one must strike a balance between being a participant and being an observer (Wilson, 1977). Neither too close to nor too distant from participants is desirable.

I will now move on to introduce my own long experience as a volunteer. My interest in volunteering began in the 1990s, when I was still at secondary school. I started by becoming a cadet member in another voluntary youth group, but I suspended my service due to public exams. In 2005, I was able to rejoin the 'cadet

movement' again by enrolling in the HKACC, because I happened to see a noticeboard prepared by one of the HKACC squadrons in Kowloon. thus I embarked on my Air Cadets journey with the OCTC, the most fascinating and eye-opening training course I have ever been on in my HKACC life. My OCTC experience was full of sweat, tears, joy, challenges, excitement, obstacles and fruitful events. I will never forget how I learned to be brave through my first solo experience at midnight in the middle of nowhere with no one around. I also remember clearly the memorable moment when, with my teammates, I celebrated after completing a three-day, two-night hiking adventure, as well as the achievement of getting to our passing-out parade. Since 2009, I have coordinated the development and implementation of a vocational qualification programme at the HKACC which has the aim to provide opportunities for adult volunteers to improve their prospects in education and work through internationally recognized vocational qualifications. Actively serving in a voluntary youth group for nearly ten years allows me easy access to the field.

As a researcher, one distinctive feature of my thesis is that I will give a reflexive, auto-ethnographic account of my own literacy practices in addition to my analysis of others'. My rotations in various roles within the Training Group, and sometimes the Institutional Advancement Group of the organisation, provide me with insights on different aspects and functions of major units in this group (see Data extract 1.19 for my major roles and Data extract 1.20 for my posts and services prior to the turning point in 2009). At the time of writing this thesis, I have been teaching in three tertiary institutions for nearly ten years. Most importantly, being involved in the VQ programme has provided significant new insights into my own perspectives on teaching and learning, and even education. My involvement with this programme is a fusion of the project in-charge since 2009, as a partial insider, and as a VQ candidate between 2011 and 2013 as a complete insider. Though I officially registered as a VQ candidate in 2011, I started preparing my reflective piece of writing in 2013. I did not expect that I would analyse my own writing and incorporate my ideas into this thesis in March 2013, but then I felt that comparing my participants' views with my own could be fascinating. Therefore, I decided to adopt an auto-ethnographic approach, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Data extract 1.19 Data about My Major Roles in the HKACC summarised from a reflective report submitted by the researcher

November 2005 – June 2006	Intensive, rewarding and challenging training on the 26 th Officer Cadet Training Course (OCTC)
2006 – 2008	I was assigned to be a Training Officer in the General Service Training Squadron (GST Sqn) of the Training Group (Trg Gp). I also served with the Adult Training Squadron (AT Sqn), assisting with training the ‘Future Force’ (i.e. Officer Cadets and Recruit Instructors)
2009	My volunteer life in the Corps reached a turning point in 2009. Thanks to my teaching profession and experience in curriculum development, I was invited to join a working group for ‘CVQO-led Vocational Qualifications within HKACC’, a groundbreaking project, and my post was Operations Manager.
October 2009	I was then promoted to be the Officer Commanding the Vocational Qualifications Unit (OC VQU) to oversee the planning and overall development of internationally recognized adult awards in the Corps.

Data extract 1.20 A Self-introduction sheet detailing my Posts and Services at the HKACC (2005–2009), as submitted to the Flight Lieutenant Interview Board

(I) Posts and Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer Commanding <u>Vocational Qualifications Unit</u> (Sep. 2009 – present) ▪ Deputy Project Officer – <u>Flag Day 2011</u> (May 2011 – present) ▪ Coordinator – <u>Local Visits</u>, <i>GST Sqn, Trg Gp / MLAU, IA Gp</i> (June 2006 – present) ▪ Liaison Officer – <u>Venue booking</u> for training or meeting purposes, <i>C Sqn and other units</i> (June 2006 – present) ▪ Coordinator – <u>Happy Family Thematic Funding</u>, <i>IA Gp</i> (March 2011 – present) ▪ Committee Member & Master of Ceremonies – <u>Commandant’s Award</u>, <i>AE Wg, Trg Gp</i> (2006 – present) ▪ Liaison Officer – <u>100th Anniversary of Aviation: Development Career Talk</u> and Visits to the Aviation Industry (March 2011 – present) ▪ Master of Ceremonies – <u>Singing Contest</u> (July 2011) ▪ Deputy Project Officer – <u>Commanding Officers Night</u> (May 2009) ▪ Committee Member – <u>38th Anniversary Mess Dinner 2009</u> (April 2009) ▪ Master of Ceremonies – <u>IACE Welcoming and Farewell Dinners</u>, <i>IEU, IA Gp</i> (July 2009 – 2011) ▪ Master of Ceremonies – <u>Athletic Meets</u>, <i>SD Wg, Trg Gp</i> (May 2009 and 2011) ▪ Committee Member & Master of Ceremonies – <u>Albatross Award</u>, <i>SD Wg, Trg Gp</i> (Dec 2006 – 2010) ▪ Deputy Project Officer – <u>Annual Dinner 2008</u> (Oct. 2008) ▪ Project Coordinator – <u>Advanced Drill and Ceremonial Course 2008</u>, <i>C Sqn, Trg Gp</i> (July 2008) ▪ Committee Member – <u>OCTC & RITC Passing Out Parade and Graduation Dinner</u>, <i>AT Wg, Trg Gp</i> (2006 – 2011) ▪ Training Officer – <u>OCTC & RITC</u>, <i>AT Wg, Trg Gp</i> (June 2006 – April 2008) 	
(II) Awards	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cmdt’s Letter of Commendation – Accreditation Exercise for Vocational Qualifications (Nov. 2009) 	

- CO's Letter of Appreciation – COs Night (*Nov. 2009*)
 - DCO IA's Letter of Appreciation – COs Night (*May 2009*)
 - OC A&S Gp's Letter of Appreciation – Anti-Drug Movie Première at Shatin Racecourse (*Aug. 2010*)
- (*Winnie, Self-Introduction for the Flight Lieutenant Interview Board, 11 June 2011*)

To justify my ethnographic stance, in my forthcoming chapters, I will clarify my position by including information about my own relationship with the informants and my various roles, such as a leader in the VQ programme and a researcher in a new pedagogical context — UG. I am one of the founder members of an organisational network linking practitioners in vocational qualifications with local uniformed groups. As the Officer Commanding Vocational Qualifications Unit, it is my duty to “oversee the planning and overall development of the internationally recognized adult awards in the Corps”. My duty is to monitor the Academic Advisory Scheme and coordinate all sorts of administrative and liaison work with awarding bodies and the CVQO. The scheme, launched in 2009, aims to recruit all adult members regardless of rank or post to join as academic advisors for either primary or secondary duty. This recruitment exercise welcomes applications from any adult members who possesses a sound academic background and have a strong commitment to academic excellence. In this scheme, Academic Advisers are responsible for providing initial feedback to candidates before an official assignment submission to the CVQO through the VQU.

I already have a good relationship with all VQ candidates because they joined the VQ programme organized by the unit where I serve as the officer in-charge. However, to balance my officer-in-charge's and researcher's roles, my priority is to take active steps to minimize the effect of power relations. In spite of putting emphasis on the voluntary nature of fellow volunteers' participation in my research project, it seems unavoidable that some participants may feel they are obliged to participate. Indeed, the hierarchical system within the UG may mislead those members who are more junior than me since they may misunderstand and think that participating in interviews or other data collection processes is a mandatory component and an assessment criterion in the VQ programme or part of their obligation as a VQ candidate. Therefore, it is my practice to ensure I arrange both an unofficial telephone invitation and an official written one. Upon receiving my

participants' verbal consent, I explained my project objectives, the timeframe and the expected involvement to each potential participant separately and sent them each an email with a written consent form to sign (Appendix 5). Most importantly, they were well briefed that their participation was only to be on a genuinely voluntary basis and were reassured that they could withdraw at any stage of the research if they wished, without any penalty. Using both telephone and email communication with the participants made me as confident as I could be that they felt comfortable with my dual roles and understood that they had no duty or obligation to join my research. In short, all these endeavours are in line with my own professional ethics, but I can never be completely sure whether power relations have some influence.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

In this thesis, this current chapter (Chapter 1) has given a brief description of the research context by describing the background of the Hong Kong FE system as the volunteering context; in particular, it has addressed the development of the vocational qualifications programme. Increasing numbers of UGs offering VQ programmes have emerged in the field of FE in the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, but little work has been undertaken to examine literacy practices in such domains. I have also explained the general rationale for the choice of the research focus and research scope.

Chapter 2 turns to a review of the literature, the theoretical framework of new literacy studies and a linguistic ethnographic approach in a voluntary context. Adopting an ethnographic approach, the literature review of vocational qualifications and volunteering aims to set the background for the literacy practices of four adult volunteers from a newly launched internationally recognized VQ programme in the domain of voluntary uniformed groups (UG), which is “a textually mediated social world” (Barton, 2001a, p.100).

In Chapter 3, I describe my sampling procedure for participants and the research methodology in terms of data collection and data analysis procedures. The chapter also describes the research design and different stages of data collection.

The core parts of the thesis (Chapters 4 and 5) then discuss the findings from the research project that I conducted on the literacy practices of adult volunteers in terms

of print (vocational qualifications) and digital (Facebook) contexts. Informed by theories of vernacular literacies and supplemented by theories on linguistic ethnography and CoP, the NLS has shaped my perception of ‘VQ assignment writing’ and ‘Facebook use’ as new social literacy practices. Chapter 4 presents an exploration of VQ assignment writing as a social practice, while Chapter 5 works on Facebook use as a techno-social practice.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the major findings obtained for the two aforementioned major types of writing platform and concludes with implications and the challenges ahead for the study of literacy and FE research in Hong Kong as a volunteering hub.

Chapter 2: Summary of the Literature and Conceptual framing

2.1 Introduction

Applied Linguistics, with its focus on ‘language teaching and learning’ (Crystal, 2003, p.10), encompasses two key areas of research, i.e. ‘language analysis’ and ‘contexts and experiences of language use’ (Heigham & Croker, 2009) which would include ‘the shift of literacy practices to digital contexts’ (Barton & Potts, 2013). The second area can partially explain the scenario of volunteering literacies. My research does not only focus on volunteers’ computer-mediated communication (CMC) on a digitally mediated platform, it also investigates volunteers’ literacy as participation in social practices when developing VQ written assignments. My research participants produce “social practices that are evolving beyond the school within digitally saturated milieux” (Lankshear & Knobel 2003, p.175).

In fact, there is copious literature on the relationship between literacy and economic benefits, particularly earnings (e.g. Ferrer, Green & Riddell, 2006; Fuller, Edwards & Gorman, 1987; McIntosh & Vignoles, 2001), but the aspect of non-economic benefits is under-researched. This thesis therefore tries to fill this gap in the literature and provide a more complete picture by using a linguistic ethnographic approach to evaluate the non-economic benefits associated with literacies through volunteering, an FE programme and a social networking site as well as their impacts on individuals as well as a community replete with literacy.

This chapter begins with Barton’s (1994) fundamental proposition about literacy as a social practice. In echoing the work of Barton and Hamilton (2012), what I aim to do in this chapter is to identify and establish my own theoretical framework for the literacies used in a Hong Kong voluntary uniformed group with its blend of dominant, academic and vernacular literacies. At the same time, building on Wenger’s (1998) articulation of CoP and extending Barton and Tusting’s (2005) understanding of going “beyond communities of practice”, by going from adolescents’ online literacy practices to those of adult volunteers, my research draws attention to how the literacy practices of adult volunteers are shaped by new technologies, with a particular focus on an SNS, namely, Facebook.

My argument will proceed as follows. In the first part of the chapter, I outline and consider associated concepts of literacies, ranging from print-based literacies to digital literacies and from mainstream literacies to everyday literacies, and explain key notions including literacy events and literacy practices. The second section briefly reviews representative research related to vocational qualifications in different countries. The third part shifts the focus to scholars' work in the volunteering discipline. The next part mentions the two main pieces of scholarly literature on communities of practice (CoP) after the groundbreaking work of Lave and Wenger (1991). The synthesis in the fifth section evaluates the differences between ethnography and ethnographic approach, as well as identifying the essential meanings of linguistic ethnography, virtual ethnography and auto-ethnography by making reference to my role and perspectives in the volunteering research context. After defining all the key notions and terminology and reviewing the literature, the last but crucial step is to explain how the theoretical framework of my research is constructed.

2.2 New Literacy Studies

Literacy Studies has long been a recognized research topic and has two major schools of thought: autonomous and ideological models. The traditional definition of 'literacy' concerns "people's ability to read and write particular forms of texts" (Ivanič, Edwards, Barton, Martin-Jones, Fowler, Hughes, Mannion, Miller, Satchwell & Smith, 2009, p.19). But literacy nowadays is no longer limited to reading and writing. Contrary to the above autonomous model that perceives literacy as a collection of transferable skills, Street's (1984, 1995) ideological model approaches literacy as a set of situated practices, which is more appropriate to my research project. Within the tradition of New Literacy Studies (NLS), a term coined by Gee (1991), Street (1984) as a pioneer rejects the argument that literacy is a set of discrete skills and emphasizes the importance of context. Lankshear (1999) also disagrees with this traditional view of skills-based literacy and prefers the idea of a sociocultural model, so he proposes a sociocultural approach to literacy. However, the classical view of sociocultural literacy studies focused predominantly on educational contexts. NLS work has played a significant role in influencing the "shift of interest beyond texts-as-products to texts-in-culture-as-a-process" (Rampton, 2007, 587), i.e. approaching the reading and writing practices of research participants who document

their own voluntary activities and interact with each other, in this case, both online and offline within a volunteering culture. This point will be exemplified in the following chapters.

In developing the rationale and analytical tools for this research, I have drawn on several strands of research. At a general level, I approach the phenomenon of volunteers' writing and reading from the perspective of 'literacy as social practice' (Street, 1984; Gee, 1996; Barton, 2007). The study is informed by a broader definition of literacy as a social practice as found within NLS (e.g. Street 1984, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanič, 2000). This theory of NLS turns a new page on the definition of "literacies" (Barton & Hamilton, 2012; Gee, 2004; Street, 2004; Barton, 2007): literacy is neither simply one type of neutral skill nor a progression of technical skills. Rather, literacy is always embedded in a particular cultural context or domain (Fishman, 1972). Language and literacy are not abstract systems but social and cultural practices which are shaped by the people involved and by their relationship to each other.

In spite of the fact that scholars from the field of NLS (Gee, 1996; Street, 1984, 1995) have widely examined the uses and meanings of written texts in other related domains, such as everyday life and home (Barton & Hamilton, 2012), the workplace (Hull, 1997; Papen, 2007), higher education (Lea & Street, 1998; Ivanič, 1998), youth organisations (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993) or a mixture of both workplace and college domains (Nikolaidou, 2009), it seems advisable to make an effort to identify the literacy practices of adult volunteers. Therefore, it can be briefly summarized that none of the existing literature fully addresses my research enquiry. Hence my research study can contribute to the knowledge on NLS in the domain of voluntary youth organisations as a new educational setting by expanding the original five general domains, namely, household, school, religion, entertainment and work, stated by Wagner, Messick & Spratt (1986).

Within the school of NLS, there is a common belief that literacy needs to have a broader definition. Therefore, it has been suggested that an alternative term, 'literacies', could be adopted to refer to the 'many different ways of reading and writing for different purposes and within different cultural values and practices'

(Ivanič et al., 2009, p.20). In my research, language, in the format of VQ written assignments and Facebook posts as two units of analysis, is investigated as a cultural practice, instead of being extracted and studied as an autonomous system.

New Literacies can be quite diverse since it encompasses letters, symbols, colours, sounds and graphics. Such multiple literacies (New London Group, 1996) move away from dominant written texts to digital literacies (Gee, 2010), ranging from visual and audio to gestural and spatial, whereby a greater social network can be formed (Street, 2004). Thus, research on reading and writing can change from a focus on individuals to interaction and social and cultural practices more broadly (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984 & 1995). In the uniformed group I have investigated, a majority of the volunteers have their own SNS accounts so their literacy practices and interactions with each other are frequent. The following subsections will define the main analytic units in NLS studies including my research, namely, literacy events and literacy practices as well as previous studies on dominant, academic, vernacular and digital literacies. All these types of literacies co-exist in the volunteers' lives.

2.2.1 Literacy Events

Literacy events, as first defined by Heath (1983), are events that involve the interaction of written and spoken language. Such events refer to activities on “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants’ interactions and their interpretative processes” (p.50). Developed from Heath’s concept of “literacy events”, Barton (1991) argues that “literacy events are the particular activities in which literacy has a role” and “may be regular repeated activities” (p. 5). My findings include both written and spoken events involving texts originated by adult volunteers. All these events are repeated regularly, every month or year, which ultimately constructs the literacy practices of these volunteers.

2.2.2 Literacy Practices

Literacy practices are common patterns found in reading and writing texts for social activities, cultural values and ideological purposes. Street (1995) further reinforces the importance of the social nature of literacy and the multiple character of literacy practices by coining the term “Social Literacies” (p. 2). Literacy practices are “regularly occurring ways of doing things with texts” (Ivanič et al., 2009, p.21). They

are also “general cultural ways of using reading and writing” (Barton, 2012, p.1) “which people draw upon in particular situations” (Barton, 2001a, p.96). Such situations in my current research include, but are not limited to, training activities, competitions, parades, mess dinners or other types of projects within the organisation.

Literacy practices can be in various formats, namely, schooled literacies, i.e. reading and writing in schools (Street, 1995), local literacies, i.e. reading and writing in the community (Barton & Hamilton, 2012), prison literacies, i.e. maintaining a personal identity in prison (Wilson, 2001), bureaucratic literacies that may be reflected in tax forms (Fawns & Ivanic, 2001) workplace literacies that could be reading and writing in the taxi industry (Breier & Sait, 1996), advertising literacies that are shown on signs in townships (Papen, 2002), visual literacies, i.e. a combination of a physical or performative act and a digital information text (Bowen, 2010) and economic literacies, i.e. reading and writing in markets (Maddox, 2001).

In addition, literacy practices on digital platforms can be quite different from traditional literacy practices by being more “participatory” and less “published”, more “collaborative” and less “individuated”, and more “distributed” and less “author-centric” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 9). This can lead to interesting tensions: interactions in online spaces can allow my research participants to disregard marks of their status in the physical world, whereas popular SNS platforms create an egalitarian framework. In the ‘real’ world, volunteers have to follow customs and courtesies, the rank system and other sorts of military-like regulations found in a uniformed group. For example, it is very unlikely to see a cadet express his or her disagreement in front of a senior officer because one of our training guidelines is “obey first”. But in the electronic world, volunteers, regardless of rank or position, can become more actively involved in reading and writing activities through sharing their own views, feelings, comments and status and expressing preferences on Facebook.

2.2.3 Dominant and Academic Literacies

Dominant and academic literacies are usually associated with the emergence of mainstream literacies, which are the first of two types of literacies found in my research context. Dominant literacies are highly valued and ‘standardised’ literacies

with ‘controlled’ knowledge and ‘bounded communities of practice’ (Hamilton, 2000), they are found in authoritative institutional settings, such as government, schools and workplaces. Within all these formal social institutions, norms and regulations exist to govern the behaviour of citizens, students and staff members, respectively. Interestingly, voluntary organisations like the HKACC also have these distinctive features. Volunteers have to observe two types of regulations and guidelines: the first type is more explicit and relevant files for Squadron, Wing and Headquarters levels as well as administration and external communication are downloadable from the HKACC website. Another type is more implicit and comes through the general principles of ‘Customs and Courtesies’ and ‘Chain of Command’, with detailed cases to be explored in Chapter 5. On the other hand, academic literacies are the dominant literacies found in schools or academic institutions. Drawing on NLS, the academic literacies I refer to in this research originate from the essence of student writing and learning as a social practice in the higher education context (Lea & Street, 1998).

2.2.4 Vernacular Literacies

An important claim pursued in this thesis is that volunteering literacies showcase an unusual combination of academic and vernacular literacies. As the second type of literacies emerged in the volunteering context, vernacular literacies are a type of writing that is more ‘voluntary’, ‘self-generated’ and ‘everyday’ (Barton & Hamilton, 2012). My research narrows the focus of ‘everyday’ life to volunteering life, so ‘everyday’ literacy practices in my research refer to informal practices in which volunteers engage in VQ programmes and Facebook interactions as part of their volunteering life. Their volunteering practices can be analysed in six different categories by adopting the terminology of Barton and Hamilton (2012): (1) organising life; (2) documenting life; (3) personal communication; (4) private leisure; (5) sense making and (6) social participation.

These six areas of everyday life in which vernacular literacies play an important role, from Barton and Hamilton’s (2012)’s Lancaster study and its first masterpiece in 1998, are presented with examples here: (1) organising life – Lancastrians got used to preparing lists, writing diaries to keep their records and have their own financial management mechanisms in their daily life; (2) documenting life – in addition to

keeping texts, people in Lancaster kept images, some documents they kept could be long-lasting across generations and some of the elderly also generated life histories; (3) personal communication – participants frequently kept in touch with each other by using notes, cards and letters; (4) private leisure – participants read and wrote for leisure, though personal leisure can sometimes occur in public areas, such as being a supporter of a celebrity; (5) sense making – neighbours who joined the study were like experts, they read booklets about particular areas like legal entitlement, health and religion; and (6) social participation – many of the interviewees were active in political organizations, had a sense of group membership and made demands of government. My forthcoming chapters will echo this Lancaster study and further explain how these six main areas of vernacular literacies have become more diversified in the volunteering context. My data will show volunteers' literacy practices are in response to the external demands of the further education programme while their practices on the SNS are entirely voluntary.

2.2.5 Digital Literacies and Computer-Mediated Communication

There has been a trend for studies to examine the digital literacies of online reading, writing and communication in the literacies field in the last few decades (e.g. Baron, 1984; Gee, 2001; Leu, O'Byrne, Zawilinski, McVerry & Everett-Cacopardo, 2009; Barton & Lee, 2013). While much has been said about the prevalence of literacies in the lives of the 'digital generation' (Buckingham, 2006), 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008), the 'Net generation'¹⁰ (Tapscott, 2005) and the 'digital generation' (Davies, 2006), e.g. seventh-grade students aged approximately 12–13 (Bryant, Jackson & Smallwood, 2006), low-income high school students aged 17–19 (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009), secondary school and university students aged 13–25 (Lee, 2002), undergraduate and postgraduate students and graduates aged 20–28 (Lee, 2007; Barton & Lee, 2012) as well as the elderly, aged 60 and over (Gatto & Tak, 2008), little is understood about the kinds of writing and reading of adult volunteers aged 21 or over¹¹ who start immersing themselves in the digital life, or how the social practices around these digital as well as print-based texts constitute professional practices within a uniformed group as a nonformal education

¹⁰ Generally this generation of people was born in or after 1980 and is immersed in digital technologies.

¹¹ Minimum age (as one of the admission requirements): Applicants have to be 21 years old by the time they are officially enrolled as adult members of uniformed groups in Hong Kong.

context. The space constraints of this chapter prevent me from detailing all aspects of my analyses and conducting a critique of all digital literacies, so the key aspects are inevitably selective.

To emphasize the dynamics of digital literacies in my research, the forthcoming chapters will highlight a new perspective in the current new social networking era. People nowadays, in particular adult volunteers, go through a process of creating, exchanging and perceiving information using networked telecommunications (December, 1996) more frequently. Because of the growth in CMC, adult volunteers incorporate communication technologies into their volunteering life and their interactions extend from face-to-face settings to the virtual world. As Romiszowski and Mason (1996) note, such communications mediated by digital technologies can be both synchronous and asynchronous, and thus in ‘real-time’ and ‘delayed time’, respectively.

2.2.5.1 Social Media

Social media, as ‘Internet-based sites and services that promote social interaction between participants’ (Page, Barton, Unger & Zappavigna, 2014, p.5), are one of the vital research foci in my research. The extent of language-related research on social media platforms has been increasingly rapidly in recent decades. The findings of some key studies have contributed to the development of my own theoretical and methodological ideas, as I shall show in this section.

First of all, weblogs, commonly called blogs, share one of the common functions of a Facebook page — a place for informal discussion. Some blog studies are relatively influential on my empirical work. For example, teenage girls maintain strong social ties and transfer this kind of relationship to their online blogs with an informal style. Blogs ultimately connect both online and offline worlds (Bortree, 2005). Though the ethnographic studies of Davies and Merchant (2007) and Huffaker (2004) focused on academic blogs, the way the former conducted autoethnographic research which serves as a good reference in terms of research methodology. The latter also enhanced my understanding of the characteristics of blogs.

Next, in view of the similar message posting and commenting functions of Facebook, as the most popular social networking site in Hong Kong, Ferdig and Roehler's (2003) observations of online discussion forums also serve as a good reference. Their work has let me critically reflect on the pros and cons of asynchronous and synchronous conversations in an online commenting environment.

In addition, another online social networking service, Twitter, in spite of its relatively low usage in Hong Kong, still offers certain insights for my research. For example, the original hashtag function (the # symbol) has now extended to the Facebook community and is widely used by Facebook users to indicate key topics. Another insight comes from the reflexive accounts of two Twitter users (Gillen & Merchant, 2013). My own autoethnographic data are presented to justify my claims throughout this thesis, including the findings chapters.

Finally, a couple of local and international studies on Facebook further influenced my theoretical and methodological framework. Doing Facework on Facebook as a new literacy practice investigated by Davies (2012) and the comprehensive and influential study on Flickr (another image and video hosting website for social use) done by Barton and Lee (2013) further shaped my conceptual framework and laid the foundations for me to depict some of the substantial elements in my Facebook chapter. I also critically review some of Barton and Lee's (2013) key notions, such as techno-biography, and redefine its meaning.

There are essentially two reasons for choosing Facebook as my research site, despite its relatively short history. The first reason, needless to say, is its unprecedented popularity across a number of countries, including Hong Kong. Moreover, Facebook is a contemporary site that demonstrates a substantial amount of user-created content, which is also a distinctive feature of other social media platforms, such as blogs, discussion forums, content-sharing sites (including text-sharing, photo-sharing and video-sharing), and, most importantly, social networking sites.

The rise of Web 1.0 in the 1990s and Web 2.0 in the 2000s has been changing literacy practices around the world. Compared with Web 1.0 as a 'read-only medium'

(Thompson, 2007) full of content only for consumers, Web 2.0 is noted for having more content creators because of its reading and writing nature. In spite of the fact that teenagers and young adults label e-mail as an old-fashioned communication tool (Carnevale, 2006), e-mail communication still preserves its core official role in business and voluntary organisations. Dehinbo's (2010) study also takes a step in the direction of justifying other Web 2.0 technologies, such as Weblogs and SNSs, which make more contributions to knowledge management than the first generation. I argue that the two types of communication technology are of equal importance in terms of enhancing mutual communication and understanding between fellow adult volunteers, regardless of their ages. Meetings and discussions of adult volunteers, for example, are increasingly being replaced by digital literacy practices in e-mail messages, Facebook chats and/or Facebook private messages. Talk hinging on both e-mail texts and Facebook posts is a common literacy event among the volunteers.

2.2.5.2 Research on Facebook

From a digital framework within NLS, texts can be multimodal: "meaning and knowledge are built up through various modalities (images, texts, symbols, interactions, abstract design, sound etc.) not just words" (Gee, 2003, p.210.). Ivanič et al. (2009) also capture the essence of modes and technologies by describing how "Modes refers to the range of semiotic resources which can be employed to make meaning: spoken language, written language, visual, material and/or animation. Technologies includes not only electronic media but also the material media and resources of 'old technologies' such as books, newspapers, magazines, pens, chalk and different types of paper" (p. 61). As can be seen in later chapters, these candidates' Facebook practices are multimodal with frequent sharing of links to local and international news websites or Youtube videos, for example.

It has also been generally agreed that both students and educators from HE recognize the importance of Facebook in countries like the United States (Barczyk & Duncan, 2013; Hurt et al., 2012; Roblyer et al., 2010), the United Kingdom (Davies, 2012) and Hong Kong (Wong, Kwan & Leung, 2011). On the other hand, in spite of the dominance of investigations on student populations (Ryan & Xenos, 2011), in fact, Facebook usage has no language restrictions but just a restriction on age, which is users have to be at least 13 years old. Facebook users can be monolingual teenagers

(Davies, 2012), adults (Harper et al., 2012) or Cantonese-English bilinguals (Lee, 2011). However, there have been no previous attempts to relate Facebook interactions in the FE and adult volunteering settings. This research attempts to do just that, with a particular emphasis on affordances relating to Facebook interactions.

2.3 Research on Vocational Qualifications

There is a growing body of research indicating that the role and uses of Vocational qualifications (VQs) have become more influential in the world. The more they have work-related or work-based components, the more useful VQs are. In terms of quality assurance, it is best is to keep updating and adapting curricula to meet local needs (Eraut, 2001). Compared to the traditional purposes of VQs, which were more concerned with the recruitment and selection processes of employers or providing an entry ticket to professional industry (Fuller, Turbin & Young, 2004), the VQs in my research can effectively prove adult volunteers' competence.

VQs and academic qualifications traditionally perform different roles in the education and training sector. VQs are labelled as being for school leavers only, whereas academic qualifications are designed for mainstream students. However, Cheung & Lewis's (1998) survey showed that employers felt there was a lack of well-motivated and well-rounded teenagers in the secondary curriculum. The voices of employers drew our attention to the need to promote "consumer education, civic education, personal and social education, as well as generic employment skills" (Cheung & Lewis, 1998, p.109) in the secondary curriculum. Interestingly, my research findings show that all these skills can be obtained through volunteering work in the HKACC. When comparing both types of qualifications, on the one hand, education policymakers faced a dilemma over whether to change the current "intellectual pursuit of knowledge" academic curriculum to be more work-related or work-oriented to meet the demands of employers in the workplace.

On the other hand, VQs may not be at parity with academic qualifications in both the labour market and VET settings. As reported in Campanelli and Channell (1996), their research participants generally expressed that holding VQs but not proper academic results in the sense of the General Certificate of Secondary

Education (GCSE) in the UK made them feel they were less favourably treated. In fact, compared with the ‘gold standard’ (Robinson, 1997) and mainstream academic qualifications including first degrees, A-levels, O-levels and GCSEs in the UK, VQs used to receive less attention due to the lower earnings of their holders according to Labour Force Survey findings (ibid.). The increasing demand for skilled workers in British society led to the rise of five-level work-based National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the early 1990s. Level 1 refers to competence at the frontline worker level, whereas Level 5 is at senior management level. Grugulis (2003) argues that NVQs failed to provide a national framework to accredit current qualifications: ‘qualifications are only a proxy for skill’ (p.461). In contrast, VQs show some positive implications for my research context. Adult volunteers, for example, cultivate a sense of achievement by acquiring, through community service, recognized qualifications that are equivalent to academic qualifications.

2.4 Research on Volunteering

Traditionally, voluntary jobs are given lower priority and are marginalized, being treated as less important and less professional compared with mainstream jobs, i.e. paid jobs (Schugurensky, Duguid & Mündel, 2010). Volunteers are generally described as ‘amateurs’. However, as showcased in vocational qualification programmes, the participants in my research demonstrated their professionalism and expertise in the disciplines of leadership and management. The dedication of such amateurs in an aviation-oriented voluntary organisation, the HKACC, proves that they treat voluntary work as ‘serious leisure’ (Stebbins, 1992, 2001). This interpretation from Barton and Hamilton (2012) of ‘voluntary organisations’ is useful to describe my target research field: ‘organisations which people join voluntarily outside of their work life, united by some common interest or cause. These local organisations and community groups in some ways act as a bridge between informal networks and official organisations’ (p.210). Thus the HKACC is a local organisation that connects a wide spectrum of volunteers, who vary in their motivations, backgrounds and professions, as do government authorities such as the Home Affairs Bureau, schools and tertiary institutions.

Different from previous studies on volunteering to gain work experience (e.g. Geber, 1991; Holmes, 2006), my research is oriented more towards volunteering for various types of motivations or purposes, including passion, leisure and social networking. Based on the most basic distinction between “intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.55), I take a further step forward to examine different types of motivations underlying the volunteering scene. Besides, the original intention behind volunteering is not for career purposes. However, my findings reveal that volunteering is influential in enhancing one’s knowledge through progressive training and VQ programmes. To put it another way, the volunteers who joined my research project were able to acquire working knowledge and cultivate work experience through various types of social services, which will be further explored in Chapters 4 and 5; ultimately it means that the volunteers in my study also gained work experience through volunteering.

The close connection between volunteering and learning has long been recognized by researchers (e.g. Elstad, 1996; Ilsley, 1990; Kemp, 2002; Kerka, 1998), though volunteers themselves may not aware of the learning component if they simply intend to complete tasks or do things (Ilsley, 1990; Schugurensky, Duguid & Mündel, 2010). In particular, volunteering is a process of learning, whereas voluntary organisations can be learning organisations (Kerka, 1998). The types and objectives of learning vary according to context. Formal learning appears in the form of curriculum documents, mentorships, apprenticeships and lessons in academic institutions, whereas informal learning implicitly plays a major role in volunteering activities. Schugurensky, Duguid and Mündel (2010) identify the need for more empirical research relevant to the connection between volunteering and informal learning and they recommend the transfer of skills, abilities and knowledge from voluntary jobs to paid ones. This is an issue that my research will address. I will argue that learning and doing are two overlapping processes in volunteering in my research context. Another issue that I would like to highlight is my stance on the relationship between a volunteer’s age and learning motivation. In contrast to Kerka’s (1998) view, there is concern over age amongst the learning motivations of my research participants. In

fact, both young and old volunteers demonstrated their altruism when I examined the reasons behind their volunteering practices.

In addition, volunteering through service learning outside the curriculum, such as in the museum sector (e.g. Holmes, 2006) or event tourism (e.g. Elstad, 1996), or as part of the curriculum, such as in the setting of interprofessional student-run clinics (e.g. Sheu, Zheng, Coelho, Lin, O'Sullivan, O'Brien, Yu & Lai, 2011), can be a process of striving for excellence and professionalism. In Sheu et al.'s (2001) project, volunteers generally reported that they managed to understand their own work duties and roles in their future careers through practical experience in the community. Volunteers also cherished teamwork and collaboration with their fellow health professional students. In contrast, in Holmes' (2006) empirical research, job-seeking respondents who volunteered in museums in the UK generally agreed that the components of learning experience did not exist. Rather, these volunteers' social networks were worked on in better preparation for a possible career path.

There are though some slight distinctions in the terminology used, including 'volunteering', 'work placements', 'internships', 'apprenticeships' and 'experiential learning'. In the UK, volunteering refers to unpaid work, whereas 'experiential learning' is 'vocational training and learning through actual experience in the work place' (Holmes, 2006, p.242). Another similar term adopted in the UK is work placements. In the US, the terms 'internships' and 'apprenticeships' are interchangeable and are used to refer to either paid or unpaid jobs involving time constraints and guidance and supervision from a teacher or mentor. But in Germany, 'apprenticeships' involve qualifications in technical and academic knowledge as well as a practical element, with a key focus on skills development (Grugulis, 2003). In Hong Kong, all this terminology, except apprenticeships, is widely used in HE and FE settings. I have decided to adopt the term 'volunteering' to reflect my philosophy in the voluntary organisation: learning by doing without financial reward.

2.5 Communities of Practice

My theoretical framework underwent a change from my initial intention to use

Gee's affinity space theory (Gee, 2004). I first considered whether to draw on the concept of affinity spaces or the concept of communities of practice for various reasons: first, informal learning takes place. Secondly, knowledge sharing, engagement, participation and practices are involved when a group of people comprising both newbies and experts share a common interest. An affinity space is a term coined by Gee (2004), when he found that many online spaces could not be explained by CoP, and this appears to be appropriate to explain an 'affinity' or "common endeavor" (Gee, 2004, p.85) among our adult volunteers. However, after looking into the literature further, I quickly realized that the notion of affinity spaces did not apply to the HKACC because an affinity space normally refers to a virtual world, such as an online video game portal, in which users do not know each other's identity in the physical world. But the HKACC is full of adult volunteers who have strong and cohesive bonds and relationships in both the and virtual worlds. Their practices in both worlds shape and complement each other. This is why I decided that CoP instead of affinity space might be applicable to my research site. As an essential part of my theoretical framework, it is worth exploring CoP in some detail.

Regarding the communities of practice model, Lave and Wenger (1991) propose three central concepts: "(1) situated learning (the umbrella concept of learning); legitimate peripheral participation (the form that situated learning takes); and (3) communities of practice (the locus or site of learning)" (Hughes, 2007, p.31). The units of analysis of my research project focus on individual participants' literacy practices and relevant communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where research participants and other volunteers "interact with each other, getting and giving meaning to signs within it" (Barton & Tusting, 2005, p.11) and work collaboratively when they meet face to face. Though Lave and Wenger (1991) did not address the issue of power relations, their idea for a new paradigm of learning is still influential as it helps to illustrate how communities of practice provide an extra model of learning over and above the formal education context (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2007).

Moreover, drawing upon Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical concept of situated learning and Wenger's (1998) later follow-up explanation, I argue that the HKACC is not just a social network but a real community with situated learning and

also an online CoP — a ‘Facebook’ community. In my research, the uniformed group I am investigating is a CoP where adult volunteers regardless of demographic and geographic characteristics come together, form social relations and negotiate and sustain all activities. HKACC members extend their interactions to the online world. My thesis paints a picture of a particular online platform on which there are frequent interactions between volunteers. Though Facebook, users can also communicate with others beyond the community of volunteers. I can analyse this learning community in three dimensions:

‘Mutual engagement’ refers to involvement in a multiplicity of actions, the meanings of which are negotiated among members. ‘Joint enterprise’ is characterized by involvement in a common endeavour, comprising collective processes of negotiated practical action, common accountability and mutual engagement. ‘Shared repertoire’ comprises ‘routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts.’
(Wenger, 1998, p.83)

Three dimensions, namely, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, categorize my research setting as a community involving the hybrid nature of formal and nonformal education, as well as online and offline literacy practices. I will exemplify each of these criteria. Mutual engagement involves frequent interactions among adult volunteers. Joint enterprise refers to the negotiation processes between them, whereas a shared repertoire includes both linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

2.6 Ethnography

There is a need to review the essence of qualitative research before examining ethnography work. Even though there is no consensus on how to conduct qualitative research, a fairly generally held view of qualitative research, is that, first of all, it is person-, context- and time-bound to the reality. To define the nature of the constructivist paradigm applied to my research, I note the idea of Merriam (2009): ‘[q]ualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they

have in the world' (p. 13). That is to say, meaning is socially constructed by researchers with a focus on participants interacting with phenomena in natural settings.

In other words, 'participants', 'phenomenon' and 'natural settings', terms highlighted by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), and similarly by Heigham and Croker (2009), are the core values of ethnography. In fact, these three core values are also commonly found in five other major qualitative research approaches, namely, narrative enquiry, case study, action research, phenomenology and grounded theory, according to the classification of Heigham and Croker (2009), and other prevailing traditions in qualitative enquiry such as inductive thematic analysis and discourse-conversation analysis, as mentioned by Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2012).

Moreover, qualitative research is seen as a set of interpretive and material practices conducted by an observer in a natural context (Denzin, 1989a; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) point out, "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.2). As a qualitative researcher seeking to make sense of my research participants' world, I aim for an in-depth understanding of the research issues, then I wish to interpret the perspectives of my participants, using the participants' own terms, and take social, cultural, economic and physical factors of the context into consideration to illustrate literacy phenomena in an authentic biliterate and trilingual environment.

2.6.1 Ethnography vs Ethnographic Approach

Turning now to the ethnography literature, Dörnyei (2007) argues that ethnography shares core elements with the school of qualitative enquiry but should not be labelled as a synonym of qualitative research. The characteristics of a case study, for example, can be different from those of ethnography (Duff, 2008). In most cases though, interviews and observations are two common types of data collection methods in both case study and ethnography research, the most apparent distinction between these two qualitative research approaches being the unit of analysis: a case study focuses on an individual informant or class activity; in contrast, ethnography

analyses a group that share the same culture. Therefore, my study takes a new look to construct an in-depth description of a “bounded system” or a comprehensive exploration of a single institution (Hood, 2009, p. 68) in a domain where volunteering and HE combine, so it can be regarded as a case study (ibid.).

On the whole, my research should not be seen as comprehensive ethnography because I take “a more focused approach to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group” (Green & Bloome, 1997, p.183) in a “broad, in-depth, and long-term” way (ibid.). I see my research as exploratory rather than comprehensive ethnography. However, it is worth specifying the meaning of an “exploratory” ethnographic study first. A useful study to relate my research to the definition of an exploratory ethnographic study is that of Klassen, who claimed to be carrying out an exploratory ethnographic study in Klassen (1991). My argument is that whether Klassen’s (1991) study can be classified as an ethnographic study is questionable. Ethnography is supposed to include a variety of data collection methods namely, participant and non-participant observation, interviews, field notes, research journals (Dörnyei, 2007) and artefacts. Klassen (1991), using qualitative data collected in Klassen (1987), claimed that his work was an “exploratory” ethnographic study (p.41), but it was actually an interview study about how nine Latin American adults joining the Toronto community as newcomers¹² managed their uses of literacy in various domains (Wagner, Messick & Spratt, 1986) in their everyday lives. Such domains include home, work, schools, streets, stores, churches and bureaucracies. Those four men and five women used literacy in Spanish, their first language, and English, their second language in the classroom. The uses of literacy identified by the informants were classified into categories of managing everyday tasks, communicating, being informed and learning. With the ultimate goal of contributing to pedagogy, Klassen attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of all four aspects in order to offer insights into the design of a literacy programme for this specific newcomers group.

¹² According to Klassen (1991), there is a distinction between the terms ‘newcomers’ and ‘immigrants’ (see Klassen & Burnaby, 1993) since Klassen thinks the former term can cover those immigrants who are refugees or unofficial immigrants.

In fact, an exploratory study normally describes complex circumstances that have not yet been explored in the literature (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I only focus on volunteers' engagement with all sorts of writing and reading in the UG, which is a particular aspect of cultural practices of this social group. In my project, there is no focus on other aspects of the everyday life of the participants, such as their workplace. Rather, the sites where the interviews, participant-observation, textual analysis and other data collection were conducted were only within the UG. Therefore, I would argue that the nature of my project involves "adopting an ethnographic perspective" and "[U]sing ethnographic tools" (ibid.). Like Klassen (1991), my research recognizes the role of sociocultural factors in the literacy practices of adult learners. I also concur with Klassen's idea about the importance of social networks, since reciprocal exchanges with fellow volunteers are useful for my informants to deal with a wide range of print items, including VQ assignments within the UG as well as virtual texts on Facebook. In terms of the research methodology, in contrast to Klassen's reliance on interviews, I adopt an ethnographic approach to triangulate the data sources by employing interviews, observations and texts to paint a holistic picture of the literacy practices of volunteer writers both online and offline.

2.6.2 Linguistic Ethnography

Malinowski's "ethno-linguistic theory" (Malinowski, 1920) is credited as being the main precursor to the classical ethnographic approach to language, leading to intriguing possibilities for exploring linguistic and social questions. The development of his classic study as an example of ethnography at the beginning of the twentieth century to look at the 'ethnography of communication' (Gumperz & Hymes, 1964) involved a crucial shift from studying others to studying researchers' own societies. In addition, the focus of language learning changed from grammatical competence to communicative competence. With the impact of five major formative traditions, including NLS, as Rampton (2007) notes, 'linguistic ethnography', which has aroused scholars' interest and emerged in the linguistic ethnography forum, is a more appropriate term to describe the combination of linguistics and ethnography.

My research is an example of "the conjuncture of ethnography and linguistics" (Rampton et al., 2004), as defined in the previous chapter. To date, the material texts

which support participants' interactions in the social world can be in both paper and digital formats (Tusting, 2013). Data collection and analysis in my research will include both thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012) and ethnographic approaches. Though linguistic analysis is not the major focus of my thesis, my data illustration part will also concern this aspect.

The decision to use linguistic ethnography as a research approach is governed by both my epistemology and my research objectives. The key aims of my research are to study the literacy practices that adult volunteers are involved in and the ways in which those practices impact on the leaders' identity construction and digital literacy practices. My interest in the research moves away from a focus on micro literacy events, such as reading a learner's guidebook, to a broader study of both the texts and social practices associated with their use on a macro level. In my thesis, apart from a linguistic ethnographic approach, other qualitative research approaches are used too.

2.6.3 Virtual Ethnography

Moving in the direction of observing informants' literacy practices in the setting of a voluntary youth organisation, my research employs qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, more specifically, both ethnographic and 'virtual ethnographic' approaches are applied to online settings (Hine, 2000; Lee, 2011), in my case, Facebook. In contrast to the fully-fledged ethnography (as in Baym, 2000) of a study on a virtual community, my virtual ethnographic study adopts ethnographic insights. Similar to the traditional ethnographic approach of data collection in 'offline' worlds, a virtual ethnographic approach involves a range of data collection methods including observation (and some participant-observation), interviews through email systems, private messages or Internet telephony protocols and artefacts collection. When conducting research online to collect data from this online community, I also observed the ethics of virtual ethnography by applying an ethnographic approach (Hine, 2008). For instance, I electronically sought informed consent from all four research participants who were Facebook contacts of mine prior to any data collection. In order not to infringe their privacy, I also protect their identities by using pseudonyms.

Using Hine's (2000) idea, the key online field, site or 'place' of my study is Facebook, where 'culture' is formed and transformed. This SNS is a cultural artefact. My research findings, with my own interpretation, will show the synergy between adult volunteers and their counterparts from different parts of the globe and the interplay of volunteers on the Facebook platform, as well as their meaningful relationships, such as online friendships in cyberspace. In addition, since the participants are also my Facebook friends, after obtaining consent, I had no difficulty in gaining access to the research setting and the participants.

Virtual literacy practices and participation can be a crucial part of adult volunteers' life. The HKACC, as a real community, also plays a role in the virtual world as a virtual community, as I shall show. O'Reilly (2008) presents a new insight and mentions the challenge it may pose to research methodologies: "As the virtual world and new technologies impact increasingly on our daily lives, so ethnographers need to consider the implications for the social world and for their research methodologies" (p.214). During the two-year data collection period on Facebook, my approach was still partially ethnographic, however, some modifications were thought necessary (Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff & Cui, 2009). For example, though I sometimes engage in discussion by replying to my participants' Facebook updates, my normal practice is to be an observer in the aforementioned virtual setting.

2.6.4 Auto-ethnography

My research involves a combination of both ethnographic and autoethnographic perspectives. On the one hand, I adopt a participant-centred approach to investigate others. On the other hand, I explore a familiar environment and apply a researcher-centred technique to focus on 'myself' and my own culture (Chang, 2008; Eriksson, 2013). Taking my own autoethnographic stance and trajectory in my understanding of literacy practices assists in complementing the voices of my interviewees and the texts in this research.

To put it simply, I took an insider position while conducting my research. As an insider in my organisation, I made use of textual materials as well as my own experience as data sources. The reflective report investigating my own experiences of

serving in various voluntary projects, coordinating the VQs programme, supervising new joiners and so on can provide an insider's insights to enrich the findings. The fact is that the reflective report that I had already written and all the other documents I had collected, including email exchanges with research participants, clearly had an auto-ethnographical and longitudinal perspective.

The data I will analyse can be classified on two levels: the first level is the reflective report itself, a text in which I could write about my personal experience. I became the 'object' of the study (Ellis, 2004). This kind of writing can be labelled as a narrative, diary, life history or, preferably, autobiography. In my auto-ethnographic research project, an autobiographical genre of writing, which "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 739) is a core text written by each volunteer under my microscope. Such autobiographic writing has the meaning of 'self life writing' in Greek (Smith & Watson, 2000) and refers to one's life story. The second level is part of this thesis as an autoethnography, since my thesis records and describes how my personal experiences are embedded in a wider social context, i.e. the HKACC.

Another type of autobiography is also found in my research participants' Facebook accounts. Their Facebook timelines are technology-related life histories. "By life history we mean the lived through life; by life story we mean the narrated life as related in a conversation or written in an actual present-time" (Rosenthal, 1993, p.1). In short, their Facebook timelines are like techno-biographies that are "a life story in relation to technologies" (Lee, 2014, p.94). I modified the techno-biographic observation and interview methods proposed by Barton and Lee (2013) to collect more comprehensive data. To be more specific, taking an ethnographic approach, I did not only collect data from self-reported accounts of life histories or technology in second interviews but also observed their language use online after capturing the screens of their Facebook timelines over a longer period (i.e. 2007–2014) instead of recording screen activities for around half an hour, as Barton and Lee (2013) did.

2.6.5 Connective Ethnography

In my research, I examine the above three types of ethnographic practices (linguistic, virtual and auto-ethnographic) in both physical and virtual worlds. My goal is to do “connective ethnography”, a term coined by Hine (2000), that focuses on how volunteering practices are tracked and recorded across online and offline spaces through ethnographic investigation. Similarly, Leander and McKim (2003) and Davies (2013) agree that computer-mediated communication, such as the project ‘Synchrony’, and Facebook, respectively, are connected to users’ physical life. Through longitudinal text data collection, interviews and participant observation over a period of time, such volunteering practices, shifting from paper-based to digital-based appear to be not only co-presented, but also inter-related and interconnected to each other, as my findings will show.

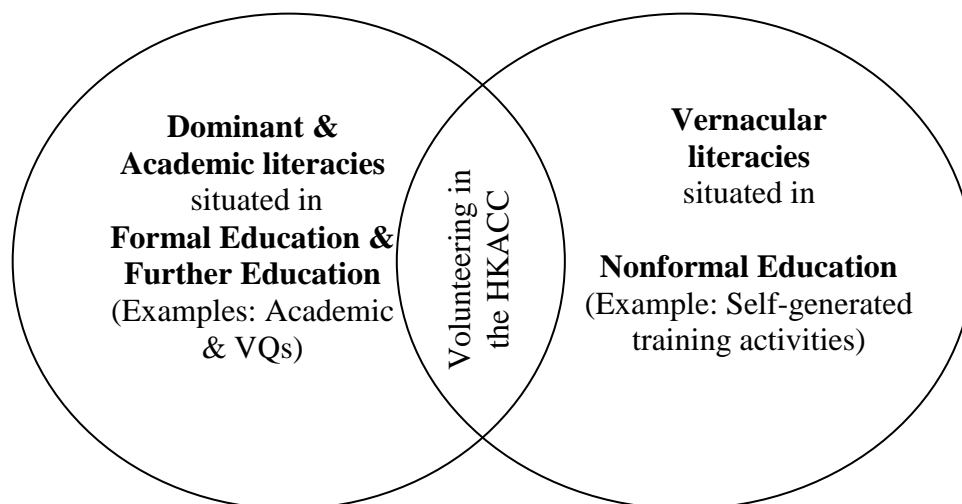
Despite claiming that I adopted an ethnographic approach to both data collection and analysis procedures in the VQ programme and Facebook parts throughout my research, I preserved the essence of spoken and face-to-face interactions when collecting online data with the aim of triangulating data sources and retaining authenticity. When conducting an investigation on the Facebook platform, I also modified traditional participant observation to a certain extent by minimizing my own role or influence on my participants’ Facebook posts and my textual interactions with them on Facebook, though not being an entirely invisible observer or cultural lurker (Hine, 2000).

2.7 Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

Volunteering in the HKACC is a fusion of both dominant and vernacular practices. As Figure 2.1 shows, the current trend is that UG volunteers encounter this new ‘world of literacy’ (Hamilton, Barton & Ivanič, 1994) and are able to gain professional qualifications as part of their volunteering activities. All adult training programmes are accredited by awarding bodies and involve regulations and requirements. In this case, voluntary activities are no longer just for leisure. The original definition of ‘vernacular practices’, i.e. ‘the reading and writing activities

[that volunteers] do in association with activities of their own choice' (Ivanič, 2009) is only partially applicable in the case of the HKACC.

Figure 2.1 Hybrid nature of literacy practices in the HKACC



Given the theoretical positions taken for the research and the status of the field as reviewed above, my research aims to answer the following core research question:

What are the print-based and digital literacy practices of adult volunteers in an aviation-oriented uniformed youth group in Hong Kong?

In order to answer my overarching question, using a multidisciplinary approach drawing on NLS, social networking and linguistic ethnography, I formulated the following two questions that could be operationalised for the purpose of data analysis:

Research Question 1:

How do Adult Volunteers develop new literacy practices when pursuing VQs?

The first research question stems from VQ assignments as the final product of an optional but vital programme in the UG. My research interest is based on my observation of such academic VQ written assignments that effectively reflect adult volunteers' social literacy practices in the volunteering world. VQ assignments themselves, in the form of either reflective reports, portfolio reports or theses, are multimodal since VQ candidates are required to submit a hybrid collection of

evidence, such as photographs, certificates, emails and screenshots of websites, to justify the claims they have made if applicable. Through an autobiographical type of VQ writing, adult volunteers can showcase their life histories of volunteering.

Research Question 2:

What are the adult volunteers' Facebook literacy practices? What is the connection between Facebook and physical world literacy practices among adult volunteers? How does Facebook break down geographical and hierarchical boundaries?

My second research question relates to adult volunteers' writing practices on Facebook as an online CoP. The focus is on literacy activities in a virtual world, which are an extension of routine literacy activities in the real world. Like the typical young 'digital generation' (Buckingham, 2006), our adult volunteers actively engage in all sorts of interactions and participation in online activities. These Facebook users' literacy practices also influence their offline literacy practices. Furthermore, the emergence of Facebook has also transformed volunteers' literacy lives by breaking down existing geographical and hierarchical boundaries.

2.8 Chapter Summary

As mentioned in the introduction, my study aims to contribute to research on both the print-based literacy and digital literacy practices of a specific voluntary uniformed group with an aviation focus in Hong Kong, i.e. the HKACC. It is important to note that the emergence of new literacy practices on screens in the electronic era does not mean that literacy practices on paper have become endangered or extinct. Rather, both types of literacy practices co-exist, they develop and complement each other (Snyder & Joyce, 1998). My research project offers insights into various types of literacy practices, namely, academic literacy practices (Street, 1993), dominant or mainstream literacies (Barton, 1994) vernacular literacy practices (Street, 1993) and marginalized literacies (Barton, 1994), all of which have relevance for education. I explore how key notions, such as dominant, academic, vernacular, digital literacies, vocational qualifications, volunteering, CoP and different items, relate to ethnography. All of these reviews will assist me in investigating hybrid literacy practices in Hong Kong. In summary, I characterise my approach as an

exploratory ethnographic study that includes elements of linguistic ethnography, virtual literacy ethnography and autoethnography.

The autobiographical style of their writing shows that all writers speak in the first person to describe their personal experiences and reflections in the broader volunteering domain. One's voluntary work is an inextricable part of VQ assignments. Apart from written texts, writers are encouraged to include pictures, figures, diagrams, email correspondence and other types of appendices to present their ideas.

My theoretical framework for volunteering literacies is based on a combination of two types of literacies: 1) dominant and academic literacies situated in formal education and further education with findings on VQ programmes in Chapter 4; and 2) vernacular literacies situated in nonformal education with details on self-generated training activities and online activities in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively. This accounts for the complicated nature of an aviation-focused UG with both online and offline CoP.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having explained the theoretical considerations of my research, this chapter will describe the details of my research participants, the sample selection and research methods in detail. The two years of data collection involved collaboration with four participants from a Hong Kong UG and one assessor from a UK-based educational charity. My data collection started with a fusion of accidents of current biography and accidents of remote biography and personal history (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). I worked closely with the participants to explore the types of reading and writing that they engaged in in both volunteering and VQ work, as well as on Facebook. The research methods included a mixture of document collection, observing and participating in literacy events and asking interviewees to reflect on their practices. The central methodology of the research project was an analysis of both researcher-generated (etic) and participant-generated (emic) texts and agency-generated artefacts, complemented by in-depth interviews and participant observations.

3.2 Sampling

In the process of identifying VQ writers in the entire population, the criteria and strategies for the sample selection are two crucial issues I was most concerned with. I conducted purposive sampling to ensure the data collection process could be more effective (Silverman, 2005). I argue that ‘purposive sampling’ (Dörnyei, 2007) or more specifically, ‘theoretical sampling’ (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mason, 2002, Seale, 1999), was useful for me to achieve the ultimate goal of collecting varied and rich data from the participants for my case studies. My sample selection process was based on my considerations on the testing of theoretical concepts.

The essential criteria for the sampling selection were as follows:

1. Writers are aged 21 or over (i.e. adult members) in the UG regardless of rank¹³ and have joined one of the CVQO-led VQ programmes
– this is a most important point in line with my research aims and research questions. I tried to ensure that participants from diversified backgrounds were recruited.

¹³ Rank is a representation of different levels of seniority in UGs.

2. Writers whose L1 is Cantonese and L2 is English
 - these are the two mainstream languages used in the aviation-oriented UG.
3. Writers have at least one year of active service in the UG
 - these adult volunteers have a basic understanding of the organisation.
4. Writers who are more willing to share their writing experience based on my impression of their personality and the rapport established through working closely with me on various projects for a number of years
 - to benefit the information sharing involved in two semi-structured interviews, participant observation and unstructured interviews.
5. Writers who are active Facebook users and implicitly treat Facebook as an indispensable part in their repertoire of modes of connection with fellow volunteers
 - to facilitate my data analysis, I deliberately selected such informants since they are both active volunteers and Facebook users who do frequent updates. I noticed that the complex nature of the online and offline literacy practices of other volunteers already offered rich copious data.

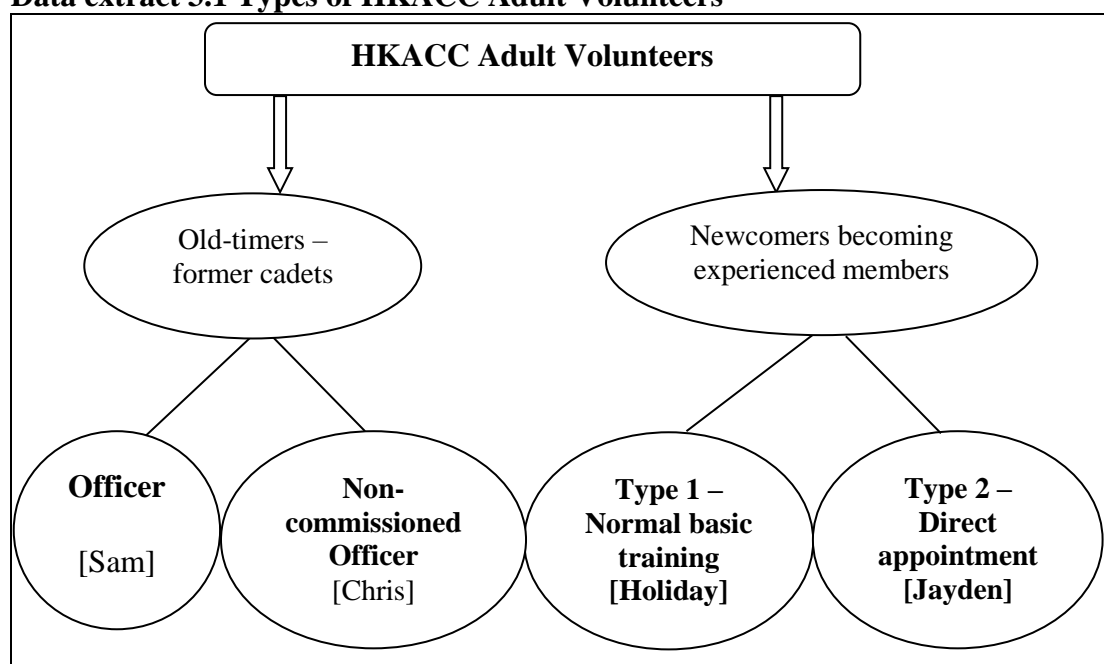
After conducting a criterion-based selection in the beginning phase of my research based on a list of specific pre-determined criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), as shown above, for a convenience sample, all of the participants involved in the research are my own Facebook contacts. I identified Sam, who was invited in the initial sample (the first participant), and five other five volunteers plus an assessor, who were officially invited to join my research after going through the ethical approval process for my research. However, the final number of VQ participants reduced to four because two volunteers withdrew from my study prior to the commencement of data collection for personal reasons: one secured a job in another country, one was too occupied at work.

The iterative process of sampling was halted when I satisfied that I had reached ‘data saturation’. As far as the sample size is concerned, the total number of VQ participants was only four since qualitative sampling in my research as an iterative process had already reached saturation point (Dörnyei, 2007). To put it more explicitly, the data related to Sam’s VQ assignments that I collected in Stage 1 became a perfect match with the emerging themes, including volunteering and

learning (Ilsley, 1990), vernacular literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 2012) and social media (Page et al., 2014), and also the rough theoretical framework of my research. Then I selected three more diverse samples with various backgrounds to refine the themes. I also invited the CVQO assessor to provide more input and insights in order to enrich my data.

In addition, sampling diversity enabled me to obtain richer data and make meaningful comparisons regarding the participants' literacy practices. In my research, the target participants have a range of ages, abilities, educational and occupational backgrounds, in different ranks and positions. My sampling involved getting one from each of the following categories: All four VQ participants were generally classified into two types according to the duration of their service history (see Data extract 3.1). Old-timers refers to those members who used to be cadet members and are currently adult members, whereas newcomers are those who joined the organisation as adult members.

Data extract 3.1 Types of HKACC Adult Volunteers



Moreover, as can be seen from the list of informants shown in Table 3.1, including adult volunteers of different ranks with three different levels of VQ qualifications within the UG enabled me to make meaningful comparisons regarding their literacy practices. Their different exposure to community service also led to a diversity of styles in their literacy practices. In other words, the literacy practices of

all the participants in my study were analysed as a comparison point of their practices. The forthcoming chapters will showcase how the data are able to answer all of my research questions.

Table 3.1 General Profile of the Research Participants in my Research

	Participant	Age range and Gender - Female (F) / Male (M)	Entry Programme	Type of Adult Volunteer	Type of VQ with NVQ ¹⁴ Equivalent	Nature of Unit in the UG ¹⁵	The Highest Qualification Held	Employment (by Industry Sector)	Major Types of Texts for Analysis	Data Collection Stage
1	Writer 1 (Sam Tong)	30–35 (M)	OCTC	Senior Officer	GCGI (Level 6)	Both Functional & Operational Units	Bachelor's Degree	Civil & Social Services	Reflective report about both cadet and adult training activities	Stages 1 & 2 (December 2012 – December 2014)
2	Writer 2 (Holiday Ho)	35–40 (F)	OCTC	Junior Officer	LCGI (Level 4)	Operational Unit	Bachelor's Degree	Information Technology	Reflective report about cadet training activities	Stage 2 (March 2013 – December 2014)
3	Writer 3 (Jayden Ku)	55–60 (M)	Specialist	Senior Officer	MCGI (Level 7)	Functional Unit	Form 7	Aviation	Thesis about flying activities	
4	Writer 4 (Chris Wong)	55–60 (M)	WOTC	Senior Non-commissioned Officer	MCGI (Level 7)	Functional Unit	Form 7	Civil & Social Services	Thesis about footdrill training	
5	David Harris	Assessor								

¹⁴ NVQs stands for National Vocational Qualifications which are work-based awards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are achieved through assessment and training.

¹⁵ Within the UG, a 'functional unit' is a unit which offers administration and liaison support, while an 'operational unit' refers to a unit that trains teenagers to form a cadet squadron.

3.3 Participants

In this thesis, the term ‘participants’ is used interchangeably with ‘informants’, a term which originates from anthropology (Morse, 1991) or, more specifically, ethnography (Spradley, 1979). Morse (1991) claims that the term ‘informants’ is used when instruction is required and a researcher has no prior knowledge of the setting or cultural rules. However, Taylor’s (2011) article on the friendship-informant relationship shows that this clear distinction may not always be the case in ethnographic research: a researcher’s friends can also become informants.

It has been recognized that an interviewer’s and interviewee’s prior experiences or relationships can contribute to the joint construction of effective interviews (Rapley, 2001; Roulston et al., 2001; Garton & Copland, 2010). The main reason why Sam, Jayden, Holiday and Chris (pseudonyms) were selected as the informants for my research project was because of the ‘rapport’ (Springwood and King, 2001) they and I had already established through routine training programmes and projects in the voluntary organisation. As far as I was concerned, our frequent interactions and friendships paved the way for the data collection process. The same idea was applied and extended to my whole ethnographic research. My research informants played the role of collaborators in my research thanks to the fair and balanced relationships with these interlocutors (Boccagni, 2011).

All of them were eager to accept my invitation and share their written work, Facebook data and other texts with me. In what follows, I will present the profiles of these VQ participants, with some information about their age, gender, overall English proficiency, career aspirations within the HKACC and my relationship to them.

Sam Tong

As a male adult volunteer in his early thirties, Sam had been actively involved and served in various flights and squadrons of the HKACC for 17 years at the time of my study. There is some objective evidence for Sam’s linguistic competence, such as his academic results, i.e. Grade C in the Use of English in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) and a band score of 6.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

When Sam first wrote his VQ assignment, he was the Commanding Officer of a cadet squadron, the officer in command of a unit in a local school in Kowloon. In this respect, he had to handle personnel and routine matters concerning manpower, finances and equipment for that unit. The ultimate goal of all training activities is to prepare young people for possible future service in the local aviation industry specifically, or to contribute to the community more generally.

He was one of approximately forty trainers when I was doing OCTC training. After my OCTC passing out, he and I managed to organize more joint projects, such as a careers talk and an overnight hike for cadets, due to our relatively close partnership within the Training Group at the time.

Holiday Ho

Holiday's age is similar to Sam's. Apart from taking courses related to English language throughout her schooling from kindergarten to university, she had regular in-class and out-of-class interactions in English because of her bonding with relatives who live in England. In spite of minor grammatical errors in her writing, Holiday has frequent English conversations in the workplace due to her working relationship with business partners.

With an aim to nurture cadet members, Holiday decided to take up a frontline role and was deployed to a squadron in the Operations Group after completion of OCTC. Being in another department does not stop the collaboration between her and myself. With her supervisor's approval, Holiday was willing to accept my invitation and give me a helping hand in two Training Group projects, namely, the Commandant's Award and the Training Group Passing-out Parade over the years.

Holiday was my OCTC course mate when I first met her in November 2005. We both joined the OCTC as outsiders without any cadet training background in the HKACC. In spite of being in different flights, we underwent training together and successfully passed the challenging initial training course for officers. Because of our well-established relationship, we shared common memories and followed the same pathway from the rank of Pilot Officer to Flight Lieutenant, which facilitated our interaction during interviews.

Jayden Ku

Jayden had just retired from his full-time job at the time of the first interview. He continued to serve in the aviation industry and had joined a private company when the second semi-structured interview of my research was conducted. He had had lots of English language exposure since he started interacting with foreigners in the workplace before 1997.

Jayden is a professional commissioned officer in the field of aviation. He has served in the HKACC for over 10 years and won a lanyard because of his excellent performance in organizing a large-scale event to promote aviation education in Hong Kong in 2009. Thanks to his insights and knowledge of aviation, some of the volunteers under his command have been able to launch some new programmes in the UG.

I first met Jayden at a community service in which he was pleased to teach and share his knowledge and experience with those he knew and did not know. I was able to benefit from the aviation training he provided later and we collaborated on projects for the benefit of cadet members.

Chris Wong

Chris will reach retirement age soon. Similar to Jayden, he did not have any professional qualification or training in English but had lots of practice opportunities during the pre-1997 period. In spite of being older, Chris had been frequently updating his own Facebook timeline with texts or images without encountering any obstacles.

Serving the HKACC for over 30 years, Chris Wong is one of the most experienced footdrill instructors. He had been conducting and planning various footdrill training courses for the UG for a long time, using his expertise and knowledge from his full-time profession in government. He was also one of the pioneers involved in creating and editing the 'Drill Manual', which is regarded as a footdrill bible within the HKACC.

When I was still an Officer Cadet, Chris was my teacher. We started to work together more often when we organized footdrill competitions and took part in the same parades. A major difference between our roles in these two activities was that we always complemented each other's duties: Chris was always inside, on the parade ground, whereas I always take up a supporting role outside, away from the parade ground.

David Harris

David Harris is currently the Curriculum Manager, City & Guilds and Regional Manager West for the CVQO. He has played a vital role as the sole Assessor of our Senior Awards programme since this scheme was launched in our Corps. As a subject specialist in leadership training and the organisation of adventure training, David's main role is to assess whether the evidence presented in each VQ assignment demonstrates the criteria specified by the awarding body, whether it is valid and reliable and of good quality and sufficient. If written work fails to be awarded a straightforward pass, David provides constructive feedback for the purpose of improving the VQ writer's learning. VQ writers concerned are required to resubmit their work with amendments. Alternatively, the VQ writers concerned are asked to attend an interview hosted by either David himself or his appointee, which is me in the Hong Kong context. However, so far, interview cases have been very rare. Before David joined the CVQO, he had a solid background in Biology teaching and Combined Cadet Force volunteering work.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The central concern of ethics in research involves the meaning of morality. Apart from the issue of power relations mentioned in the Introductory Chapter, there are three other distinctive characteristics of the ethical nature of my research.

First of all, for the benefit of the research participants, they were assured that they had the option to join or withdraw from any stages of the research study. A consent form was used for both online and offline data collection, according to the guidelines issued by the university's ethics committee. An example of having such ethical consideration was to inform my research participants about their participation

being on a voluntary basis and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Regarding the timeframe to minimize adverse effects, participants were told that if they would like to withdraw more than one month after the study finished, the information they shared with me would be used as part of the study. Following Androutsopoulos (2008), I adopted pseudonyms for names and squadron number to guarantee the anonymity of all participants and avoid them being recognizable in either virtual and physical communities.

Secondly, the anonymity of my informants is assured. The names of all research participants (except for David Harris who wants to use his real name) shown in this thesis are pseudonyms. The real name of the Ceremonial Squadron is used due to its unique nature in community service.

Finally, concerning confidentiality, I have the responsibility to keep some information confidential instead of transferring it to this thesis. For example, during the two-year data collection period, from time to time, I personally had WhatsApp communications with my research participants that could be potential data on volunteering. However, in view of their confidential nature, such data from private communication channels are not disclosed in my thesis.

3.5 Data Collection

The overarching research aim, on the one hand, fits my research focus, which is to capture how adult volunteers conduct community service in squadrons or in virtual worlds like Facebook, construct their VQ written assignments and serve as volunteers; on the other hand, to give orientation to my research methodology, a linguistic ethnographic approach is employed. This linguistic ethnographic orientation involves “close knowledge through first-hand participation [which] allows the researcher to attend to aspects of lived experience that are hard to articulate, merely incipient, or erased within the systems of representation that are most regular and reliably described” (Rampton, Tusting, Maybin, Barwell, Creese & Lytra, 2004).

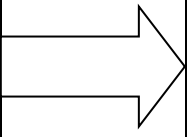
In order to avoid superficial data and paint a more complete picture of VQ writers’ literacy practices involved in developing their written assignments and Facebook literacy practices in the volunteering domain, I aimed to triangulate my data

by collecting them in various forms, ranging from texts and visual data, especially photographs, and participant observation to semi-structured interviews using audio recording instead of relying solely on interviews (Barton & Hamilton, 2012). For example, my thesis includes a combination of texts, artefacts, self-reported feelings and thoughts of the research participants, as well as data obtained from participant observation. My intention with this methodology was that instruments and approaches would complement one another and combine to address my research questions effectively.

Importantly, as scholars including Geertz (1973), Denzin (1989b) and Holloway (1997) explain, ethnographic research, as longitudinal research, aims to observe, record and analyze a culture with the ethnographer's interpretation. This interpretation must be based on a "thick description" of the target subculture (Geertz, 1973), which refers to a rich description, and the researcher's own interpretation, of the findings vis-à-vis the perspectives, values, behaviours and experiences of the participants and with a detailed account of the field experiences and phenomenon of sociocultural relationships. Painting a holistic picture, as aforementioned, of my informants' views, feelings, changes and experiences over a longer period of time is another characteristic of ethnography, which is believed to address all the research questions more effectively.

The details of my two-year longitudinal data collection are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Research Schedule and Instruments

Stage 1 (December 2012 – March 2013)		Stage 2 (March 2013 – December 2014)	
Preliminary study of the first participant		All participants	
Type 1 Texts (VQ Assignment and related documents) collection		Type 1 Texts (VQ Assignment and related documents) collection	Type 2 Texts (Facebook pages) collection
Participant observation		Participant observation	
Semi-structured interview 1		Semi-structured interviews 1, 2 & 3	
Thematic analysis		Thematic analysis	

To refine my research focus and research instruments regarding VQ assignments, I conducted the Stage 1 data collection with a focus on the thematic analysis of texts and the transcript generated from the semi-structured interview 1 with Sam, the first participant between December 2012 and March 2013. A concrete example will be discussed in Section 3.5.2.

3.5.1 Texts and Artefacts Collection

The first type of data collection method is the collection of texts and artefacts as well as a combination of fieldnotes and audio-recordings. The collection of documents ran in parallel with the research process. At least one writing sample related to VQ written assignments was collected from each informant. All VQ assignments are in the format of an autobiographical narrative. These narratives document the informants' self-reported personal experiences in response to key questions mentioned in the resource packs and demonstrate skills and competences at management level in the HKACC, plus they show the writers' professional competence. This type of retrospective review as one type of learning biography is welcomed by researchers like Carroll (1967) as it involves a great deal of linguistic input and output. For example, Sam attended the OCTC in 2002, finished his reflective report with a narrative and systematic reflection in 2010 and has continued to serve in the UG. Other texts written on other occasions within the UG, such as email exchanges, can supplement the reading and writing practices of the writers and serve as appendices to VQ written assignments if applicable.

Extracts from the participants' Facebook pages also constitute authentic texts for thematic analysis that interprets raw data. The aspects of techno-biographies I focus on in my research are current practices, participation, life history and digital timelines (Page et al., 2014). The texts and practices studied in this research have a mixture of Cantonese and English. For example, written assignments, guidebooks and email correspondence are all in English, while interview transcripts and Facebook messages were first written in Chinese and then translated into English for data analysis purposes. The Facebook pages of my research participants contain rich data on online interaction and content creation. I captured and stored all relevant data for later analysis using Atlas.ti so that I had enough evidence of the online literacies of

my research participants and their fellow volunteers, which were shaped by the HKACC's institutional culture and the social context of their lives (Hine, 2000).

As for artefacts, the CVQO assessors' and the VQUs' academic advisors' feedback and comments were useful to adjust interview questions, elicit answers and evaluate the effectiveness of vocational writing workshops. More specifically, written assignments submitted by VQ writers and relevant guidebooks issued by the awarding body helped me take a glimpse at their literacy practices prior to their semi-structured interviews and covered gaps in information that might be missing in the interview guide. The collection of a plethora of artefacts, both digital and print, including student guidebooks, memorandums, regulations, guidelines, forms, emails and training materials enhanced my understanding of the participants' work and my interpretive process.

In addition, photographs taken in the research field with the informants' permission helped to facilitate our one-to-one discussions about particular parts of written assignments. By eliciting information as well as using reflexive accounts from my fieldnotes about the details of the literacy practices of VQ writers I observed, this can complement self-verbal reports during interviews. With the help of both digital recordings and fieldnotes, the details of conversations between writers in both official and unofficial meetings and those between the learners and me were captured.

3.5.2 Participant observation

The second indispensable data collection method in ethnographic research is participant observation. Among the four different types of researcher roles regarding the continuum constructed by Gold (1958, as cited in Cowie, 2009), namely, complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer, I first located myself on this continuum as a participant observer, since it was deemed appropriate for my research project even though flexibility in ethnography is allowed. Being part of the participants' social world was a pre-requisite for my detailed investigation of it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). I had already put on my insider's hat as one of the adult volunteers in the uniformed group and effectively made touch with the target participants.

However, there were some issues that drew my attention as follows: To begin with, there was a need to review my dual role as researcher and volunteer from time to time throughout the whole data collection process. Having gained the informants' consent to access and collect both VQ and Facebook data (as shown in Appendix 5), I acted as Sam's helper in some of his squadron's training activities in order to enhance my understanding of these weekly training activities for cadets, which is one part of the process of constructing his VQ assignments as a learner in an operational unit. However, after the first visit, I realized that the level of my participation in the aforementioned activities might have affected the validity of the data I collected. Therefore, during Stage 2, when I visited Holiday's squadron, for example, I saw myself as a participant observer instead of having a different researcher roles because of the flexibility allowed in ethnography (Gold, 1958). I also reckoned that participant observation was an ongoing process in my research since the data provided important background information for the continued refinement of two interview guides.

Another issue was that informants might doubt the purpose of arranging visits to their units. As an ethnographer, I believed that eliciting information from them as well as reflexive accounts from fieldnotes during the participant-observation process was able to complement the self-verbal reports during interviews (Davis, 1999). What the informants did in the field was relatively more valid than what they claimed during the interviews.

The third issue concerns the possible challenge of gaining access to the community. Gaining such access is like an admission requirement and a key to success when doing ethnographic research (Moss, 1994). In spite of being an active leader in a functional unit, I have inadequate frontline training experience in operational units. In other words, there is still a distance between my informants and me. To avoid paying a visit to this type of unfamiliar field as a stranger or possibly intruder from some cadets' viewpoints, there was a need to do some preparation work. For example, gathering relevant information on a particular unit's website prior to a visit was beneficial to my understanding process. Another notable challenge was the list of jargon being used in frontline units. In this case, I scheduled an unstructured

telephone or face-to-face interview with each of my informants before participation and observation in their field.

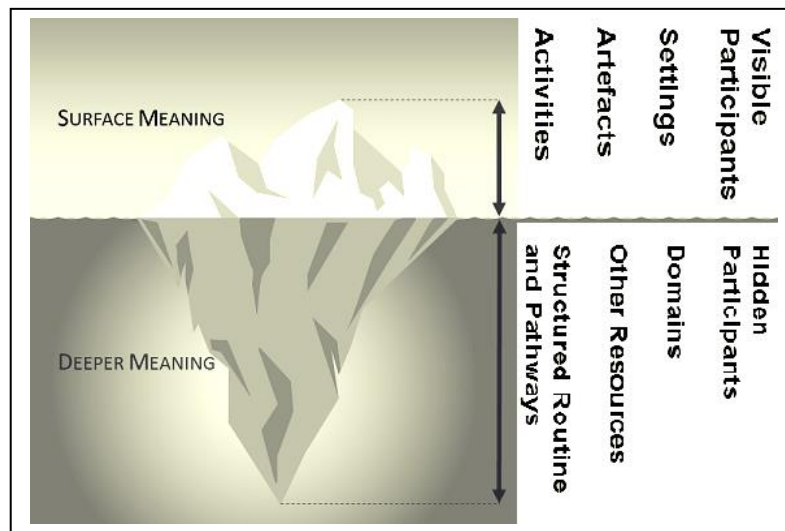
The last issue is about an observation guide that served as a good reference to the exact elements I had to focus on during observation in Stage 2. The observation guide was derived from Hamilton (2000), together with a combination of ideas from Cowie (2009) and Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005), it is a list of items ranging from informants themselves to the environment where linguistic events are situated for my reference during the participant-observation process. As Table 3.3 shows, my observation guide was composed of visible and invisible elements. I used Hamilton (2000)'s categories to formulate the key dimensions of my observation guide.

Table 3.3 Observation Guide – Key Dimensions of Observation

	Dimension	Remarks on foci
Visible elements	Visible participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The people involved and their appearance ◦ Physical behaviours and gestures ◦ Verbal behaviours and interactions ◦ Their goals and feelings
	Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The physical place or places ◦ Personal space
	Artefacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The physical things or objects that are present
	Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A set of related acts that people do ◦ Related activities that people carry out
Invisible elements	Hidden participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Other people involved behind the scene
	Domains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The area where the event takes place
	Other Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Values, feelings, skills and knowledge involved
	Structured Routine and Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The facilitator and regulator of events

Hamilton's (2002) original idea of visible elements captured in photographs and invisible elements inferred from photographs is applicable to my research. As she says, we can treat literacy events as an iceberg. The observable evidence is the tip of an iceberg but other invisible resources, including one's cultural knowledge and emotional feelings reflecting social purposes and values, lie underneath. The concepts I adapted are presented as four parallel components in the four points below, as well as in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 Relationship between visible and invisible elements during the observation process



Visible Participants & Hidden Participants

The first dimension I looked at during the participant-observation process was visible and hidden participants. Visible participants are those who clearly interact with the written texts at my research sites, whereas hidden participants represent other “people involved in the social relationship of producing, interpreting, circulating and otherwise regulating written texts” (Hamilton, 2000, p.16). The following literacy event is a good example. During my squadron visit in August 2014, Holiday, one of my research participants, interacted with her cadets when they discussed the arrangements for cadet recruit interviews to be held the following week. Various points such as manpower, schedule, booking a venue and the division of labour were discussed. In this case, Holiday and her cadets were visible participants while institutions such as the school and its janitors were invisible elements, i.e. hidden participants.

Settings & Domains

The second dimension for my attention is settings and domains. Settings are “the immediate physical circumstances in which the interaction takes place”, whereas domains are the area of social activity in which the event is embedded, and from which it “takes its sense and social purpose” (Hamilton, 2000, p.16). Examples of settings include squadron bases, meeting places and competition venues, while examples of domains in the study are school and voluntary work.

Artefacts & Other Resources

The third aspect guiding my participant-observation process is artefacts and other resources. Artefacts are “the material tools and accessories that are involved in the interaction (including texts)”, while other resources brought into literacy practices include “non-material values, understandings, ways of thinking, feeling, skills and knowledge” (Hamilton, 2000, p.16). In my observation of data collection, texts created by either me or the participants play a significant role in each literacy event. The focus of literacy research is not just the texts themselves but also modalities, media and languages. For example, during participant-observation, Holiday interacted with her cadets with a Cadet Training Record Book (CTRB). Such a document is an artefact generated by the organisation. Other invisible resources include her expedition skills, her understanding of regulations and guidelines and her awareness of the submission procedure when she completed the CTRB for her cadets effectively.

Activities, Structured Routine and Pathways

The last focus is on activities, a structured routine and pathways. Activities refer to “the actions performed by participants in the literacy event”, whereas a structured routine and pathways “that facilitate or regulate actions” are also rules of appropriacy and eligibility, such as who does/doesn’t, can/can’t engage in particular activities” (Hamilton, 2000, p.16). I observed how Chris dealt with meeting documents, such as the agenda and minutes with fellow adult members at a meeting on 23 November 2013, which is an example of literacy activities. As for the meaning of a structured routine and pathways, all the regulations and guidelines within the organisation set boundaries for the activities of both units and projects in the HKACC.

3.5.3 Semi-structured and Unstructured Interviews

The third distinctive method of data collection is semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Whereas “structured interviews follow a predetermined and standardised list of questions”, “at the other end of the continuum are unstructured forms of interviewing such as oral histories” (Dunn, 2005); the semi-structured interview “has some degree of predetermined order but still ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant” (ibid.). Two semi-structured interviews for each VQ participant (except Chris who replied to the questions for the semi-

structured interviews in a questionnaire format due to his busy schedule), each one lasting approximately thirty minutes, and another interview for the assessor, together with irregular unstructured interviews on various occasions at the HKACC, were conducted over a period of two years in either the squadron's training venues or the meeting venues for the operational unit's volunteers and the functional unit's volunteers, respectively. The topics of the first semi-structured interviews were derived from the VQ assignments my participants had submitted earlier, whereas the second ones were related to the Facebook practices they engaged in. My interpretation of the interview data will be further explained in forthcoming chapters.

Generally, the prime objective of semi-structured interviews is "to probe beneath the surface of things and try to see things from students' perspective" (Richards, 2009, p.183). Since the ultimate goal of my research is to obtain a deep and rounded understanding (Mason, 2002) of the literacy practices of adult volunteers, collecting precise and comparable data using a 'spoken questionnaire' during a relatively controlled structured interview or conducting an open interview in an 'in-depth' but 'unstructured' form (ibid., p.184) is relatively unfeasible. Instead, conducting semi-structured interviews with three interview guides is one of the more appropriate data collection methods in my research. All the semi-structured interviews were audiotaped and the audio recordings were transcribed for further analysis. As a newer mediated observation technique, audiotaping is more convenient for me as an observer since I can replay tapes during the transcription stage (Knupfer & McLellan, 1996).

The interview itself is a textually oriented activity because its content is related to the informants' own written assignments. Using Interview 1 as an example, by asking specific questions based on the content of their assignments, I was able to understand how different institutional and contextual factors and personal experiences were brought into the literacy practices of volunteers.

3.5.3.1 Interview Guide for Literacy Acquisition Background and Vocational Qualifications

One practical issue that prompted my concern before the first semi-structured interview was conducted was the language to be used. My original plan was to

interview all VQ writers in English as their L2 for three reasons: first, central features underpinning the training curriculum and day-to-day correspondence in our UG are in English. Second, my prior knowledge of their academic backgrounds and professions let me know their fluency in speaking English. Third, by conducting an interview in English with the English version of the interview guide, translation from Cantonese as L1 to English can be skipped and thus facilitate the transcription for my data analysis later. However, based on Sam's feedback as well as that of other target participants who agreed to join my project, using their own L1 in interviews would enable them to convey their messages more clearly; therefore, a Chinese version of the interview guide for Interview 1 (Appendix 6) was created and used. This compromise was a vital step in maintaining our rapport and long-term collaboration (Boccagni, 2011).

The first semi-structured interview aimed to explore the issues of the literacy acquisition background of adult volunteers and their reading and writing practices and written assignments in the VQ programme. The questions covered in the first interview guide are shown in Figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2 First Semi-structured Interview Guide

<p><u>Part A – Second Language Learning Experience</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your first language (L1)? 2. What is your second language (L2)? 3. Do you know any other language(s) apart from L1 and L2? (L3) 4. What are your personal attitudes towards L1 and its culture? 5. What are your personal attitudes towards L2 and its culture? 6. Do you have close friends or relatives who use English as well as Cantonese as their first language? If yes, do they influence your English language learning? 7. Previous school experience: Can you tell me about your first experience of learning English? What did you do? What were the environment, the people and the activities? Did you attend any English related extra-curricular activities? 8. Previous voluntary experience: Were there any fellow volunteers who spoke fluent English? What did you think of your own English at that time? 9. Do you remember a fellow volunteer or an incident at the Corps that had an impact on your language learning? 10. What were your best and worst language learning experiences? 11. What activities do you do in the Corps, where do you communicate in English? 12. Are you conscious of any strategies that you use to communicate in English in those activities (that the interviewee mentioned in Qs7–11)? 13. Do you feel that your service or voluntary work in the Corps has contributed to your second language learning? If yes, how do you assess that? E.g. Slightly? Moderately? Significantly? 14. Do you feel your service or voluntary work in the Corps has a positive influence on your English language learning in terms of pronunciation, language acquisition and comprehension? 15. What kinds of effort do you make for your English learning? 16. Are you satisfied with the L2 performance you have achieved?

Part B – Vocational Qualifications

1. How do you know about the CVQO-led Qualifications?
2. Why do/did you choose to enrol for the aforementioned vocational qualification? What makes/made you decide to pursue this qualification?
3. Do you plan to enrol for any more vocational qualifications? Why/why not?
4. Do you think using your L2 instead of your L1 would affect your performance when doing your written work?
5. Compared with your written work for previous academic qualifications, what do/did you feel about preparing your written work in your L2?
6. What do you do if you feel you cannot understand the content/instructions in your student guidebook?
7. Have you found language to be a problem when doing written work?
8. How do/did you find the feedback you received from the CVQO assessor? Is/was it helpful or not?
9. What parts of the programme did you find most helpful in your overall success as an ‘all criteria which are fully met’ graduate? What factors determined your final success?
10. What do you think is needed for successful VQ L2 learning?
11. Would you recommend this programme to anyone else? Why or why not?

A series of first semi-structured interviews, as a reflection of the reported beliefs of the volunteers, is able to provide insights into and information about the VQ writers’ ideas about their writing and the rationales behind written content, as well as the institutional factors including document analysis of assessment criteria and regulations related to their learning of writing.

3.5.3.2 Interview Guide for Technology-related Life History, Current Practices, Social Networking and Interacting on Facebook

New data types emerge in the volunteers’ online world. To understand how the writers interacted with technologies in the past, what their present practices on Facebook are and how they interact in this social network, I arranged another interview with the list of questions shown on Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 Second Semi-structured Interview Guide

Part A – Technology-related life history

1. Can you remember when you started using a computer?
2. Can you remember when you started using the Internet?
3. Can you remember when you started using Facebook?
4. Why did you join Facebook?
5. What are your reasons for using Facebook?

Part B – Current practices

1. Do you go on Facebook in different places (home computer, work computer, mobile device)?
2. How often do you use a mobile phone, home computer or work computer to access Facebook?
3. How much reading and writing related to our Corps do you do on Facebook?
4. How often do you post or share images and/or videos related to our Corps on Facebook?
5. Do you enjoy posting Corps-related messages on Facebook? Why?
6. Do you like writing comments about your Corps-related photos?
7. How often do you comment on the messages of other volunteers on Facebook?
8. In general, do you enjoy making comments on Facebook? Why?
9. Which languages do you prefer to use on Facebook? Why?

Part C – Social network and interaction

1. How do you choose your ‘friends’ on Facebook in terms of i) accepting friend requests and ii) initiating friend requests?
2. What proportion of your Facebook ‘friends’ are Corps members (i.e. fellow volunteers)?
3. Do you get to know more about Corps members on Facebook in terms of both quantity and quality?
4. What do you think about the relationship between Facebook and mutual communication between Corps members?

3.5.3.3 Interview Guide for the Perspective of the CVQO Assessor

To build a more comprehensive picture of the VQ programme, I also focused on the perspective of the CVQO Assessor, David Harris, and so I developed questions specific to his views and feelings on assessing student assignments, as shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Third Semi-structured Interview Guide

My research is about Hong Kong adult volunteers’ reading and writing practices. I would like to better understand your perspective on assessing student assignments.

Before starting the interview, I would like to emphasise that your participation is entirely voluntary and that you can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw at any time. For the purpose of anonymity, I will use a pseudonym in all references to you.

Part A – Background

1. In what ways are your experiences with Hong Kong students and their use of digital communications different from your experiences with UK students?

Part B – Assessing student assignments

1. How has your previous experience as a teacher influenced you, or not, in the decisions that you have made when assessing written work?
2. As you know, Hong Kong students use English as their second language. To what extent do you feel you can concentrate on the content of their assignments? How does their style of grammar affect you?
3. Do you think Hong Kong students using their second language would affect their performance when doing written work?
4. Are you conscious of any strategies that you use to assess their written work?
5. What do you do if you feel you cannot understand a particular sentence or paragraph in a candidate’s work?
6. How can interviews with candidates be useful?
7. What do you think is needed for successful written work?

The above general interview guides, compared with the detailed interview schedules normally used in structured interviews, imply a sense of flexibility (Richards, 2009). Nevertheless, I treat research design as an ongoing process and so the interview guides for the informants were amended at various stages of the research. In spite of the long list of planned interview questions with three main focus themes, namely, second language learning experience, vocational qualifications and Facebook use, not all interviews were strictly structured. With the objective to generate new themes in our discussions, I allowed and encouraged my research participants to reply to questions in a spontaneous way. Sometimes, unexpected answers given by the participants led to adjusting the actual list of interview questions in the field. Also, all informants were given the opportunity to seek clarification of some particular wordings of the interview questions when they were in doubt. In short, it was my common practice to go beyond the interview guides and encourage my participants to express their ideas as freely as possible. In addition, ad hoc unstructured interviews were also arranged when I met VQ writers or their peers at some large-scale events or training activities within our UG. On average, the number of ad hoc interviews was two per participant.

3.6 Data Organization

Moving on from data collection, my focus now shifted to a database for analysis and the issues of tools and concepts for that analysis. The database for analysis constitutes two major types of data sources. In line with the linguistic ethnographic perspective (Tusting, 2013), the first type of data is linguistic data in the form of texts, i.e. VQ written assignments and Facebook written texts, whereas the other type is ethnographic data generated in the form of field notes from participant observation and, possibly, unstructured interviews, and, most importantly, transcripts of semi-structured interviews after a longitudinal data collection process.

Table 3.4 presents an outline of the data analysed in my research. My research gathered evidence about the extent to which the claims made in research can be substantiated in the context of VQ programmes in a UG.

Table 3.4 Examples of Texts Analysed for Each Writer

	Participant	Examples of Texts Analysed and Research Fields			
		Routine volunteering activities			Facebook
			<i>Example 1</i>	<i>Example 2</i>	<i>Example 3</i>
1	Sam Tong	Squadron's training base and meeting venues	Reflective Report for the GCGI	Transcript of Semi-structured Interview 1 (Date: 10 March 2013)	1. Transcripts of Semi-structured Interview 2 2. Facebook tour 3. Screenshots of data
2	Jayden Ku	Training and meeting venues	Thesis for the MCGI	Transcript of Semi-structured Interview 1 (Date: 16 December 2013)	
3	Chris Wong	Footdrill training courses: base and meeting venues	Thesis for the MCGI	Transcript of Semi-structured Interview 1 (Date: 18 January 2014)	
4	Holiday Ho	Squadron's training base	Reflective report for the LCGI	Transcript of Semi-structured Interview 1 (Date: 23 August 2014)	

Two types of data were collected: researcher-generated and participant-generated. Researcher-generated data include interview transcripts and audio recordings after interviews were conducted in the research field, the researcher's fieldnotes from observations and photographs taken by the researcher in the research field, while participant-generated data cover VQ writers' own written work submitted to the awarding body as well as other related documents issued by the uniformed group and the awarding body.

The following table (Table 3.5) lists data collected between December 2012 and December 2014.

Table 3.5 Research Participants' Major Literacy Activities

	Participant	Rank & Position	Data Collected		Data Generated Date	Data Collected Date
1	Sam Tong	Flight Lieutenant and Squadron Leader	Major type of writing	Reflective report for the City & Guilds Graduateship in Youth Management and Training (Level 6)	01/08/2010	01/12/2012
				Sam's Major Unit Commander Feedback Form	01/08/2010	01/12/2012
			Other text types	Email correspondence	01/10/2009–31/12/2014	01/12/2012–31/12/2014
				First semi-structured interview on 1) second language learning experience and 2) vocational qualification and transcript	10/3/2013	10/3/2013
				Second semi-structured interview on 1) technology-related life history, 2) Facebook's current practices and 3) Facebook social networking and interaction and transcript	30/11/2014	30/11/2014
				Collection of all Facebook postings from 2007 to 31/12/2014, copied to Word. Occasional observations on Facebook's literacy practices and screenshots related to volunteering	2007–31/12/2014	20/11/2013–31/12/2014
				Participant observation on the fourth Group meeting in 2013 and a summary of report items	21/11/2013	21/11/2013
				Participant observation on the second part of the Wing meeting of the cohort of 2014/2015 and field notes	19/03/2014	19/03/2014
				Participant observation on the third Group meeting in 2014 and Sam's wing report	17/09/2014	17/09/2014

2	Holiday Ho	Flying Officer and Flight Lieutenant	Major type of writing	Reflective report for the City & Guilds Licentiate in Youth Leadership and Training (Level 4)	13/03/2013	13/01/2014
				Holiday's Major Unit Commander Feedback Form	13/03/2013	13/01/2014
			Other text types	Email correspondence	01/10/2009–31/12/2014	01/03/2013–31/12/2014
				First semi-structured interview on 1) second language learning experience and 2) vocational qualifications	23/8/2014	23/8/2014
				Second semi-structured interview on 1) technology-related life history, 2) Facebook's current practices and 3) Facebook social networking and interaction	23/8/2014	23/8/2014
				Collection of all Facebook postings from 2007 to 31/12/2014, copied to Word. Occasional observations on Facebook's literacy practices and screenshots related to volunteering	2007-31/12/2014	20/11/2013–31/12/2014
				Participant observation on a routine training activity at a local school	23/8/2014	23/8/2014
				Participant observation on a pre-departure briefing session and field notes recording the interaction about three parts of the CVQO Graduation Ceremony 2014 in England: pre-, during and post-trip stages.	29/7/2014–22/11/2014	29/7/2014–22/11/2014
3	Jayden Ku	Squadron Leader	Major type of writing	Thesis for City & Guilds Membership in Strategic Youth Management (Level 7)	17/7/2011	22/09/2013
				Jayden's Major Unit Commander Feedback Form	17/7/2011	22/09/2013
			Other text types	Email correspondence	01/10/2009–31/12/2014	01/03/2013–31/12/2014
				First semi-structured interview on 1) second language learning experience and 2) vocational qualifications	16/12/2013	16/12/2013

				Collection of all Facebook postings from 2007–31/12/2014, copied to Word. Occasional observations on Facebook’s literacy practices and screenshots related to volunteering	2007–31/12/2014	20/11/2013–31/12/2014
				Second semi-structured interview on 1) technology-related life history, 2) Facebook’s current practices and 3) Facebook social networking and interaction	17/09/2014	17/09/2014
4	Chris Wong	Warrant Officer	Major type of writing	City & Guilds Membership in Strategic Youth Management (Level 7)	15/07/2011	22/09/2013
				Chris’s Major Unit Commander Feedback Form	15/07/2011	22/09/2013
			Other text types	Email correspondence	01/10/2009–31/12/2014	01/03/2013–31/12/2014
				Semi-structured interview on 1) second language learning experience and 2) vocational qualifications	18/01/2014	18/01/2014
				Participant observation on the fourth Group meeting in 2013 and a summary of report items	21/11/2013	21/11/2013
				Online questionnaire on 1) technology-related life history, 2) Facebook’s current practices and 3) Facebook social networking and interaction	30/8/2014	30/8/2014
				Collection of all Facebook postings from 2007–31/12/2014, copied to Word. Occasional observations on Facebook’s literacy practices and screenshots related to volunteering	2007–31/12/2014	20/11/2013–31/12/2014
5	David Harris	Assessor and Operations Manager	Major type of writing	Assessor’s feedback forms for all my research participants	09/09/2010–22/11/2013	12/12/2013
			Other text types	Email correspondence	01/09/2009–31/12/2014	12/12/2013–31/12/2014

			Video on thesis writing workshop – transcript	09/03/2011	1/5/2014
			Unstructured Skype interview	17/07/2014	17/07/2014
			Semi-structured interview on 1) second language learning experience and 2) vocational qualifications	09/10/2014	09/10/2014

3.7 Approaches to Data Analysis

In this section, I describe my approach to qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2002). There are two main steps to analyse VQ assignments, Facebook data, transcripts of semi-structured interviews, photographs of literacy artefacts and field notes from participant observation. First, I use transcription software, namely, 'Express Scribe'. In terms of ethnographic data, notes from audio-recorded interviews, and field notes, were re-read before the audio files were transcribed and then respectively transformed and recontextualised into textual form. This change from oral texts to written ones is a 'recontextualisation' process of literacy practices. Ethnographic data with their 'reminders, quotations and details' can enrich data descriptions and interpretations (Eisner, 1991). For all interviews conducted with adult volunteers in Cantonese, the method of naturalized transcription was first applied, and then the interviews were translated into English. My focus was "on the details of the discourse, such as breaks in speech, laughter, mumbling, involuntary sounds, gestures, body language, etc. as well as content" (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). 'Respondent debriefing' (Singleton & Straits, 2001) is a vital step in the data interpretation process. Having interpreted the transcripts as a principal investigator for the second time, a complete set of transcripts was sent to the informant concerned to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation.

Secondly, the software package Atlas.ti (Weitzman, 2003) was used to code and retrieve linguistic data about VQ written assignments and Facebook data as first-person narratives illustrating participants' literacy practices and experiences in the community service context as a social practice (Street, 1984; Barton & Hamilton, 2012). The coding scheme partly originated from the literature review, with special attention paid to vernacular literacies (Barton & Hamilton, 2012), while new codes emerged from my own words, some screenshots and interviewees' words. So my research involves a mixture of these three approaches to naming codes (Merriam, 2009). In short, all codes are both data-driven and theory-driven. I will show some examples in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Coding Scheme Used for Analysing the Data of VQ Assignments and Semi-structured Interview 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Background: Corps ◦ Background: Equipment/ Activity ◦ Background: Participant ◦ Background: Unit ◦ Corps – aviation objectives ◦ Corps – non-aviation objectives ◦ Not only Aviation ◦ Importance of fund-raising
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Researcher's Role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Extrinsic motivation ◦ Intrinsic motivation ◦ Reason for being a volunteer ◦ Reason for joining the VQ programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Voluntary work's impact on English (L2) ◦ Voluntary work's impact on Personal & Career development ◦ Voluntary work – Exposure to English (L2) ◦ Daytime job's impact on voluntary work ◦ Training's Benefits for Cadets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Challenges in the Corps ◦ Challenges of VQ HW ◦ Strategy for handling challenges/ problems ◦ Suggestions made to 'incomplete' VQ candidates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Comparison of Academic vs Vocational Qualifications ◦ Eagerness to continue education/ lifelong learning ◦ Formal & Informal Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Documenting life ◦ Organising life ◦ Personal communication ◦ Private leisure ◦ Sense-making ◦ Social participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sense of belonging ◦ Role & goals ◦ Team work & leadership skills ◦ Eagerness for cultural exchange

The coding list, as can be seen, involves both deductive and inductive elements. Deductive codes including six aspects of vernacular literacies were adapted from Barton and Hamilton's (2012) influential work as well as some implicit CoP concepts such as 'team work', 'role and goals'. Other codes such as 'challenges in the Corps',

‘strategy for handling challenges’, ‘comparison of academic vs vocational qualifications’ were generated intuitively.

Thirdly, after the coding process, I conducted a thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012) to identify themes in order to examine how participants’ literacy practices and their learning trajectories differ from each other. Conducting inductive thematic analysis of raw data including written assignments, interview transcripts and other texts and artefacts enabled me to investigate how VQ writers employ different text types in two different fields – the physical world and the virtual world.

Data were analysed both vertically, focusing on the ‘vertical slice’ – the literacy practices of individuals as distinctive case studies (Barton & Hamilton, 2012), and horizontally, attempting to find commonalities and differences among different research participants with reference to the theoretical concepts mentioned earlier. The development of the framework for data analysis, therefore, was a result of data-driven and theory-driven processes, as well as a prolonged engagement with empirical data and theories.

3.8 Issues of Validity

Issues of validity constitute an indispensable part of my research project. When raising the issue of validity, first, combining multiple research methods including collecting the self-reported feelings and thoughts of research participants through interviews, having more interactions with participants through participant observation and other types of document collection helped to ensure my interpretation was valid (Mason, 2002); and secondly, the evidence gathered was able to justify the validity of my ethnographic research. Such triangulation of data and findings served to validate and reinforce my understanding as a researcher. Triangulating my data by using multiple references to draw conclusions about the truth ultimately facilitated my understanding of the phenomenon from the etic perspective of a researcher (Mackey & Gass, 2005). To enhance the validity of my current work, the ‘refutability principle’ recommended by Silverman (2005) was employed. This principle involves the process of actively refuting my initial assumptions about my own data as a researcher. One concrete step I took was to reflect all the findings and interpretations of my research to the participants. Furthermore, as for the interview process, it was an

ongoing process. Frequent cross-checking of the data gathered and revisiting the research purposes clearly with the interviewees at the beginning of every semi-structured interview made the data interpretation more reliable (Davies, 1999).

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter began by describing the sample selection process and giving details of the research participants. Using qualitative research methods, I came to the best possible understanding to approach the issues I was particularly interested in, namely, the print-based and digital literacy practices of adult volunteers in an aviation-oriented UG. Throughout the research study, I have remained mindful of ethical issues and relationships and provided justifications for claims of validity and ethical considerations. The chapter continued by evaluating the aspects of data collection, data organisation and data analysis. My research design has sufficient flexibility to be open to opportunities to collect further data where relevant, because there were some occasions on which ad hoc unstructured interviews were arranged. Finally, my chapter concludes by examining issues of validity to make sure I have captured the reality (Mason, 2002). Table 3.7 serves as a summary of my research questions, corresponding data, methodological tools and the framework for analysis.

Table 3.7 Summary of Research Questions, Data Collection and Data Analysis

Research Questions	Data Needed	Data Collection	Tools for data analysis	Frameworks for data analysis
1. How do Adult Volunteers develop new literacy practices when pursuing VQs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview transcripts • Audio recordings • Fieldnotes • Photographs • Collection of texts and artefacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leaders' guidebooks for various City & Guilds VQs ▪ Leaders' written assignments, such as Joseph's reflective report ▪ The Assessor's feedback report for leaders' written work ▪ Official documents issued by the awarding body and the uniformed group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interviews • Participant observation • Photography • Collection of texts and artefacts, especially leaders' guidebooks (for document analysis) and leaders' written assignments (for textual analysis) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlas.ti (Weitzman, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984; Barton & Hamilton, 2012) • Thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012) • Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton, 2007) • Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data (Creswell, 2002) • Multimodality and literacy (Jewitt, 2005) • Reflexive ethnography (Davies, 1999)

<p>2. What are adult volunteers' Facebook literacy practices? What is the connection between Facebook and the physical world literacy practices of adult volunteers? How does Facebook break down geographical and hierarchical boundaries?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview transcripts • Audio recordings • Fieldnotes • Photographs • Facebook texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured Interviews • Virtual participant observation • Collection of Facebook texts → screenshots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlas.ti (Weitzman, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984; Barton & Hamilton, 2012) • Thematic analysis (Joffe, 2012) • Linguistic Ethnography (Rampton, 2007) • Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data (Creswell, 2002) • Multimodality and literacy (Jewitt, 2005) • Reflexive ethnography (Davies, 1999)
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Chapter 4: Four: Identification and analysis of the first issue – VQ assignment writing as a new literacy practice

4.1 Introduction

The first research question “**How do adult volunteers develop new literacy practices when pursuing vocational qualifications (VQ)?**” originated from my interest in VQ assignments as a final product of an optional but vital programme in the HKACC. My research interest is based on my observations of these VQ written assignments that effectively reflect adult volunteers’ social literacy practices in the volunteering world. With the major theme of ‘learning by doing’, the VQ programme of the HKACC has been providing a fruitful learning and reflection journey to adult volunteers with varied paid jobs who are devoted to spare some of their leisure time for volunteering. All VQ assignments become valuable evidence of each volunteer’s dedication to and enthusiasm for community service for the benefit of the Hong Kong community at large.

This chapter explores the literacy practices that each participant accumulated during their community service. It includes a broad focus on many aspects of volunteers’ practices which ultimately contribute to VQ assignment writing, and shows the close relationship between community service and the VQ programme. It argues that VQ literacies are an example of situated learning, learning as a social process which draws on candidates’ personal experiences, evident in both the content and the structure of the assignments. One’s voluntary work is an inextricable part of VQ assignments. It shows how new challenges are created when the volunteers read and write, including improving their written and spoken English, and learning the new kinds of formal literacies required by the VQ programme. It shows how candidates draw on a combination of resources from both dominant and vernacular practices in responding to the literacy demands of the programme. And it demonstrates how the adult volunteers engaged in literacy practices associated with Barton and Hamilton’s (2012) six vernacular domains, both in the VQ programme and more generally as part of their volunteering lives.

4.2 Writers' Perceptions of Reasons or Motives for Volunteering

To enhance my understanding of writers' perceptions of reasons or motives for volunteering, which gives insights into community service and VQ assignment writing, and can ultimately be beneficial for the design of the training curriculum (Kerka, 1998), I planned this component in my interview guide for the first series of semi-structured interviews. Kerka (1998) comments that the most explicit motivational factor behind volunteering is altruism. Interestingly, in spite of sharing the same commitment to volunteering, I am aware that all four active volunteers had different reasons for serving other individuals and the community. Their different aspirations for volunteering are distinctive as well. Before I explain the literacy practices of the VQ writers in my research, this section aims to highlight the fact that all four writers have different reasons or motives for contributing of their precious time, money and energy to get involved in volunteering or, more specifically, to join a UG as volunteers.

4.2.1 Volunteering for Leisure

Volunteering, from Chris's point of view, is for leisure, although voluntary work has already merged into his life. He commented, 'I didn't think of whether I did volunteering or not. I started playing in 1976 and suspended in 1979 because of my cert exam (Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE)) ... I rejoined Air Cadet Corps in 1985 when I was 25-year-old ... I didn't think of volunteering but just wanted to keep my activities in ACC' (*Chris, semi-structured interview 1, 2014*). Like his fellow cadets and classmates, Chris submitted a written request for study leave and sat for the HKCEE, the first public examination taken by secondary students when they reach the end of their five-year secondary school education in Hong Kong during the period 1978–2011. Chris expressed that he got used to seeing the HKACC as his leisure pursuit, so he decided to resume his membership after the public exam.

Sam shared the same view of volunteering for leisure when he was asked about why he joined the voluntary organisation when he was just a junior secondary student. He was first advised by his mother to join 'a summer interest class' (*Sam,*

unstructured interview, 2014) during the three-month summer break in his secondary schooling in the mid-nineties. Sam recalled that his mother glanced at a recruitment advertisement for this ‘summer interest class’ in a local paper by chance, which marked the beginning of his cadet life in the voluntary organisation. In fact, cadet recruitment is normally conducted in the summertime by respective squadrons (Sqn¹⁶) before squadron-training activities officially commence in the new academic year. Therefore, the so-called ‘summer interest class’ for leisure was a serendipitous coincidence.

4.2.2 Volunteering for Passion

The HKACC can be viewed as a community that shares knowledge, ideas and passions, since volunteers form a CoP in which they “are informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise” (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p.139). Being volunteers in an aviation-centred youth group can be simply because of a common passion. A joint enterprise emerges since the main purpose of helping young people links adult volunteers together and provides an ultimate goal for their practice. For instance, Sam’s motive for volunteering was to have a change when his cadet life came to an end. When Sam reached the age of 21, like other fellow cadet members, he was able to opt to ‘leave’ or ‘stay’. Sam realized that his service was not a temporary but a long-term passion, ‘As I wished to served the Corps and the community as well as sharing my experience and providing training and guidance to the fellow cadets, I kept on my service in the Corps and joined the Officer Cadet Training Course (“OCTC”) in 2002 right after my cadet life ended’ (*Sam, reflective report, 2010*). Sam’s endeavours and enthusiasm to serve the community grew as an adult volunteer. He felt his experience was of value to other volunteers. I extrapolated his desire to devote himself to the Corps to contribute his knowledge to a new generation from his written remarks in Data extract 4.1.

Data extract 4.1 Sam: ‘I wish to be the role model to my fellow staff and cadets’

I do try my best to cascade the ‘positive ideology’ and ‘positive energy’ to the teenage cadets. So that they all can have a higher chance to establish the positive values during the critical ‘shaping period’ of their lives. And moreover, most importantly, I wish to be the role model to my fellow staff and cadets that we should serve our community by providing voluntary contribution to the public welfare as what is mentioned at our Corps’ objectives.
(*Sam, Reflective Report, 2010*)

Similarly, Jayden shared this passion though he was a relatively new joiner in the community compared with Chris and Sam. Though his passion is more oriented towards aviation education compared to Sam, Jayden is also keen to contribute to the society. Jayden mentioned that ‘...since I decided to pursue my passion for aviation and give reward to the community at the same time, I joined HKACC in 2000’ (*Jayden, thesis, 2011*). Having served the aviation industry for over thirty years, Jayden was determined to immerse himself in this aviation youth group and hoped his own professional knowledge could be beneficial to the organisation after he was invited to join the HKACC by his friend (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 1, 2013*).

4.2.3 Volunteering for Social Networking

In contrast, Holiday’s reason for volunteering is more closely related to social networking, ‘Since I felt I had some free time and wanted to meet more friends after I finished my undergraduate degree’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 1, 2014*). Holiday took advice from her former colleague who was an Officer Trainee (OT) in the Corps. This OT suggested that Holiday could try to join the Adult Training Squadron as a starting point. Computers are like friends to Holiday in the Information Technology Industry. Through voluntary work, Holiday managed to meet more friends from different professions and so the number of her social contacts expanded.

4.3 Impact of the Volunteer Experience

According to my personal experience, people often have a conception of volunteers as givers, as sacrificers of their time. Others align more to a biblical proverb – “It is more of a blessing to give than to receive.” Volunteers are generally labelled as people who make sacrifices. However, my participants reflected that they gained more than they offered through serving the organisation and the community. The purpose of this section is to understand whether our adult volunteers perceive that their voluntary work has an impact on two aspects of their life: English language learning and paid work.

4.3.1 Impact of the Volunteer Experience on English Language Learning

In spite of the challenges that adult volunteers face on their English language learning journeys in a Cantonese-dominant city, as mentioned in the Introductory

chapter, voluntary service in an aviation-centered uniformed youth group unexpectedly enhances their English language learning, as can be seen from my data in this section. Looking at the different projects and activities that adult volunteers are involved in reveals the different literacies used by them in order to achieve collective goals in a systematic community. I shall analyse how volunteers benefit from communal resources from four different angles: writing, reading, speaking and listening.

The first aspect is writing. Writing is a core element of HKACC community service. VQ writers benefit from various writing tasks and opportunities. For example, Chris who was used to Chinese as a medium of instruction at school did not have enough exposure to English because of policy constraints. However, thanks to being immersed in the Air Cadets, an English writing world, he had more opportunities for exposure to English, ‘Now when I look back to my old days, it [being exposed to English in the HKACC] really helped me’ (*Chris, semi-structured interview 1, 2014*). More than that, Sam pointed to the significant changes in his writing style after joining the Corps, ‘...what I learnt would be more workplace related, for example, letters, correspondences, or letters exchanged between people, especially official or business letters, which change my English writing style’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012*). He further commented that the main duty of an officer is to ‘do more memo, email and report writing’. In the past, Sam’s writing style was so-called ‘student-like’, which means he just knew some basic sentence structures.

Similarly, Holiday, as a newcomer, had more exposure to written English than spoken English after immersing herself and participating fully in the volunteering community which is full of experienced practitioners. This is a process of legitimate peripheral participation as described by Lave & Wenger (1991), ‘When I wrote documents for operations such as an Operational Order, it made a great impact on my written English because I had to learn their style, format, structure, etc. Since I have joined HKACC, I have more chances to write more emails and write more in English. So it was a positive impact’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 1, 2014*). An Operational Order (Ops Order), the key text mentioned by Holiday, is a written plan to provide enough information and instructions for a particular mission. Such missions can be as small-scale as a routine meeting at a school base or as large-scale

as a Flag Day across Hong Kong. An old maxim in our Corps, ‘Failing to plan is planning to fail’, shows the possible consequences of this Ops Order. When Holiday was asked what strategies she could think of with an aim to prepare a well-written Ops Order, she replied that discussion was the key to success (see Data extract 4.2).

Data extract 4.2 Holiday: ‘Every [written] outcome originates from the discussions’

Winnie: Any strategies you would like to share to the newbies or NCOs?

Holiday: As for strategies, I think the key is to refer to more sample Ops Order from others to see how they are written. It also depends on who my bosses are this time to understand the direction [of the project] this time. Since documents are always very formal, I have to see how the situation can match with the documents every time.

And every [written] outcome originates from the discussions during squadron routine meetings (i.e. weekly trainings), so it won’t deviate from its normal path.
(Holiday, *semi-structured Interview 1*, 2014)

Apart from the aforementioned writing for ad hoc operations, Holiday commented that her written English improved a lot because she writes very often in English. Doing weekly writing in English became her practice as she attended routine meetings every week. The routine writing she specified included all the messages she conveyed to her cadets about dress code, notes, documents required and work flows in English.

The second aspect is reading. Reading is closely associated with writing, so it is worth examining the importance of frequent reading in English in our Corps. The positive impact of HKACC reading activities on one’s reading proficiency is described by Holiday, e.g. ‘the majority [of my work] involves writing. So, writing more emails enhance reading comprehension’ (Holiday, *semi-structured interview 2*, 2014). Data extract 4.3, depicting Sam’s experience of overcoming the language barrier, is another similar case. Reading more often in the Corps has a positive impact on his overall reading practice. In spite of the small challenge Sam encountered in reading comprehension, as reported in Chapter 1, he commented that reading itself was not that difficult though there was no denying that exceptional cases like slang, colloquial words, metaphors and official terms do exist.

Data extract 4.3 Sam: ‘[the difficulty] keeps my motivation on learning and read more English books’

Reading comprehension is more challenging for me, which let me study intensively. For example, when our UK partners interact with us during their visit to Hong Kong, I believe they tend to use fewer slang, avoid colloquial words and use more official terms and tones. However, as I said earlier on the point about correspondence or emails, [the difficulty] keeps my motivation on learning and read more English books.

Actually I didn’t feel reading is too difficult. I think Hong Kongers generally don’t think reading is too difficult except those difficult words, metaphor or slang in reading passages. Generally ACC people don’t think reading is a problem.

(Sam, semi-structured Interview 1, 2012)

The third aspect is listening and speaking. Regular listening and speaking activities within the organisation are an effective means of enhancing one’s knowledge of and performance in English communication. Chris is one of the more experienced adult volunteers, with a prolonged service life, who has had more interaction with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Shek Kong in Hong Kong before the turning point I mentioned in Chapter 1, i.e. 1997, the year of the handover of Hong Kong to Mainland China. Chris pointed out that the common language he shared with the RAF instructors was English. Footdrill training activities were conducted in English easily when the topics, experience and drill commands were universal, as in Data extract 4.4.

Data extract 4.4 Chris: ‘It was quite convenient to me that both of us talked about the same footdrill issues’

Chris: There was a corporal [coming from RAF] who assisted us to organize a drill instructor course for us. Of course it [the course] was conducted in English. What he discussed and taught were all in English. Since he knew what he taught, every lesson in the daytime was in English ... We were still able to communicate with each other. I understood what he said. He also understood what I said.

Winnie: Probably because both had a common topic and experience.

Chris: Yes. It was quite convenient to me that both of us talked about the same footdrill issues. So we didn’t need to have any particular nouns or verbs, which let me express myself more easily. It was also easy to understand what he said for me.
(Chris, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

Clearly, the HKACC is full of listening and speaking activities which provide opportunities for volunteers to reflect on their English language learning. For instance,

Sam has observed some significant projects throughout his volunteer experience, e.g. the International Air Cadet Exchange (IACE) Programme¹⁷ which is a programme known as “a world of friendship and aviation” for all Air Cadets around the world, and the Commandant’s Award which is the annual aviation English competition. Both events let Sam realize there was room for improvement in his listening and speaking proficiency, as pointed out in Data extract 4.5.

Data extract 4.5 Sam: ‘I had to ensure I speak English fluently in order to communicate well with foreigners’

Since I have joined HKACC, there are visitors from UK, Australia and USA who join the exchange programmes to HK. Their L1 is English. As for my feeling, whenever they talk to me, I feel my English is not proficient enough. I feel a strong need to improve my English proficiency in order to communicate with them more effectively when they come next time.

I feel the need to work on it. At the same time, when I talk to them, I also have to listen to them but may just get 70-80% of the content. I think I need to improve. I joined IACE to France and I was aware that I had to ensure I speak English fluently in order to communicate well with foreigners, so I practised a lot.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012)

As shown in Data extract 4.6, Sam agreed that the international nature of all the exchange activities in HKACC was useful for enhancing his English listening and oral skills through interacting with English-speaking Air Cadets from different parts of the world. His service at the IACE project continued after becoming an adult member due to his secondary duty as the Public Relations Officer during UK delegation visits.

Data extract 4.6 Sam: ‘I had a lot of chances to practise my English with my mates’

If you refer to a particular event that made a great impact on improving my English proficiency, I would say the Commandant’s Award. My team had a total of 3 members to join an English presentation competition. There was 1 more member who provided support in editing PowerPoint slides and making models. At that time, I had a lot of chances to practise my English with my mates because of the script writing and rehearsals as well as the semi-final competitions before the final one. We focused a lot on oral presentation. It was the first time for me to video-record my own English presentation ... It’s the first time I present officially and we had to ensure we have eye contact, body language, intonation, etc. *(Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012)*

¹⁷ The IACE Programme is an annual exchange programme jointly organized by various civilian auxiliary aviation organisations, including the Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, with the aim to promote character, goodwill and cooperation among all the cadets involved. Cadets participating in the programme came from the following countries in 2015: Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the USA (<http://www.iacea.com>).

As shown in Data extract 4.6, Sam was proud of his breakthrough in video recording and conducting official oral presentations in English and believes that practice makes perfect. Compared to the presentations he gave at secondary school, Sam felt that the annual aviation English competition organized by the Aviation Education Wing of the HKACC was longer and more serious. Sam was impressed that each of the contestant team members ‘had to present for at least 3 minutes in order to make a 10-min presentation in English’ (*Sam, semi-structured Interview 1, 2012*). More than that, Sam understands that oral presentations are not only concerned with listening and speaking proficiency to some degree, but also other non-linguistic assessment criteria.

In fact, Sam’s understanding of the marking scheme is true. Figure 4.1 shows that the adjudication team is composed of one English lecturer, one Aviation lecturer and one serving professional from the aviation industry, so they do not only assess the linguistic aspect, which is ‘Proficiency in the English Language’, but also non-linguistic parts, such as ‘Contents of Presentation’, ‘Presentation Skills’ and ‘Overall Performance’.

Figure 4.1 Marking Scheme of the Annual Aviation English Competition

Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps Commandant's Award 2012 Marking Scheme 評分標準						Judge
Team 組別:	No.	Squadron 第	中隊			
Topic 題目:						
Assessment items 評估項目	Score 分數					Comments 評語
	1	2	3	4	5	
Part I. Proficiency in the English Language 第一部分：英語熟練程度						
Fluency 流暢						
Grammar 文法						
Part II. Contents of Presentation 第二部分：演示內容						
Composition 構成成分						
Creativity 創意						
Comprehensiveness 全面性						
Coherence 連貫性						
Part III. Presentation Skills 第三部分：演示技巧						
Effectiveness of presentation 演示效果						
Confidence & Posture 信心和姿勢						
Team Coordination 團隊合作						
Usage of Visual Aids 視像器材的運用						
Part IV. Overall Performance 第四部分：整體表現						
Team Spirit 團隊精神						
Impression 印象						
					Total Score: 總分:	
Overall Comments (if any) 整體評語(如有):						

An individual's reflection on their English language learning experience can be about his own but can also be about that of others. Data extract 4.7 is about Holiday's description of her cadets' communication breakdown with her during a lesson at the beginning. This incident made her realize that there is a need to cater for the needs of her students on their English language-learning journey. Written English is more appropriate for her cadets than spoken English, for example.

Data extract 4.7 Holiday: 'This process lets me understand what kind of difficulty my cadets face when I teach them or communicate with them in English'

In terms of language learning experience, my focus is more on English since I use English more often. Actually, in terms of the best experience, using another language must be under pressure for sure.

When I speak in English with my cadets, they do not understand. So I have to write what I am doing and the words I have mentioned on the blackboard. Then they would understand my meaning. This process lets me understand what kind of difficulty my cadets face when I teach them or communicate with them in English, which lets me think about how to structure English carefully. Writing and speaking are two different things so I learn the concepts through this teaching and learning process.

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

4.3.2 Impact of the Volunteer Experience on Paid Work

Another bonus the volunteers gain is the positive impact of volunteering on their paid jobs. Chris and Sam shared the same view on more interaction leading to more language learning. It becomes clear that plenty of language exposure while volunteering facilitates job duties, including liaising with foreigners in their paid work. According to Chris, it is evident that HKACC experience has an impact on his work: 'Since I keep playing in ACC, it [my ACC experience] is beneficial to my work to a certain extent' (*Chris, semi-structured interview 1, 2014*). As for Sam, he has more chances to 'interact with visitors in English thanks to our connection with RAF' at the HKACC, so he can 'keep the motivation of using English in order to communicate with them well' (*Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012*), which lets him become more fluent than when he had to fulfil his duty to interact with foreigners at his workplace.

The impact of volunteering experience on paid work for Chris and Sam is more

speaking-related, while the impact for Holiday is both speaking-related and writing-related. As reported in Data extract 4.8, Holiday mentioned that, in the past, her English proficiency was abnormal and she did not have enough confidence to speak in English. Nowadays, Holiday has seen significant growth in her confidence in communicating freely without fear of making mistakes in English. As for her writing experience, Holiday also felt she performed better in writing after she got involved in volunteering and changed to a new job later.

Data extract 4.8 Holiday: ‘Now is much better than before’

Thanks to HKACC, my English becomes normal. I dare to speak in English. In the past, I didn’t dare to speak English in front of strangers. I just managed to speak 1 or 2 sentences. However, nowadays, I speak English very often in meetings and conferences so I dare to do it [speak in English] now.

Now is much better than before ... I am able to speak in English immediately now once I pick up a phone call. In the past, I had to think how to reply for a while, so I wasn’t that effective in the past. Now it [thinking in English] is faster.

Later, when I started working in a regional company, I felt it [writing in English] was less difficult than before since I have to write and speak in English with all my clients from South China and Australia and my colleagues from Asia. All communications are in English.

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 1, 2014)

4.4 Vocational Qualification Programme

This section aims to explain the Vocational Qualification Programme in detail and how it works to give recognition to adult volunteers’ knowledge and skills. As introduced in Chapter 1, my research focuses in particular on the literacy practices of participants in the CGLI Senior Awards programme. This programme is simply referred to as the ‘VQ programme’ in this thesis. It is offered by the CVQO, a CGLI approved centre and was recognized and accredited by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)¹⁸ in the UK until mid-2014. A short description about the mission of the CGLI is shown in Data extract 4.9.

Data extract 4.9 CGLI’s Mission

Our purpose is to enable people and organisations to develop their skills for personal and economic growth. It’s about tapping individual potential to help people develop the skills they need to succeed – the skills that help them progress into a job, on the job, and onto the next job. (City and Guilds, 2015)

¹⁸ NQF was later replaced by the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). QCF is a new credit transfer system for recognizing qualifications and units by awarding credits in the UK.

4.4.1 From Civilian to Military; From Work to Volunteering

The VQ programme offered by the HKACC is an extension from the civilian to the military sector and from the workplace to the volunteering world. Originally, the VQ programme was tailor-made for people working as managers or leaders in professional sectors in the civilian world, e.g. Waitrose and Lloyds TSB Bank are respective examples of retailing and financial service industries. These blue chip companies incorporated this VQ programme into their staff professional development programmes in the workplace. In addition, various universities in the UK, such as Bath, Cardiff and Leeds, offer the VQ programme. Later, having made the breakthrough in bringing the VQ programme to the military world, the CVQO, a UK-based education charity, launched this VQ programme for voluntary uniformed groups in the UK in 2001 and introduced it to Hong Kong, or more specifically to our Corps, in 2009 via liaison work with the RAF. ‘As far as I know, discussions on introducing this VQ programme have been on for years. UK RAF has long been running this scheme. Thanks to the sound relationship between RAF and our Corps, RAF staff wanna introduce this scheme to Hong Kong’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012*). Sam’s statement is accurate, as shown in Data extract 4.10.

Data extract 4.10 City & Guilds Senior Awards for the RAF

City & Guilds Senior Awards for the RAF recognise the leadership and management experience, personal achievement and the applied professional knowledge of both SNCOs (Senior Non-commissioned Officers) and officers. This special accreditation structure for members of the Service provides recipients with well-regarded awards which are recognised in both civilian and military worlds. (Royal Air Force, 2015)

The VQ programme in the organisation has the characteristics of a CoP since it involves a group of adult volunteers who are eager to pursue continuing education. It is argued that the situated learning proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) makes sense in the organization because it is learning as a social process rather than an individual process. For instance, both Sam and Holiday had already obtained at least one academic qualification at bachelor’s degree level but were still interested in applying for the VQ programme because of having a common endeavour (Wenger, 1998). Sam commented that ‘the more qualifications the better’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012*). From Sam’s point of view, volunteers are doing voluntary work anyway so all they have to do is ‘do a little bit more paperwork’ in order to get official recognition.

Therefore, he decided to go a step further and get this qualification, which is a Graduateship (GCGI). Holiday held a similar view about the advantages of having one more qualification: ‘This scheme can recognize what we have done in squadrons, sharing our activities and experiences, officially recognizing what we do in squadrons, which is out of our expectation. What we do in squadrons are just routine meetings. I have never thought of doing regular activities can be recognized by a vocational qualification framework, which is unexpected’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*).

The major admission criterion for enrolling on the VQ programme is that volunteers have to fulfil either five or ten years of active service in the Corps. In other words, those who are eligible to apply for the VQ programme have all been active volunteers for a certain period of time. For example, Sam mentioned that he needed ‘10 years active service in order to be eligible for being a VQ candidate’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012*), since he was supposed to demonstrate ten years of working knowledge and experience in order to gain the GCGI qualification. In fact, Sam received a compliment from the CVQO Assessor, David Harris, about ‘the energetic and focussed way he has addressed the Graduateship criteria’ (*Sam’s Graduateship assessment feedback form from David, 2010*). Sam’s masterpiece in the VQ programme demonstrated his ‘vast experience’ in the HKACC (*major unit commander’s feedback report on Sam, 2010*) and his desire to improve through ‘the number of HKACC courses that he has attended ... Reference is also made to the application of skills from the Officer Cadet Training Course (p.8) and the Officer Command Course (p.13) (*Sam’s Graduateship assessment feedback form from David, 2010*).

4.4.2 Vocational Qualification Assignment – Content, Style and Structure

To achieve Licentiateship (LCGI), GCGI or Membership (MCGI), each candidate has to write a Reflective Report, Portfolio or Thesis based on the criteria set out by the CGLI. The type of writing depends on the background, or more specifically the origins, of the candidate. For example, reflective reports are for those volunteers who have gone through the OCTC, while portfolios are for directly appointed candidates. Though terms such as ‘Report’ and ‘Thesis’ in the VQ programme are similar to relevant text types in the academic world, all these text types show some

similarities and differences in terms of content, style and structure. To illustrate all six of the different types of texts further, I summarise the key points in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Summary of all VQ Assignments (Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2009e, 2009f)

No.	Text Type	Key Instruction	Structure of the VQ Assignment
1	Licentiateship (LCGI) – Reflective Route	Demonstrate how your service performance meets the standards required for the award and your application of those skills.	Chapter 1: Self-management and Development Chapter 2: Managing Tasks, working with and relating to others Chapter 3: Communicating Clearly and Effectively Chapter 4: Applying knowledge and Initiative in work problems Chapter 5: Reflection on one's own learning outcomes Chapter 6: Detailed Research
2	Licentiateship (LCGI) – Portfolio route	Present a Portfolio of evidence that demonstrates how your service performance meets the standards required for the award.	Chapter 1: Self-management and Development Chapter 2: Managing Tasks, working with and relating to others Chapter 3: Communicating Clearly and Effectively Chapter 4: Applying knowledge and Initiative in work problems Chapter 5: Reflection on own learning outcomes Chapter 6: Detailed Research
3	Graduateship (GCGI) – Reflective route	Demonstrate how your service performance meets the standards required for the award and your application of these skills.	Chapter 1: How does your role enable your Cadet Service to achieve its goals? Chapter 2: How do you demonstrate team-working and leadership skills? Chapter 3: How do you collect information and how do you apply this to solve problems and make decisions? Chapter 4: How do you manage yourself and your work effectively? Chapter 5: How do you demonstrate that you take responsibility for developing yourself? Chapter 6: How do you demonstrate and model good practice? Chapter 7: Detailed Research
4	Graduateship (GCGI) – Portfolio route	Present a Portfolio of evidence that demonstrates how your service performance meets the standards required for the award.	Chapter 1: Your role in enabling the Service to achieve its goals Chapter 2: Demonstrate team working and leadership skills Chapter 3: Collect information and use it to solve problems and make decisions Chapter 4: Manage yourself and your work effectively Chapter 5: Take responsibility for developing yourself Chapter 6: Model good practice Chapter 7: Detailed Research
5	Graduateship (GCGI) – Thesis route	A successful Thesis shows a clear progression of ideas, from clearly defined	List of contents Chapter 1: Introduction – The aim of the Thesis, objectives, methods and outcomes Chapter 2: Relevant factors – A description of the factors which affect the Thesis Chapter 3: Discussion and analysis

		objectives, scope and methodology through to presenting clear outcomes.	Chapter 4: Different methods used Chapter 5: Conclusions Plus optional sections: Executive summary Cost and savings data Appendix Bibliography
6	Membership (MCGI) – Thesis route	A successful Thesis shows a clear progression of ideas, from clearly defined objectives, scope and methodology through to presenting clear outcomes.	Synopsis (Scope and Methodology and Candidate's contribution to it) List of contents Chapter 1: Introduction – The aim of the Thesis, objectives, methods and outcomes Chapter 2: Relevant factors – A description of the factors which affect the Thesis Chapter 3: Discussion and analysis Chapter 4: Different methods used Chapter 5: Conclusions Plus optional sections: Executive summary Cost and savings data Appendix

Three major points that need to be made about comparisons between VQs and academic assignments are illustrated below. First, in terms of content, less attention is paid to theoretical knowledge in vocational assignments: ‘Remember that personal experiences quoted in your report are a requirement and add weight to your commentary, demonstrating competency against the awarding criteria. Avoid the theoretical stance’ (Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, 2009a, p.7). Such guidelines issued by the CVQO also match the participants’ comments. A VQ assignment, in terms of content, is like an autobiography of a candidate’s own past experience and community service within the voluntary organisation – the HKACC, and this differs from an academic assignment. Sam’s comment clearly identifies the autobiographical nature of this type of vocational writing: ‘Since this one is a vocational study, its focus is to show my understanding on the Corps’ affairs ... As I said earlier, this assignment is like a summary of all my previous work at Air Cadets, a consolidation of the reflection of my feelings’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2012*).

Similarly, Jayden highlighted the keyword ‘experience’ but not theory when he was interviewed: ‘I just have to write what I normally do: an experience sharing but I add the professional and academic elements into it [the thesis]. Since I normally do

aviation and virtual flight simulation,¹⁹ which are actually topics that I am very interested in and also the projects that I aim to do for long’ (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). In his thesis, instead of explaining the theory of Virtual Flight Simulation, Jayden explored how he sought to ‘develop a cost effective Virtual Flight Simulation Training Programme that will inspire and provide HKACC members and cadets with an ideal environment to acquire aviation knowledge, skills and airmanship’ (*Jayden, thesis, 2011*), which is the central theme of his VQ assignment. Figure 4.2 shows a virtual flight simulation class as part of the Advanced Aviation Education Programme (AAEP), which is a ground course for both HKACC members and the general public wanting to take the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority General Flying Practical Test.

Figure 4.2 Virtual Flight Simulation Class of the AAEP, 3 May 2014



Secondly, in terms of style, there is a distinction between assignments for academic programmes and those for vocational programmes. If we compare two of the major genre categories, Holiday’s case is a good example. With an Information Technology (IT) background, Holiday commented that ‘IT documents were normally workflow, writing the introduction part for manuals and how to write about specifications, but this VQ assignment is about my past experience. That’s why they are two different writing styles’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). In other words, Holiday felt that the texts she wrote in her workplace were expository and this writing style was more subject-oriented since she has to explain technical ideas or process in a logical order and sequence, with facts and figures or a scientific

¹⁹ ‘A flight simulation artificially recreates the aircraft flight and flying environment and runs on a personal computer. As such, it can serve as a training platform for students to learn ‘hands-on’ how to fly an airplane. Flight simulation can sometimes be a more suitable learning environment than the cockpit of an airplane in some cases’ (*Jayden, thesis, 2011*).

argument. In contrast to expository texts, VQ assignment is more narrative, in that it maps the writer's own experiences in the volunteering world (Graesser, McNamara & Louwerse, 2003). The writing style of VQ assignments is first-person narration in which the voice of the writer plays a crucial role.

Sam also commented that he 'used other people's knowledge and examples more often [than in his previous degrees in science and social sciences] compared with the current VQ degree' (*Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2012*), but he used more personal examples to reflect his personal experience and feelings in his VQ assignment. In addition, though there has long been a debate about whether authorial self-referential first person pronouns like 'I' and 'we' should be used in academic writing generally (Hyland, 2002), the style of vocational writing is more clear-cut and highlights the writer's own authority and visibility in the research. In this CoP, academic writing is seen as encouraging impersonality and passive forms, while the style of vocational writing demanded here emphasizes the writer's own claims and his or her own experiences as an authority.

Thirdly, in terms of structure, when studying academic and vocational assignments, we can see both similarities and differences. Two similar and one different features can be identified. The first feature of similarity is a synopsis of the thesis route in our VQ programme. A synopsis refers to the same thing as an abstract in a research article or a postgraduate-level thesis or dissertation in the academic world. A synopsis is a brief summary to highlight the thesis's purpose, scope, research methodology and findings. As shown in Data extract 4.11, Jayden commented that 'each village has its own rules'. The phrase 'each village' denotes 'each awarding body or academic institution'. This example also shows the existence of the 'shared repertoire' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) dimension of a CoP. By suggesting an analogy between them, Jayden identifies the differences between organisations and the importance of following the thesis structure and relevant regulations provided by awarding bodies.

Data extract 4.11 Jayden: ‘Each village has its own rules’

Actually, as for CVQO’s City & Guilds Level 7 thesis’s framework, there is a particular format. Before you submit your thesis, you have to submit a synopsis. In terms of academic level, there is a particular structure you have to follow. You cannot just simply write whatever you want. It [synopsis] focuses on certain requirements. There are some elements you have to present in order to fulfill a certain level. It is not something like “I write whatever I want”. Even if you really want to write what you like, you still have to follow a particular thesis structure, right? Well, for me, I just “straight pass” without returning to my writings. Actually, if you study this type of courses outside [in other institutions], regardless of the type of institutions, there are specific regulations you have to follow. Even if you do not feel the need to follow [the regulations], you still have to respect the game rules. Each village has its own rules.
(Jayden, *semi-structured interview 2, 2014*)

The second feature of similarity is the recommendation part in writing, which is another common element when the structure of academic and vocational writing is examined. Chris commented that, ‘Before I joined the VQU to do my MCGI, I attended the courses organized by Chinese University, that is, the external programmes of Chinese University of Hong Kong and its diploma. The assignments we did were the same and similar since at the end [of assignments] the recommendation part is necessary’ (*Chris, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Chris also incorporated the part of recommendation on footdrill training into the conclusion at the end of his Membership Thesis.

And as for the different feature, as can be seen in Table 4.1, the structure of all reflective and portfolio route assignments is more content-oriented, i.e. thematic categories construct the whole piece of writing, which is different from the traditional organisation of academic writing or scholarly writing that has ‘introduction’, ‘main body’ and ‘conclusion’ as expected by higher education institutions (Lea & Street, 1998), the traditional Introduction-Methodology-Results-Discussion (IMRD) format which has been globally implemented (Swales, 1990) or the Introduction-Literature Review-Methodology-Results-Discussion (I(Lr)MRD) structure identified by Kwan (2005). Such traditional structures can be found in academic writing, the GCGI (Thesis route) and MCGI theses though.

4.4.3 Resources Used to Complete an Assignment

To meet the literacy demands of the VQ programme, the candidates had a combination of dominant and vernacular practices as responses, as found by Barton (2001b). Official texts can be surrounded by vernacular practices. In my case, the research participants created VQ assignments based on all sorts of voluntary work and made use of a range of resources in the voluntary domain. Table 4.2, based on all the resources from the writers' assignments, is assembled by me.

Table 4.2 Types of Resources used by adult volunteers for VQ assignments

Type of Resource	Participants			
	Chris	Holiday	Jayden	Sam
Certificates		✓		✓
Guidelines				✓
Organization and training charts				✓
Sample reports				✓
Reference books				✓
Training and learning materials	✓	✓	✓	
Training schedule		✓		
Websites	✓		✓	✓
Thesis writing workshop	✓	✓	✓	✓

The first distinctive type of resource is text-based. Examples of texts range from reference books and guidelines to sample reports from “ancestors” of the projects concerned. For instance, Sam’s current practices in the VQ programme were affected by his previous practices for his undergraduate degree in a similar discipline – management. He talked about his misunderstanding of the meaning of “detailed research”. He created the labels “internal research” and “external research”, which represent locating and referring to reference materials inside and outside the HKACC, respectively, in order to complete his reflective report (as shown in Data extract 4.12).

Data extract 4.12 Sam: ‘The meaning of “research” should be to ask us to indicate what research we have done in the Corps’

Chapter 7 asked us to conduct research so I went to the library to find reference books, which were used in my social science degree. I also had citation and used the examples I quoted before. However, later I figured out the meaning of “research” should be to ask us to indicate what research we have done in the Corps. Let’s say, if I plan to organize a camp, I would look for the relevant guidelines in the Corps and interview [consult] those who have organized the camp before or whether there are any reports for my reference. So, the meaning of research is the above instead of something academic. The approach of my paper is more towards academic research. The student guidebook actually hasn’t specified which type of research we should use: “internal research” or “academic research”.

Anyway, I was allowed to pass finally. Therefore, even though we all know the meaning of “research”, the meaning really depends on each organisation’s requirement. If I were able to have more understanding about VQ at the beginning, then I should have used the approach of “internal research”. Since I didn’t know much about VQ, I focused more on “external research”. The problem may be the lack of cultural understanding.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2012)

Apart from texts, another key resource is an important literacy event – the ‘Thesis Writing Workshop’ first initiated by David Harris, the CVQO assessor who has been responsible for assessing all the VQ assignments submitted by HKACC adult volunteers (see Data extract 4.13). David first sent me an email to explore the possibility of organizing a face-to-face interaction opportunity for our CGLI writers during his visit to Hong Kong.

Data extract 4.13 Email exchange about the Thesis Writing Workshop (Extract)

David’s email:

The main aim of such a workshop could be to provide advice on how best to meet the criteria when writing theses or reports for the City and Guilds awards. This might be helpful for adults who have already enrolled or who are considering enrolment. Of course I should be happy to attempt to address any points you want to raise.

I should think that an hour and a half or two hours would be sufficient for this. I imagine that an evening would be best but a daytime meeting would be possible. The most convenient dates for me will be Wednesday 9th, Thursday 10th or Friday 11th March but there is some flexibility outside these days.

If this idea is something you would like to follow up, please do let me know and we can discuss the details.

Winnie’s email reply:

Thanks for your good news! I shall send out a room booking request to our HQ and a memo to my fellow members for your workshop to be held in one of the evenings during your trip to Hong Kong. Let’s fix it on 9 March tentatively and keep in touch. *(Winnie, Email, 2011)*

I acted as both organizer in the capacity of the unit in-charge as well as participant in the first workshop. Because it was the first writing workshop the VQU had ever conducted, after receiving the kind offer from David, I immediately prepared a memo (see Data extract 4.14) and asked HQ to circulate it among our writing community at their earliest convenience to ensure my message could be delivered efficiently to the target participants – adult volunteers who had enrolled or were considering enrolment.

Data extract 4.14 Aims of the Thesis Writing Workshop

This workshop will be an opportunity:

1) to provide some guidance on how best to meet the criteria when writing theses or reports and

2) to exchange knowledge and experience about writing a thesis

(Winnie, *'Workshop on Thesis Writing' Memo, 2011*)

Our volunteers highlighted the positive impact of such a workshop on assignment writing. Despite the overall well-educated background of these VQ writers, most of them experienced difficulties in writing a VQ assignment in the early stages. As Connor (1999) comments, “every new genre brings its own challenges” (p.38); for instance, Chris pointed out that VQ writing was a traumatic experience at the beginning. The workshop was able to divert his writing in the correct direction. Like Sam, Chris also mixed up the definition of ‘research’ in academic and vocational writing at the beginning. He made an effort to come up with some ideas by drafting a table of contents, but in vain. The writing workshop jointly organized by me and David Harris was a transition point in the thesis writing process of Chris, as shown in Data extract 4.15.

Data extract 4.15 Chris: ‘After his workshop, [I realized] my writing was not in the right direction. So I changed the direction’

Chris: At the beginning, I felt it was difficult to write that paper. My original idea was that I had to write a paper just like those academic papers in the universities, or I had to conduct some research, analyse some data, so on and so forth, so I felt it was difficult. Later I listened to ... was he David?

Winnie: yes, you are right. David Harris. Your memory is good.

Chris: He came to tell us how we could write [a paper] once. After that, my direction was changed. It was very easy for me to write.

Winnie: So, you mean the workshop conducted on 9 March 2011?

Chris: Wow ... your memory is even better. Winnie: Haha ... yes.

Chris: In fact, at the beginning, I paid much effort in writing some table of contents or some points about what kind of steps I would do. (Winnie: hmm ... hmm...). However, after his talk ... his workshop, [I realized] my writing was not in the right direction. So I changed the direction. I kept writing towards this direction and everything was smooth. Writing what I have been doing at work [voluntary work, but not paid work] from the beginning, to the present and [I] kept writing ... so, writing was smooth. At the beginning, I submitted a couple of thousand words to him [David Harris]. His feedback was okay.

Winnie: Oh, that's the synopsis?

Chris: Yes. That means my writing was not going in the wrong direction. So I followed what he commented on how to write and finished [the thesis] quite quickly.

(Chris, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

The writing workshop was remarkably effective in guiding the VQ writers in the right direction. Prior to the workshop, Chris's interpretation of the word 'thesis' was affected or misled by his past schooling since he had got used to writing for academic purposes. From Chris's original point of view, a 'thesis' is a long piece of academic writing for him to fulfil the requirement of the VQ, it is comparable to a master's degree in the discipline of leadership and management. He also thought it was necessary to conduct independent scholarly research, using a variety of media, including books, journals and media sources, and to follow the traditional requirement of thesis writing by having core parts such as 'introduction', 'literature review', 'research methodology', 'findings' and 'conclusion'. Fortunately, what Chris gained most from the workshop was that he managed to understand the correct meaning of 'thesis' writing in the HKACC context: writing about his own experiences, the problems he encountered and how he solved them, with examples and explanations (*David, Workshop PowerPoint, 2011*). In addition, Chris also understood that the parts 'objectives', 'scope', 'methodology' and 'findings' are essential in his MCGI thesis, and these are similar to academic writing but not exactly the same, as discussed in subsection 4.4.2.

Similarly, Jayden also recognized the importance of the writing workshop by using a metaphor for the relationship between 'supervisor-supervisee' and 'company-

client'. More confident in his writing approach after attending the workshop, Jayden valued it as an opportunity to better understand the taste of his assessor, the same as a 'supervisor' or 'client', so that he would be able to boost his understanding of the CVQO's marking criteria for his thesis and ensure his own writing could get his message across. Compared with Chris, Jayden was more concerned about the writing time and the marking requirements of the assessor. To reassure himself that his writing quality and quantity met the assessor's expectations, in spite of having explicit written guidelines in his student guidebook, Jayden cherished the face-to-face question-and-answer session in the second part of the writing workshop as then he could consult the assessor and seek some suggestions to alleviate his doubts. Jayden also treated understanding the assessor's marking standard as a crucial study skill. He commented that some of his coursemates had to rewrite because they did not acquire this study skill (Data extract 4.16). Jayden's idea of 'You have to know what the clients/the bosses want' matches Connor (1999), who gives the same advice to ESL writers based on her literacy autobiography: "Find out the expectations of your audience before starting to write" (p.37).

Data extract 4.16 Jayden: 'Actually I was clearer and understood the requirements after his presentation' and 'You have to know what the clients/the bosses want'

Jayden: Actually I remember [in a workshop held] in Aviation Club, his talk was presented with a PowerPoint and handout. Actually I was clearer and understood the requirements after his presentation. Some classmates may not know what they have to do after they receive an assignment [i.e. join the VQ programme]. The most important point is you have to know you need to achieve the goal, submit the assignment and understand the viewpoints of the one who marks your assignment [i.e. the assessor]. If your writing cannot get the message across and do not follow the specific format, then you have to rewrite. Just like Raymond [another candidate] who mentioned to us after his first draft was rejected [by the assessor], it is not because what he writes is not good, but because what he writes is not something [the assessor] wants to know.

Jayden: In my opinion, if you do not regard it as an assignment but an engineering project or just a project [like what we do in HKACC], you have to know what the clients/the bosses want. You have to obtain the information first before you give someone something. [After you] receive the message, receive the goods, and then check [with my clients/bosses], if they match, then you do not have to walk again (i.e. redo the writing again).

Winnie: So, no need to waste time?

Jayden: yes, no need to waste time. Just like a study skill.
(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Based on these two cases, it can be briefly summarized that the thesis writing workshop, supplemented by texts as resources, is a useful guiding light for those VQ writers who are lost in their writing lives. After writers get used to the writing system, they begin to feel liberated, to excel or even to feel a sense of achievement.

4.5 Assignment-related Literacy Practices of Four Writers

This section draws heavily on community literacy practices (as identified by Barton and Hamilton, 2012) and focuses on six areas of vernacular activities and the literacy practices associated with them in the volunteering domain: (1) organising life; (2) documenting life; (3) personal communication; (4) private leisure; (5) sense making; (6) social participation. I will present the data in these six areas one by one to demonstrate the connections between adult volunteers' individual literacy practices and social practices in a broader sense. VQ assignments, face-to-face discussions with my participants and other documentary data provided evidence that these writers use literacy in very diverse ways for various purposes.

4.5.1 Organising Life

4.5.1.1 Organising Life in the VQ Programme

Writing and technology are inseparable companions for writers (Hyland, 2009), including VQ candidates. On the one hand, volunteers were similar to some Lancaster people mentioned by Barton & Hamilton (2012) with their paper-based literacies. On the other hand, the meaning of vernacular literacies had to be redefined because of the emergence of technology in their lives (Barton & Lee, 2012), such as computers, the Internet and Facebook in my research. In the VQ programme, the application and assignment submission processes are digitally mediated. Our volunteers used literacy to deal with application and assignment submission activities. For instance, Chris first received a memo with appendices from the Officer Commanding Vocational Qualifications Unit (viz. I have dual roles as a researcher and the officer in-charge) via the HKACC Headquarters' electronic mailing list. Then, he glanced through all the files online but decided to download an application form, print it out and complete it. He attempted to send his completed application form to his Major Unit Commander (Cdr) for endorsement by email, but in vain, so he decided to give the original to his

commander at the next meeting. Since the CVQO only accepts electronic applications, Chris had to scan the completed form before sending it by email. During the assignment writing process, Chris also had to word-process a file and look for relevant email correspondence in his inbox. If he had any queries about the VQ programme, he was encouraged to contact me either offline (when I met him at any Corps event or social gatherings) or online (send me either emails or instant messages through Facebook's chat function if he wanted a faster response).

Another issue that shows volunteers' literacy practices as regards organizing life in the volunteering domain is the importance of filing, as Sam mentioned to me when I conducted an unstructured interview with him. Similar to the daily practical organisation in Barton & Hamilton (2012), Sam got used to using a couple of folders to keep original and photocopies of certificates, organisation charts and regulations that became useful appendices for his VQ assignment. The other documents he paid more attention to were the originals of important documents such as 'Income and Expenditure Reports' and original receipts, before submitting them to headquarters, while storing all soft copies in his own email account. Sam also emphasized the importance of financial management whenever he ran any squadron activities so he proposed to establish a post of 'Team Treasurer' to assist the Squadron Treasurer (see Data extract 4.17 for his reflective report, with an extract below).

Data extract 4.17 Sam: 'all of us should pay utmost vigilance on financial control of squadron funding'

I strengthened the financial management within the squadron because all of our allocated funding from headquarters is actually public funding. Thus, all of us should pay utmost vigilance on financial control of squadron funding. Hence, I have implemented feedback control on financial matters. The squadron's treasurer needs to produce a squadron financial chart per month. Also, for monitoring the expenditure of individual activity, the cadet 'Team Treasurer' of each event needs to produce the event expenditure report to squadron treasurer soon after the event, but not later than one month.
(Sam, reflective report, 2010)

The central role of the records our volunteers kept of their finances may also be apparent in my own LCGI reflective report where I take an auto-ethnographic

approach to analyse my own work. As can be seen in Data extract 4.18, I paid close attention to the step prior to producing a financial report – a budget plan. A budget plan is an essential document that is submitted annually to the HKACC Executive Board for approval by all units or the squadron in-charge.

Data extract 4.18 Winnie: ‘It is vital in keeping an estimate on all current and future expenses’

Another type of plan that my unit needs would be a budget plan. Creating a budget does not sound interesting to me and my team mates but it is vital in keeping an estimate on all current and future expenses so that the Corps would be able to allocate the government funding to various units and find out the sources of revenue for these allocations.

(Winnie, reflective report, 2013)

Budget planning involves both numeracy and literacy. My experience is, in many ways, similar to the experiences of other adult volunteers. Before the beginning of the financial year, the units or squadron in-charge have to discuss among their teams how to finalize the budget plan drafts. After funding is approved, as a general rule, adult members in positions of responsibility in the HKACC, especially officers, have a sense of responsibility regarding taking control of the finances and monitoring income and expenditure in order to avoid debt. Figure 4.3 shows a budget plan prepared by Jayden and the volunteers under his command for an aviation project in 2011.

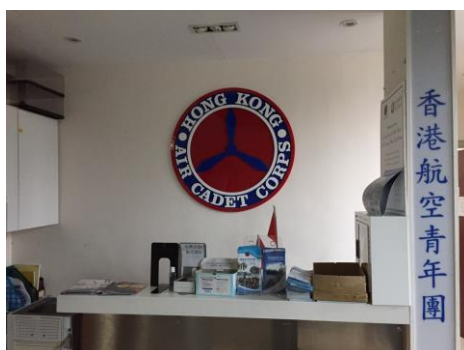
Figure 4.3 Jayden’s budget plan example

Particular	HKS
<i>Income</i>	
Happy Family Thematic Funding	40,000
<i>Expenditure</i>	
Transportation	\$1,500
Meals and Refreshments	2,000
Materials (Carbon fiber tube, Aluminum beam, Wheels, etc)	30,000
Materials delivery	3,500
Decoration	3,000
<i>Total Expenditure</i>	40,000
<i>Total Surplus/Deficit</i>	0

4.5.1.2 Organising Other Aspects of Volunteering Life

Apart from VQ assignments, it is worth examining text production and text use at HKACC Headquarters (HQ). HQ is the place from which operations are controlled and is managed by around six paid staff members. Examples of routine literacy activities include ‘the allocation of headquarters equipment’ such as borrowing ‘the portable Public Address system (“PA system”) with compact disk player from headquarters store’ (*Sam, reflective report, 2010*), ‘swords for their (officers’) Wedding Ceremony’ (*Chris, thesis, 2011*) or an ‘Aeromodelling Training Programme for 120 members conducted at the HQ Technical [sic] Workshop and Tseung Kwan O Aeromodelling Base’ (*Jayden, thesis, 2011*). HQ also acts as a tiny information hub that stores various types of texts, which enables volunteers to use literacy in their volunteering life. For example, limited number of promotional leaflets for recruiting adult and cadet members can be collected from the reception area (See Figure 4.4). OC units can officially submit a written request for extra copies of leaflets, by email if necessary.

Figure 4.4 HQ Lobby Area, 6 December 2014



HQ paves the way for structuring our volunteer lives. For instance, a series of pigeonholes with clear unit labels where all the papers, documents and correspondence are kept is located on the other side of the lobby (see Figure 4.5). The order of all these small boxes looks simple but a classification system does exist since they are arranged in ascending order for the squadrons from No. 101 to No. 609. As for other functional units, their pigeonhole labels are in alphabetical order according to unit categories or posts in Senior Management. HQ’s practice is to inform the volunteers concerned by email first, then put original copies of correspondence into unit pigeonholes for collection during or after office hours. Near the pigeonhole area,

there are also price-lists and a folder with the store's opening hours and details of equipment, accessories and souvenirs, such as postage, for volunteers' reference. On top of the pigeonholes, some uniform items or souvenirs such as commemorative envelopes are also available for purchase.

Figure 4.5 Pigeonholes and texts available, 6 December 2014



HQ is unable to accommodate all the cadet and adult members of the HKACC due to size constraints. In fact, all operational and functional Units are composed of volunteers throughout Hong Kong. Such units are like virtual or mobile offices. All adult volunteers work in their own offices or at home and meet up weekly, in person, for squadron training activities, or irregularly for meetings of functional Units. Responding to official emails sent by supervisors or exchanging ideas with fellow volunteers through email is common in UG volunteer life. In response to Peter's (Jayden's supervisor) question, 'May I know if there is any further follow up we need to do on this topic?', i.e. student membership of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) issue, Jayden gave a brief but clear response by using his iPad and mentioned that the colleague under his command would take further action accordingly (see Data extract 4.19).

Data extract 4.19 Jayden's email reply to his supervisor

Dear Peter,

We have a new colleague from ABC Company and under the flight of Simon, in fact, he is one of RaeS committee, I will assign him as a coordinator to promote and handling the matters of the RAeS student membership in HKACC.

Simon will take care [of] this issue.

Cheers,

Jayden

Sent from my iPad

(Jayden, email 2, 2011)

4.5.2 Documenting Life

4.5.2.1 Documenting Life through Autobiographical VQ Assignments

The best example of documenting volunteer life is the VQ written assignments that document the autobiographies of participants' knowledge, perceptions and experience in community service work. Under the VQ programme, "Autobiography" becomes everyone's common writing task, which is different from 'a few people's writing task' in the Lancaster study (cf. Barton & Hamilton, 2012). To define 'autobiography' briefly, as mentioned in Chapter 2, I adopt the interpretation of Smith and Watson (2000): 'Autobiography' in Greek refers to self-life writing. However, it is more appropriate to judge VQ assignments as an 'autobiographical type of writing' in this thesis. The reason why I argue that VQ written assignments are like autobiographies, but not fully so, is because the assessment criteria are as follows: the degree to which the evidence presented demonstrates that the CGLI criteria have been met, the validity and reliability of the evidence provided by adult volunteers themselves, the quality and sufficiency of the evidence and the comments of volunteer referees who are their Major Unit Cdrs, which means all this evidence involves literacies, attitudes and practices around the literacies of writers' community service. The scope of these 'autobiographies' is limited to the volunteering domain, it does not include other domains such as home or school. VQ assignments also have a time constraint. To reflect on one's leadership and management calibre, writers are required to write about their life as adult members instead of as cadet members. Consequently, my analogy has certain boundaries. Using Sam's GCGI assignment as an example, this volunteer was required to show evidence of his previous and current community service in a squadron as a middle manager and leader, as shown in Data extract 4.20.

Data extract 4.20 Sam: '[A VQ assignment] is like a summary of all my previous work at Air Cadets'

[A VQ assignment] is like a summary of all my previous work at Air Cadets, a consolidation of the reflection of my feelings and a reference for my fellow members.

[A VQ assignment] is just a description or a reflection of our memory. We just have to describe what we have done before ... I just have to write about my own experience.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 1, 2012)

Sam regarded his VQ writing as a showcase of his memory. In fact, what he wrote was more than that. He did not only talk about his past memories but also his current practices and future goals (see Data extract 4.21 for his supervisor's comments).

Data extract 4.21 'Making reference to his vast experience'

The candidate has been providing comprehensive training to cadets and fine-tuning training style in squadron by making reference to his vast experience that he had gained from his 6-year cadet life. He aims to assist his fellow cadets to establish a happy cadet life and develop all-rounded skills.
(*The major unit commander's feedback form of Sam, 2010*)

Apart from citing examples of his verbal instruction given to cadets or subordinates, Sam demonstrated his ability to deliver effective written instruction by email correspondence and to motivate the members under his command. Thanks to his habit of keeping a record, he was able to include impressive evidence in his assignment.

4.5.2.2 Documenting Other Aspects of Volunteering Life

4.5.2.2.1 Documenting Life through Other Texts

The previous subsection shows how the participants in this research documented their volunteering life in the HKACC through VQ assignments. This subsection will explore how adult volunteers document their life through other texts. For example, the CTRB, as a mandatory text for all cadet members, is distributed to each cadet upon enrolment to let them record "all activities a cadet participates in, such as training, examinations passed and community services achieved" (Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, 2015) in their entire cadet life. Unit Cdrs like Holiday play a major role in countersigning their cadets' training accomplishments and their service hours at different stages before the CTRB is passed to Training Group for endorsement or verification whenever cadets go through the process of classification advancement and promotion (see Figure 4.6 for an example of a page in a CTRB).

Figure 4.6 CTRB of Holiday's cadet

Unlike cadets, adult members including the researcher record their service hours on a log sheet, known as a ‘duty hours log’ (see Figure 4.7), instead. This document is a collection of either electronic or printed text showing a documented history of adult volunteers’ community service. Adult members who satisfy the minimum annual efficiency requirement, which is 100 duty hours per year, can seek recognition from the Social Welfare Department to obtain a volunteer certificate each year (Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, 2012).

Figure 4.7 Researcher’s Duty Hours Log in 2013

A001/699A.mended

香港航空青年團
義工服務紀錄

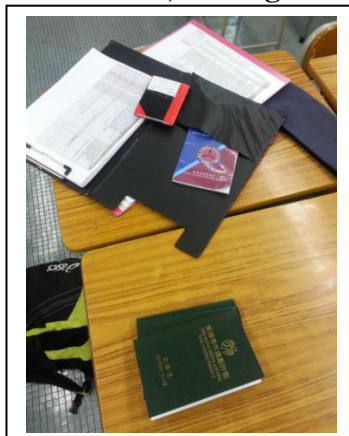
請用正楷填寫，本紀錄表可自行影印使用 2013 年度 第 1 頁

日期	服務性質	簡述	時間	時數
2/1/2013	Preparation	Administration on various VQs	10:00 至 20:00	10
11/1/2013	Preparation	VQU Writing Workshop - Administration	13:00 至 14:00	1
15/1/2013	Liaison	VQU Writing Workshop - Liaison	17:00 至 20:00	3
18/1/2013	Preparation	VQU Writing Workshop - Administration	10:00 至 18:00	8
19/1/2013	Execution	VQU Writing Workshop and follow-up work	10:00 至 20:00	10
21/1/2013	Preparation	VQU - Administration	13:00 至 18:00	5
27/1/2013	Preparation	VQU - Administration	13:00 至 18:00	5
5/2/2013	Liaison and Preparation	Walk Along Glider Building Workshop & Competition	13:00 至 18:00	5
6/2/2013	Meeting	Trg Gp Meeting	19:00 至 23:00	4

Another text that appears quite often in the organisation is the Hong Kong Award For Young People (AYP) Record Book for those members aged twenty-five or under. Paper-based record-keeping documents are still vital in both the paper-based community in Lancaster and the digitally-oriented community in Hong Kong. The “AYP, formerly known as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award” before 1997 in Hong

Kong has the aim to “help both the young as well as those who are concerned for their welfare” and to cultivate “youngsters with perseverance and the spirit of self-challenge” (Hong Kong Award For Young People, 2015). As an AYP bronze expedition instructor, Holiday is responsible for planning the content of an expedition programme lasting two days, including a night camping, as approved by AYP Head Office, monitoring the safety of cadets in the field during expedition training, assessing whether cadet members achieve the right level and signing the AYP Record Book. Based on her involvement in the AYP, Holiday suggested creating ‘more interesting items except theory class’ in order to let cadets learn how ‘to build up different kinds of ability in their cadet life They will learn some skills in those expeditions’ activities. It will involve in expedition leadership skill and soft skill on communication with teammates’ (*Holiday, reflective report, 2013*). Figure 4.8 shows two examples of a CTRB as mentioned earlier and an AYP Record Book for cadet members.

Figure 4.8 CTRB and AYP Record Book, 23 August 2014



4.5.2.2.2 Documenting Life Through Photographs

Photographs are observable data which show the participants, settings, artefacts and activities involved in literacy events and practices; “Photographs are particularly appropriate for documenting these aspects of literacy since they are able to capture moments in which interactions around texts take place” (Hamilton, 2000, p.17). Selecting photographs taken at squadron activities and posting them onto the squadron’s base notice board is a typical literacy event. For instance, Holiday’s squadron’s display board at her base is a good example to showcase important events including recruit cadets’ passing-out parades, flying operations, group photos with the

principal during training courses and expedition activities her cadets have been involved in before (see Figure 4.9 for a photo taken during a participant observation in 2014).

Figure 4.9 Display Board in the Squadron Base, 23 August 2014



4.5.3 Personal Communication

“Personal communication takes many forms and serves many purposes, and the literacies used are equally varied and wide ranging” (Barton, 2001b, p.24). The research participants in my research employ various literacies in the area of personal communication. “Our Corps, like other sister and brother uniformed groups in the city, involves thousands of members who are mainly volunteers so effective communication is vital to overall development” (*Winnie, reflective report, 2013*). Personal communication links with the ‘mutual engagement’ dimension of CoP (Wenger, 1998) to a large extent in my research context. Voluntary members of the CoP interact with each other frequently and shape the community culture as well as its practices. In this section, I will redefine the original scope of personal communication in Barton & Hamilton (2012) which focus on notes, letters and cards sent by people and classifies different forms of communication into talk-oriented, text-oriented and talk around text.

4.5.3.1 Talk-oriented Communication

The first example of talk-oriented personal communication is information sharing in the format of face-to-face information sessions, which are conducted on training bases in the voluntary youth group very often. As is evident in Data extract 4.22, Sam remarked that he would share information on intellectual property protection with his cadets after attending a training programme about the protection of copyright when photocopying publications and downloading files from the Internet. In

view of the worsening situation regarding illicit trade and pirated and counterfeit goods, the Hong Kong government, in collaboration with local UGs, launched several publicity campaigns including an “I Pledge” Anti-Internet Piracy Campaign to promote intellectual property rights protection in 2011. Sam agreed with the importance of civic education to raise the public’s awareness of the issue and felt positive about this type of cadet development initiative, so he encouraged his cadets to join the “I Pledge” campaign. After taking a Train-the-trainer course, Sam conducted a Google search to crosscheck the accuracy of all the official terminology prior to his presentation at squadron base.

Data extract 4.22 Sam: ‘I will share the information that I have obtained to cadets by holding talks regularly’

In order to learn more about the protection upon copyright matters and to share such knowledge to my fellow cadets, I had taken the Train-the-trainer Course organized by Hong Kong Customs & Excise Department (the law enforcing agency in Hong Kong for intellectual property protection) in December 2006. I was also appointed to be the Youth Ambassador Against Internet Piracy (the certificate at Annex E). All along, I am kept informed of the updated trends of the piracy related crimes. I will share the information that I have obtained to cadets by holding talks regularly.
(*Sam, reflective report, 2010*)

The second example is having clear and effective oral communication with both cadet and adult members, as reported by Holiday. She observed that her fellow Corps members come from all walks of life and ‘have different opinions, values, beliefs, and needs’ (*Holiday, reflective report, 2013*). As a result, she listed some of her literacy practices when she had to interact with others in the Corps (see Data extract 4.23).

Data extract 4.23 Communication Skills reported by Holiday

Listen and let people know you have heard what they said.

It is very important things when I order some to my cadets. I also ask question for clarification about my idea.

Concentrate on facts.

When I want to collect more idea in my colleagues and cadets, I never ask too much on my feelings. I didn’t want to ask for my comment will affect their opinions. It is provide a good conversation surrounding and more new point of views from my colleagues.

Don't interrupt other people when they are talking,

I should try hard to listen and understand what they are trying to say. When I got some opinions on cadets training program, I must understand more background on my cadets. So, I want to know more real facts on cadets.

When saying no, be decisive. Explain why you are refusing

When my senior cadets rise up some idea on squadron meeting, I will considering [*sic*] their point of views is or not reasonable on their case. If their idea not a suitable solution, I will ask them more suggestion on their problem.

(*Holiday, reflective report, 2013*)

4.5.3.2 Text-oriented Communication

Written texts are central to HKACC activities. Every Sqn, Wing, Unit or our HQ has its own rules, guidelines and forms to constrain the literacy practices of volunteers. Personal communication among volunteers cannot be successful without written texts in the HKACC. For example, as shown in Data extract 4.24, I evaluated my own literacy practice of circulating a memorandum to my fellow volunteers and associated texts including guidelines and meeting minutes around this practice in my VQ assignment.

Data extract 4.24 Winnie: ‘Written communication is the core way to share information to a large audience through mass mailings effectively’

Written communication is the core way to share information to a large audience through mass mailings effectively. Written communication can also provide official records and references. Memoranda and electronic mail correspondence are the most typical less formal circulars in our Corps. To enhance document accuracy, before I send out a memo to my fellow members through HQ, I would not only refer to the useful guidelines, namely, ‘Notes on Word Processing of Service Documents’ but also circulate the draft to my team members for them to comment on. A sample memo and a sample of meeting minutes prepared by me can be seen in the appendix 3.

(*Winnie, reflective report, 2013*)

4.5.3.3 Talk Around Text Communication

Some written texts are not unique in our Corps but can serve the purpose of facilitating “Talk around texts” (Barton, 2001a, p.99) discussions among UGs. Speech events appear around literacy events. For example, footdrill manual is a mandatory and must-not-miss text for all foot drill instructors as well as those cadet non-commissioned officers (NCOs) or senior NCOs who plan to take the foot drill instructor training course. In spite of the differences in the nature of training activities, all UGs share the same training component — footdrill or simply known as drill. “Drill is a powerful aid to discipline. It develops a sense of corporate pride, alertness,

precision and readiness to obey orders instantly. Good drill in aircraft is directly fostered by the habit of drilling smartly on parade. Officers and cadets are better prepared for combat and any work they have to do - on the ground or in the air - if fit and mentally alert” (Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, 2009, p.4). As in Data extract 4.25, as one of the footdrill trainers at HKACC, Chris recognized a strong need to have bi-directional exchange with the other footdrill trainers from other UGs. Chris recommended sharing the footdrill bible with other UGs so that different UGs can learn from each other and achieve the advancement of professional drill training out of friendship.

Data extract 4.25 Chris: ‘Among the uniformed youth organisations, one of the ways to show friendship is exchange drill manual’

Drill Manual is a tool to drive the organisation to maintain their standard and style of their own. Collecting drill manuals from other countries and organisations may treasure our drill and ceremonial concept.

In fact we are not doing it for our career, but if we do not teach it frequently, it may be lost. However, we are going to deliver professional training. For the preparation of the drill lesson, reading manual is a way to make sure what we are going to teach are correct, at the same time refresh our mind in teaching sequence.

Among the uniformed youth organisations, one of the ways to show friendship is exchange drill manual. If we can put the drill manual into our Corps’ web site, then it would be more convenience for members to refer.

(Chris, thesis, 2011)

So, UGs in Hong Kong have their own routine training activities, organize collaboration projects or have joint activities from time to time. My data show that inter- and intra-organisation activities are notable examples of talk around text communication. Data extract 4.26 presents Chris’s account of his attempt to exchange his opinions and experience on the drill manual with footdrill trainers from another UG.

Data extract 4.26 Chris: ‘During the workshop, I recommended the British Minister of Defence (MOD) Drill Manual for them’

I was asked to organize a workshop for a uniformed organisation in Hong Kong in 2011. This organisation have [*sic*] years of history, they have their own drill manual but only few members could check it out. During the workshop, I recommended the British Minister of Defence (MOD) Drill Manual for them, like the foundation, how to deliver words of command, the definition of regulation pause, how to form up a formation and its direction flank, etc. In the advanced level, a manual can provide ideas on how to organize a parade, the procedure of a parade and how to use teaching aids. I dug that information from the MOD Drill Manual and it would reflect the importance of the Drill Manual.

(Chris, thesis, 2011)

4.5.4 Private Leisure

It is generally agreed that reading and writing can be leisure activities (see Barton, 2001b; Barton & Hamilton, 2012). Volunteering itself can be regarded as a form of private leisure and many literacy practices are associated with private leisure activities. Volunteers write and read for themselves or for the benefit of the Corps. However, in view of the significant amount of reading and writing involved in all voluntary activities in the HKACC, it is worth exploring whether my research participants truly think what they have been doing in their voluntary work is enjoyable and whether they volunteer for leisure. Apparently, as seen in Data extract 4.27, Chris is a dedicated volunteer who expressed his enthusiasm when he took part in an official duty for his unit involving a lining party.

Data extract 4.27 Chris: ‘We are very pleased and proud to perform such duty in front of the public’

Lining Party – A Lining Party is mounted to enhance an important occasion without the full ceremonial of Guard of Honour. It serves to embellish the arrival of the distinguished person at say an entrance, inside or outside. There was a great lining party named Street Lining which along the street when Prince William’s Royal Wedding took place outside the Palace Buckingham.....We are very pleased and proud to perform such duty in front of the public. We have confidence to turn out, shininess’ uniforms, smart looking, properly accessories and discipline. Those are trained by the Foot Drill, Arms Drill and Ceremonial Training. One of the important things is the honour for the members who are carrying out the duty.
(Chris, thesis, 2011)

Incorporating military traditions and customs into wedding ceremonies is a typical example of private leisure in this military-like or paramilitary organisation. Traditionally, if either bride or groom is a member of the military, an arch of sabres (or an arch of swords for Navy and Marine Corps) can be performed in Air Forces or Armies, though this ceremony is an optional tradition. Volunteers doing the arch of sabres use literacies because of hidden guidelines and regulations concerning rank, words of command, footdrill etc. In Data extract 4.28, Chris makes a note on conducting the arch of sabres as a common practice for wedding ceremonies or banquets within the organisation.

Data extract 4.28 Chris: ‘From time to time, our officers and warrant officers would ask Headquarters to loan swords for their Wedding Ceremony’

Unofficial Wedding Ceremony – The first time we served a wedding ceremony which was held in a banquet hall of a hotel ... From time to time, our officers and warrant officers would ask Headquarters to loan swords for their Wedding Ceremony. There are some differences from the hosts’ religion; they may organize the ceremony in church, garden, banquet hall or wherever, so that we have to modify the formation to adopt such scenes.
(Chris, thesis, 2011)

4.5.5 Sense Making

Adult volunteers in my research are like local experts who carry out their own research in the community, the same as people who are experts in the Lancaster community. On the one hand, they bring their professions into the volunteering world. Notable examples include Jayden from aviation, Holiday from IT, Chris and Sam from discipline training. On the other hand, all these professionals never stop learning and pursue continuing education both inside and outside the VQ programme in the volunteering domain. For example, Holiday engaged in expedition training activities with reference to AYP guidelines, as examined previously, whereas Sam drew on and created new vernacular knowledge by referring to the General Guidelines for Conducting Training Activities (see Appendix 7) issued by Trg Gp, as seen in Data extract 4.29. He kept an eye on the temperatures reported by the Observatory regularly and monitored members’ health whenever there were any outdoor activities such as hiking.

Data extract 4.29 Sam: ‘I have asked my training staff to observe the Guidelines strictly’

As we all know, the weather of Hong Kong is hot and humid. Also, Hong Kong is often affected by typhoon and rain storms during summer times. Thus, my squadron, which often arranges footdrill training in open area, needs to take utmost care of the arrangement of training activities under adverse weather for ensuring the safety of all squadron personnel.

The Training Group of the Corps has published the “General Guidelines for Conducting Training Activities” (please see Annex F), which stated the arrangement of training activities under adverse weather. I have asked my training staff to observe the Guidelines strictly. Also, special attention is paid to ‘Heat Exhaustion’.

My staffs are asked, during any training session, to be aware of the likelihood of the participating cadets to suffer from heat exhaustion if the outside temperature is over 30°C. All outdoor activities should also be halted if the temperature is over 33°C.

All in all, my staffs are kept on reminding by me to consider the comfort of the cadets during any training. Periods of instruction should be short enough to avoid the instructor or cadets from becoming over tired (usually giving rest in every 30 to 45 minutes). The training staffs are also required to ensure the cadets can have adequate supply of water at the training venue.

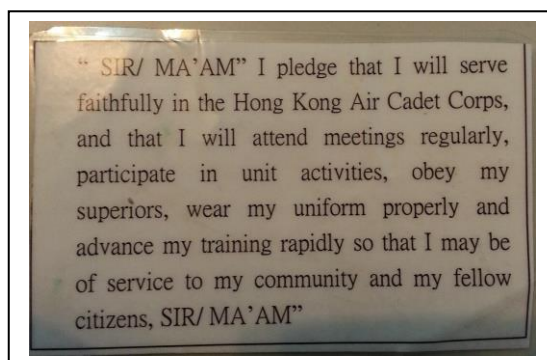
(Sam, Reflective report, 2010)

4.5.6 Social Participation

Volunteering within HKACC is a form of social participation which involves diversified types of activities (Barton & Hamilton, 2012). This voluntary organisation acts ‘as a bridge between informal networks and official organisations’ (Barton & Hamilton, 2012, p.208). As a registered charitable body in Hong Kong and a member organisation of the Hong Kong Community Chest, the HKACC has a formal structure, self-initiated activities and personal networks. Literacy plays a central role in group practices. For example, the ‘Cadet Pledge’ (see Figure 4.10) serves as a useful guideline for all volunteers. It was originally designed to guide cadet members, but it is also applicable to adult members. Serving faithfully, attending meetings regularly, participating in unit activities, obeying superiors, wearing one’s uniform properly and advancing through training rapidly become the common practice and interest of research participants. As Sam commented, ‘The Cadet Pledge of our Corps states the minimum requirements that cadets have to perform. In my opinion, all the adult staff of the Corps should also observe what the Pledge stated. I, as the OC, of course need to be the role model to observe the Pledge, especially for the statements,

‘wear my uniform properly ... participate in unit activities ... advance my training rapidly’ (Sam, *reflective report*, 2010).

Figure 4.10 ‘Cadet Pledge’ in a cue card format for a training camp which the researcher organized



4.5.6.1 Internal Social Participation

HKACC Members are involved in literacies and a wide range of social activities in many ways. These social activities can be internal, like ‘the intensive, rewarding and challenging training in the 26th Officer Cadet Training Course (OCTC)’, ‘Corps-level competitions such as Albatross Award, the annual footdrill competition and Commandant’s Award, the annual Aviation English presentation competition’ (Winnie, *reflective report*, 2013). Undoubtedly, OCTC organizers have to draft recruitment notices, prepare posters, design training curricula and contact trainers and equipment suppliers every year. For the Albatross Award and the Commandant’s Award, the duty of the project officer is to finalize the assessment criteria in either digital or print format and invite adjudicators via post or email.

4.5.6.2 External Social Participation

Social activities can also be external, such as ‘local visits to aviation organisations such as the Cathay Pacific City and the Government Flying Services for the Corps members’ (Winnie, *reflective report*, 2013), which involves email or postal applications being sent to external organisations to explore visit opportunities and recruit participants via HQ memos beforehand. A dinner meeting with an external organisation coordinated by Jayden (see Data extract 4.30) is another example.

Data extract 4.30 Jayden's invitation email sent to members from the working group

Dear Colleagues,

As refer the mail from Adam, the dinner meeting with RAeS (HK branch) committee is being confirmed on 24 Feb 2011 (Thursday).

Please, kindly show your interest and let us know to book the venue.

Your valuable support would be highly appreciated.

We have Adam, Jayden and Eden from HKACC so far.

Thanks,

Jayden

(Jayden, email 3, 2011)

4.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, my argument is that learning is related to social relationships, not just for the acquisition of knowledge. In this volunteer organisation, adult volunteers' active participation in a CoP is closely connected to 'situated learning' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning is collective in the HKACC as a shared domain. Discourses are demanded through a continuing education initiative, which is the VQ programme. People move on from peripheral participation in the CoP and its discourses with help from others. My findings can be evaluated by using the six aspects of vernacular literacy practices proposed by Barton and Hamilton (2012). Adult volunteers have developed new literacy practices when pursuing vocational qualifications governed by the rules set by the awarding body.

To increase my understanding of volunteering literacies, I deliberately emphasize reflexivity to reflect on my texts and the practices associated with these texts in my research. As an educator and volunteer in-charge who has been responsible for promoting the VQ programme to my fellow volunteers within the organisation, by researching my own practices (Barton, 2001b), my understanding of the issue of volunteering literacy practices can be enhanced. A detailed study of my own VQ assignment, the texts I have created or been involved in and the literacy practices in the HKACC complement the data I have generated and collected from four writers and provide rich evidence of the situated nature of volunteering literacies.

Furthermore, volunteering literacies cannot be isolated from social networking sites in the contemporary technology era. Volunteering literacies become more instant and comprehensive due to the frequent interactions among adult volunteers on Facebook everyday. This chapter has focused on volunteering in a real-world setting whereas the next chapter will shift the focus to a new interface – Facebook. It can be seen that the six aspects of volunteering literacies are given new definitions on Facebook.

Chapter 5: Facebook Use as a New Literacy Practice

In Chapter 4, we saw how vocational writing, in the form of autobiographical text, provided a glimpse of the volunteering literacy practices of our writers. Similarly to Chapter 4, this chapter will further discuss the six areas of reading and writing activities in HKACC adult volunteers' life but this time I will explore their virtual life with examples of the range of literacy practices in them to address the following Research Question 2: **What are adult volunteers' Facebook literacy practices? What is the connection between Facebook and physical world literacy practices among adult volunteers? How does Facebook break down geographical and hierarchical boundaries?**

With the aim to gain a more representative picture of the volunteering literacy practices of HKACC writers, it is worth exploring another part of volunteering lives – cyberspace or, I might say, the online world with a particular focus on Facebook – the most popular online social networking site (SNS) in Hong Kong in recent years. “Yet the change in communication technologies that seems to happen almost daily is both real and dramatic in the ways it is changing how young people read and write with words and images” (Williams, 2008). In fact, in the HKACC community, the transformation in communication technologies is not only happening in the world of our young people, i.e. our cadet members and young adult members, but also in that of our older generation. Members, regardless of rank, post or unit, are immersed in the life of Facebook. Cadet-adult members and junior-senior dialogues, interactions and exchanges are more frequent.

Compared with vocational life writing, Facebook life writing is more global and interactive. Vocational writing is only shared among the personnel involved in the assignment writing process, which are VQ writers, Academic Advisors, Major Unit Cdrs and the Assessor. In contrast, Facebook life writing involves more than four types of people. It has been recognized that the Internet or World Wide Web cultivates global literacy practices (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000). Facebook is a contemporary example of electronic communication, what researchers such as Cope (2000) have termed a global village. That is, the research participants in my study extend the boundaries of the communities of friends and families they belong to,

wherever those people are relocated to, even if the original connection was local. More specifically, my research participants make use of Facebook to extend their volunteering literacy lives in global ways. For example, in this electronic environment, HKACC volunteers can be in touch and share their writing with their fellows from the same UG, their friends from other UGs or even counterparts from the Air Cadet Organisation (ACO), UK,²⁰ which transforms the traditional penpal system (Bates & Murphrey, 2015). The post together with the photograph in Data extract 5.1 show how I integrate language and SNS as a global resource for an original local activity and assist Dan, a volunteer from the other side of the globe, to convey a message to Bobby who is another volunteer who has travelled from the UK to Hong Kong as an escort officer for a course held in Hong Kong in 2013. My post, as a connection tool, also attracts comments from two other friends of Bobby.

Data extract 5.1 A local image triggers global communication and interaction

31 August 2013

Our favourite Uncle Bobby
[an image here]
60 like this.

Volunteer 1: I miss him too ~

Volunteer 2: He marched to CO for the medal yesterday

Volunteer 3: oh this is uncle bobby ;)

Dan: Winnie can you ask Bobby to ring me when he returns to UK. thanks. He looks as though he had a good time. Haha.

Winnie: Dan, wilco! Volunteer 2, yes, this pic was taken on Thursday.

Friend 1 of Bobby: Bobby – Looking good

Friend 2 of Bobby: Retirement suits you Bobby
(Winnie, Facebook post, 2013)

On the other hand, Facebook life writing, as mentioned in Chapter 2, certainly involves more communication and asynchronous interaction between all writers if they are part of the Facebook community. Vocational life writing has no interaction between writers and assessors. Both the assignment itself and the feedback report are

²⁰ ACO is a youth organisation or UG sponsored by the Royal Air Force, UK.

just one-way communication. However, all VQ writers, Academic Advisors, Major Unit Cdrs and the Assessor can be Facebook writers if they wish. VQ writers can update their status on Facebook and expect other writers in their network to write replies, comments or questions. The Facebook timelines of all four volunteers involved in my study have regular entries with commentaries, descriptions of events and other material, such as videos or graphics.

The literacy practices on Facebook related to the voluntary youth group are deeply embedded in adult volunteers' lives. Being oriented by the theoretical underpinnings that I discussed in Chapter 2, after exploring literacy practices within a volunteering domain, my focus shifted from print to the digital domain and my interpretation of the Facebook literacy practices of my research participants in the HKACC. My second research question relates to adult volunteers' writing practices in Facebook as a virtual CoP. The texts on their Facebook timelines are all "co-produced" and "mobile" (O'Reilly, 2008). The focus is on literacy activities in a virtual world, thus extending their routine literacy activities in the real volunteering world. Our adult volunteers actively engage in all sorts of interaction and participation in their activities on Facebook. The CMC data presented in this thesis are social media genres encompassing written (with spoken-like) and hybrid modes of communication (Page et al., 2014), which are multimodal affordances.

The first two sections of this chapter introduce participants' perceptions of computers, the Internet, Facebook and what the Facebook platform looks like. Next, the cases of four writers will be investigated further, concentrating in particular on using Facebook for social purposes and their different perceptions of the definitions of 'Facebook Friends'. Finally, the six aspects of vernacular literacies first proposed in the seminal study of Barton & Hamilton (2012) are used to illustrate the Facebook lives of volunteers and how literacy practices on Facebook occur alongside their routine voluntary duties and to analyse the impact of online dynamics on real life voluntary activities.

5.1. Computers, Internet and Facebook

The first part of each second semi-structured interview aims to explore my participants' literacy history on computers, the Internet and Facebook. Discussions of technology-related life history serve not only the purpose of having a warm-up activity before examining core issues, but also provide an opportunity for my interviewees to recall their first memory with large bulky computers, which contrast with their contemporary life with computer-like mobile devices such as smartphones and personal digital assistants. The first reaction of both Holiday and Jayden was to burst into laughter before their self-reported accounts, which shows that the contrast between the two types of 'computers' could be an interesting issue.

When Holiday was asked when she started using a computer, she giggled at the question and immediately related her computer usage to her academic study at secondary school. She started using an Intel 486, a microprocessor produced in around 1989, because of a mandatory subject at her school: Computer Studies (see Data extract 5.2). Sam, as young as Holiday, also started using computers at secondary school.

Data extract 5.2 Holiday: 'I started using a computer to do an assignment for Computer Studies'

Winnie: Do you remember when you started using a computer?

Holiday: Wah (exclamation in Chinese) ... Haha! Form 4. When I was in F.4, I used 486.

Winnie: 486? Ah yes, it seems to be.

Holiday: I remember I studied Computer Studies when I was in F.4 since I opted for the Science Stream and added one more subject called 'Computer Studies'. So it's the first time I started using a computer to do an assignment for Computer Studies.

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Not surprisingly, Holiday, Sam and I shared similar memories of the past because we are of a similar age. That is the reason why I concurred with Holiday's claim about the computer model by saying '486? Ah yes, it seems to be.' In contrast, at first I was a bit lost when Jayden mentioned an unfamiliar term, 'Apple 1', during

his interview and felt that Jayden may have shared a not-so-similar experience until Jayden further explained the models '286, 386 and 486'. As an experienced trainer, Jayden immediately thought of a good example with the aim of explaining that period of time more clearly by labelling it 'The Wynners period'. In Data extract 5.3, the expression 'The Wynners period' was used because The Wynners were a well-known band in Hong Kong in the 1970s and have been influential in the popular music industry for four decades. Though Jayden and Chris are of the same generation as older computer users, Chris started using computers at a later stage, in 1992.

Data extract 5.3 Jayden: 'Computer? 30 years ago. Apple I period ... the Wynners period'

Jayden: Computer? 30 years ago. Apple 1 period.

Winnie: Oh, what's this?

Jayden: Computer 286 laptop!

Winnie: Oh, I have heard of this!

Jayden: 286, 386, 486, etc.

Winnie: 30 years ago?

Jayden: Yes, 30 years ago. Were you born yet?

Winnie: No, yes yes, Haha!

Jayden: The Wynners period.

(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Internet use is the second technology issue I explore. Being immersed in the Internet world for around two decades, all my participants, regardless of age, have a solid foundation in technology and thus encountered neither difficulties nor challenges when they transited to Facebook. The barriers, such as frustration, physical and mental limitations and mistrust, studied by Gatto and Tak (2008) did not happen in the world of my older computer users. Both young and old adult volunteers have a sound system of online social support and computer-mediated communication, which further cultivates their sense of connectedness and satisfaction.

In terms of Internet usage history, older adult members such as Chris and Jayden reported that they had been surfing the Internet for nearly ‘20 years’ (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*), while younger users like Holiday and Sam remembered starting their Internet journey when they were senior secondary school students in the mid-1990s. For instance, Holiday, who pursued her study of the discipline of Computer Studies further after her secondary 5 education, mentioned the classical and dominant web browser ‘Netscape Navigator’, in the 1990s, as an example of her first impression of the Internet: ‘After Form 4, when I was doing my Diploma, I started using a search engine, Navigator ... I did a diploma after Form 5. I was doing the Diploma in Computer ... Computing’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Sam did not account for his view of the importance of the Internet in his interview but his VQ assignment shows his stance. He supports the view that digital literacies on the Internet benefit his communication with fellow members, as well as training activities (as seen in Data extract 5.4). MSN (Microsoft Network) mentioned by Sam used to be the most popular Computer-based Messenger from 1999 to 2013, though MSN or Windows Live Messenger was later replaced by Skype and thus finished its historical mission.

Data extract 5.4 Sam: ‘Internet nowadays has been one of important parts of our daily life’

Need not to say, Internet nowadays has been one of important parts of our daily life. Teenagers also often spend much time on surfing Internet, such as chatting with friends on MSN, seeing friends’ new posts on Facebook and etc. As the ‘customers’ of our Corps and our squadron are the teenage cadets, we must understand their daily life more, with a view to having more topics when communicating with them. Besides, by making good use of Internet, for example, communicating with cadets by means of emails will also increase the efficiency in communication within the squadron.
(*Sam, Reflective report, 2010*)

The last, but core, aspect of technology our adult volunteers are immersed in is the Facebook world in this research. All four Facebook users created Facebook accounts in 2007 with reference to the timeline function of the Facebook platform. When users were asked when they joined the online social networking world, they addressed the issue in different ways. For instance, Holiday immediately associated Facebook with her Information Technology job: ‘Oh, Facebook? I already started

working [when I started using it]! I think it should be ... when I started working in ABC Company' (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Jayden reacted to the question with his usual humour. He implicitly compared Facebook's age with his own age by pointing to his face: 'As for Facebook, [I started using it] in recent years ... for around 5 years. Facebook wasn't that old!' (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 2 and field note, 2014*).

5.2. Facebook's Key Features

Before analysing literacy practices on Facebook, the appearance of the SNS needs to be portrayed. In doing so, I present the most distinctive feature related to writing – the status update feature – in the following. On Facebook, with a documenting life function, Timeline is to show one's life story. Each user's personalized timeline, which was the 'profile' page or 'wall' before 2011, or 'homepage' (Harper et al., 2012), has three major sections where one can voluntarily update one's Facebook status inside a status box in response to the prompt "What's on your mind?" in the desktop version or the mobile app. On each user's Facebook page, the content below the status box in the middle column is the "News Feed", which shows a stream of updates about what their friends post.

All statuses can reference one another on each writer's timeline. Each timeline shows updates in reverse chronological order, with the latest one at the top of the timeline. Alternatively, each status can be treated as an individual post. The first type of status is text-oriented "status": it is to post text items, ranging from letters, words and sentences to paragraphs, together with the following options:

1. "Add photos to your post"
2. "Tag people in your post"
3. "Add what you're doing or how you're feeling"
4. "Add a location to post"
5. "Set the date and time of your post"

The owner of a post can also adjust its privacy setting. This privacy feature can limit who sees the information. In response to "Who should see this?", either "Public

(anyone on or off Facebook)”, “Friends (Your friends on Facebook)” or “Only me” can be set before clicking the button “post”.

The second type of status update feature on Facebook is multimode-oriented “Photo/Video”. In the twenty-first century, in spite of the common culture of having semiotic systems such as non-text based images and videos, written texts still constitute a core and dominant part of new media (Lee, 2011), in my case Facebook timelines. Facebook is full of multimodal texts ranging from linguistic, visual and audio to gestural and spatial (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Jewitt, 2005). Since literacy can be examined in multiple dimensions, the combination of oral, visual and gestural modes with written forms can be regarded as ‘multimodal literacies’ (Makin & Whitehead, 2004). For example, when volunteers navigate their own Facebook pages or their friends’ pages, they do not only type messages on pages but also share videos, songs, photographs and hypertext links with fellow volunteers on friends’ lists. The process of updating texts, visual images or audio files can be completed without the constraint of geographical distance.

Facebook users can share their updates by uploading either photos or videos. Photographs can be divided into two types: personalized or other photos. As for personalized photos, for example, users’ personal profile pictures are organized in reverse chronological order with the aim to help others recognize them on Facebook. Compared with the smaller dimensions of the profile picture which is restricted to a square crop, a cover photo is another option to upload a bigger photo to the top of one’s timeline. Regarding other photos, users can create photo albums or simply keep photos or videos in either “timeline photos” or “mobile uploads” folders.

The third type of feature highlighting the background of each Facebook user is the “About” section. The “Life Event” under this section has five major categories, as shown in Table 5.1 as at 1 December 2014: 1. Work & Education, 2. Family & Relationships, 3. Home & Living, 4. Health & Wellbeing and 5. Travel & Experiences. Among these five categories, the sub-type “Volunteer Work” is the one most relevant to the community service of research participants. The other sub-types are not evaluated further here as they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Table 5.1 The Category of “Life Event” for Adult Volunteers under Investigation, 2014

Work & Education	New Job...
	Published Book or Paper...
	Retirement...
	New School...
	Study Abroad...
	Volunteer Work...
	Military Service...
	Create Your Own...
Family & Relationships	
Home & Living	
Health & Wellbeing	
Travel & Experiences	

5.3. Common Facebook Purposes: Social Use and Different Perceptions of the Definitions of ‘Facebook Friends’

It is shown that there is an overlap between participants’ online and offline networks of friends, thus the online connection can strengthen the offline one (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter & Espinoza, 2008). This relationship also works the other way round. In my research study, offline bonding among adult volunteers can also strengthen online bonding. Therefore, my research findings will demonstrate both online and offline friendships. The analysis in this section is concerned with adult volunteers’ common purpose of joining the Facebook platform, as well as their different viewpoints on the meaning of Facebook friends.

5.3.1 Social Use

Based on all of my participants’ accounts of their reasons for joining Facebook, as expected, the common experience among them was social use or, explicitly, being connected with friends to maintain social relationships. For example, Holiday commented that using Facebook let her share her status and photographs. ‘[Facebook] is a platform for exchanging things with friends’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Jayden had the same idea. Sam further emphasized the two-way communication between him and his Facebook friends, 70 per cent of whom are Air Cadets: ‘to view the latest updates of my classmates, colleagues and friends [and] to share my posts and updates with others’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). This finding matches a key finding in research on Facebook in higher education in the

United States (Roblyer et al., 2010): a majority of college faculty and students used Facebook with the aim of keeping in touch with friends. For Chris, Facebook is useful for him to share his viewpoints, feelings and attitudes on volunteering life with his HKACC counterparts, as shown in Data extract 5.5:

Data extract 5.5 Sharing a view on the importance of volunteering

31 July 2011

Chris shared The 789 Squadron of Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (Official)'s photo

We cannot just focus on activities, which are for money making. The most important asset is whether we are dedicated [in volunteering].

(Chris, Facebook post, 2011)

5.3.2 Facebook Friends

Despite having the same purpose of joining Facebook, all the Facebook users in my research had different perceptions of the definitions of 'Facebook friends' and friending practices. Some members use this SNS to maintain "existing social ties" (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007, p.1144) whereas others aim at making new contacts. For instance, for Chris, his existing Facebook friends included both his real friends, 75 per cent of whom are Corps' members as well as his 'kids'. Chris seems to adopt an 'all are welcome' policy in terms of Facebook friend selection. He accepted almost all the friend requests he received on Facebook. His intention in using Facebook was to 'get closer with my friends and my kids' (Chris, *questionnaire*, 2014). Chris's children have been sent to study abroad, so Facebook is effective in breaking down the geographical constraint as well as bridging the generation gap to a certain extent. Facebook enables Chris to get closer to his children, as reflected in an unstructured interview in 2012.

In contrast, Jayden, Sam and Holiday had a more conservative attitude towards friend selection on Facebook. Jayden's friend selection criterion was to accept fellow members from the same organisation online: 'since I receive some friend requests for no reason, I still add them after I check they are friends from Air Cadets with uniform. Though I do not know them, I know they have seen me before but I forget who they are. I am not that 'powerful' for adding every single person' (Jayden, *semi-structured interview 2*, 2014). Apart from having children who study in another part of the world

as well, Jayden has Facebook friends who are both real friends and relatives abroad. In Jayden's Facebook account, 60 per cent of his friends are fellow volunteers from HKACC. Jayden appreciated the social networking function of Facebook which let him feel that 'the bonding among us [him and his relatives abroad] is very close' in Data extract 5.6. The expression 'close' appears twice in this description of his relationship with his Facebook friends. From Jayden's viewpoint, Facebook fosters a sense of solidarity among volunteers.

Data extract 5.6 Jayden: 'I feel the bonding among us is very close'

Jayden: Regarding the Facebook program, once you have an account, you can find many of your friends and 朋友 (the word 'friends' in Chinese) inside. Since some of your friends are relatives abroad, I feel the bonding among us is very close.

Winnie: Yes.

Jayden: The connection is very close. And the real-time function can cause immediate reaction if they view Facebook [updates]. That's why I always see things about you and your husband.

Winnie: (smiling)

Jayden: ...and I also know those events within Air Cadets.
(Jayden, *semi-structured interview 2*, 2014)

Furthermore, Sam and Holiday are even more conservative in terms of friends selection online. Their Facebook friends are those with whom they have connected in the physical world. Unlike Jayden, Sam did not choose every person he knew on Facebook as friends, only those who were 'like-minded' (Sam, *semi-structured interview 2*, 2014). Holiday shared the same view because she was aware of the security issue. She felt more satisfied and comfortable online after face-to-face interactions with her offline friends. She did not intend to add any strangers or other members whom she did not understand well (see Data extract 5.7). All of these self-reported accounts of informants have been crosschecked with my virtual data from participant observation.

Data extract 5.7 Holiday: 'At least I have to talk to them first to have feelings about them. If they are okay, I add them'

Holiday: [I choose] those whom I have talked to. I have to know their names and personality. At least I have to talk to them first to have feelings about them. If they are okay, I add them. For those who have never talked to me, I don't add them.

Winnie: Anyone sends you friend requests?

Holiday: Yes, I reject them since I have never talked to them before.

Winnie: Unless they invited you and you know them?

Holiday: Yes, because Facebook can be dangerous if you have never heard of this person ... after you add some people on Facebook as friends, they can see everything about you. So if you do not know their personality, it can be very dangerous.

Winnie: So in short, your Facebook friends mean your real life friends?

Holiday: Yes, unless they are my clients ... no, I still don't add them.
(*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*)

Holiday first defined 'Facebook friends' as her classmates from the Diploma in Computing. In her early Facebook period, she felt a strong need to keep in touch with her classmates after class and commented that 'we played together' (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Currently, sixty percent of her Facebook friends are from the HKACC with a relatively great proportion of those being cadet members (as shown in Data extract 5.8).

Data extract 5.8 Holiday: 'We played together'

Holiday: My friends created [an account on Facebook], I had to [communicate] with them. Therefore I created it.

Winnie: Friends mean ACC or non-ACC?

Holiday: Non-ACC, my Computer classmates. We played together.

Winnie: classmates mean Diploma or Degree's?

Holiday: Diploma ... Diploma's friends [were] together then we created Facebook accounts [together].

Winnie: What proportion of Facebook 'friends' are your Corps' members (that is, your fellow volunteers)? Just a rough percentage is alright.

Holiday: Wah (exclamation in Chinese)! ... more Facebook friends are cadets especially after every squadron's recruitment exercise. I think 60% are ACC, 40% are those friends whom I have met in my daily life.
(*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*)

5.4. Facebook Literacy Practices of Four Writers

In this section, drawing on the six notions of vernacular literacy practices proposed by Barton and Hamilton (2012), which are organising life, documenting life, personal communication, private leisure, sense making and social participation, I classify literacy practices, with a prime focus on the Facebook world, into six main types in terms of their literacy content. Adult volunteers take up ‘new opportunities on the Internet’ (Barton, 2010) and participate in writing practices associated with Facebook. The findings will demonstrate how Facebook breaks down geographical and hierarchical boundaries and showcase the influence of Facebook communication on offline literacy practices, and vice versa.

5.4.1 Organising Life

5.4.1.1 Organising Facebook Life

Facebook is intrinsic to our volunteers’ everyday life. Vernacular practices become more valued socially on this platform, which is full of social interaction, in contrast to the traditional emphasis on dominant practices in education and other institutions (Barton & Lee, 2012). With a well-structured appearance, the Facebook platform manages to classify users’ profiles and posts in a systematic manner. A user’s profile information is more static and provides supplementary information about a user in a direct way, while posts in the middle part of the timeline are more constant and offer information indirectly. A user can determine the privacy level of their own Facebook account in different ways, such as what kind of information can be disclosed on their profile or timeline, how others see them, who can see photographs they post on Facebook when someone else is tagged in it, how they choose who can see photos and other items they post.

Routine message-posting activities on Facebook involve literacy. For example, Holiday claimed that she first joined the Facebook family when she “already started working ... when I worked in ABC Company in 2005 or 2006” (*Holiday, interview 2, 2014*), but actually in 2007 based on my Facebook data collection. As far as I observed, she writes or types her posts about her squadron activities on a regular basis, as well as other parts of her HKACC life. All of these activities are related to the chores in her volunteering life, which are all generated by her volunteering

practices. Her posts receive comments from fellow volunteers in other squadrons, as well as from other volunteers in other UGs or even from the UK. So local posts lead to international exchanges in the Facebook world.

5.4.1.2 Organising Life with a Heterogeneous Collection of Appointment Diaries

Recording details of routine appointments and important events within the organisation is a notable example of demonstrating how our participants organize their life with a particular focus on the volunteering aspect. Based on my participant observation, though Sam, Jayden, Holiday and Chris are all digital literate volunteers, Sam, Holiday and Chris still rely on paper calendars, while Jayden, in spite of his extra years, is used to using the calendar function as well as other functions on his smartphone. For example, Figure 5.1 shows the paper appointment diaries used by Sam, Holiday and Chris to list major events and activities conducted in their unit or group during the periods 2011–2014, 2008–2009 and 2012–2014, respectively.

Figure 5.1 Paper appointment diaries belonging to Sam (left), Holiday (middle) and Chris (right)



Holiday has been using pocket-sized appointment diaries for a long time, she is able to carry one to her squadron and indicate clearly whether a particular routine meeting is ‘closed meeting’ (i.e. cancelled) or not. Coincidentally, the A5-sized appointment diaries of both Sam and Chris are provided by the Hong Kong Government to employees on a free-of-charge basis. Interestingly, Sam likes stapling his own HKACC name card onto the front cover of each calendar to make it more personalized and “professional” (his own word). There is a common practice and a common goal to create a professional identity among all HKACC volunteers. When Sam was asked why he did not intend to shift from a paper to a digital calendar, such as the calendar function on his smartphone, his immediate response was “it [using

paper appointment diaries] is my habit” (Sam, *unstructured interview*, 2014). So, organizing life through print-based calendars is a typical common practice.

Holiday seems to be the only one among the writers who has more diversified strategies for organizing her volunteering life. As well as a paper format, Holiday is used to recording her Air Cadets-related activities in the calendar function of her smartphone (Figure 5.2). On top of this, to remind herself of key dates of routine meetings, she also prepares slips of paper and keeps one in her purse. An example is shown in Figure 5.3: all the dates shown are for routine meetings of her squadron from November 2013 to March 2014. Information about the timeslots of routine meetings is skipped on this paper reminder, since from 1 pm to 5pm every Saturday²¹ is a common practice for Holiday and her cadet members. Holiday likes to keep all three types of schedules in different locations: a paper reminder in her purse for quick reference, a paper appointment diary at home and a digital appointment diary which is portable. So it can be seen that print-based and digital practices overlap and do not directly duplicate each other.

Figure 5.2 Holiday’s Digital Appointment Diary

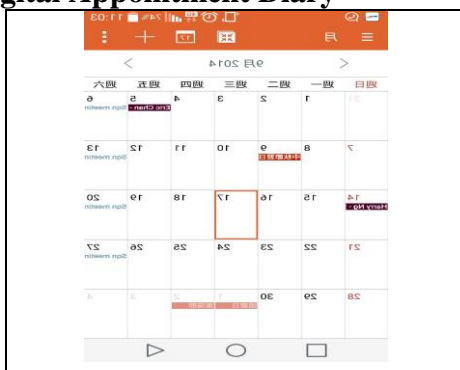
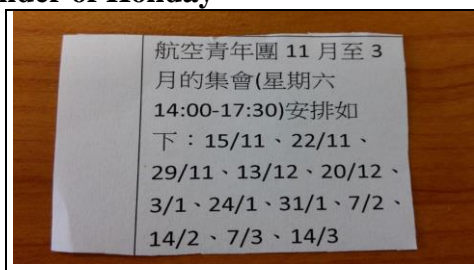


Figure 5.3 Paper Reminder of Holiday



²¹ In general, a great majority of the cadet squadrons hold their weekly routine meetings on Saturdays from 1 pm to 5 pm, or sometimes to 6pm, which is like a norm in the HKACC, whereas a few squadrons have weekly training on a Saturday or Sunday morning due to school availability or students’s needs.

5.4.2 Documenting Life

Facebook itself is a notable example of documenting volunteers' lives as written life histories in the digital domain. Facebook becomes a virtual community with a majority of HKACC members who post messages on their own timelines detailing their life in words, images and other types of files, though writing is still a core aspect (Barton & Lee, 2012). Facebook documents participants' lives from the past and the present and looks to the future.

5.4.2.1 Documenting Life about an Offline Text

Facebook itself is online but the texts recorded by Facebook can be offline. For instance, in Data extract 5.9, Holiday successfully cultivated a sense of satisfaction through recording her cadet achievements in a Cadet Training Record Book (CTRB). CTRB is like a handbook to record the details of individual cadets' results in all their continuous assessments, promotions and community service. All records have to be endorsed by their officers or projects-in-charge. According to the First Class Cadet Training Manual, "The Cadet Training Record Book is presented to a cadet at the time of his/her enrollment and it maintains a record of all the activities a cadet participated in, such as training, examinations passed and community services achieved" (Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps, 2015).

Data extract 5.9 Documenting Life with a CTRB

12 October 2013

As a ma'am, the happiest moment is to sign my name in the CTRBs for endorsement after my cadets passed their exams. When their CTRBs are full of [our] signatures, I am really satisfied. *^O^*



29 like this.

(Holiday, Facebook post, 2013)

5.4.2.2 Documenting Life through Photographs

The Facebook users in my research like keeping photos as a record of their lives. Participating in current activities can trigger one's memories of past activities. Memory retrieval is a common practice in Facebook timelines. For instance, as shown

in Data extract 5.10, due to his current paid job's duties, Chris managed to revisit a place in which he took on the duty of a local escort in the IACE when he was in his cadet period.

Data extract 5.10 The retrieval of events or information from the past

15 May 2014

When I was a local escort for IACE at the age of 17, I was swimming with the overseas cadets at this swimming pool at the Gordon Hard Camp. I am not sure if I still have any chance to revisit old places. Today I managed to revisit this old place because of work.



26 like this.

Chris: Were you, you and you there once upon a time?

Volunteer 1: Bo Lung?

Chris: The riverside opposite Bo Lung.

Volunteer 2: Sailing at the Gordon Hard Camp (Rigid Raider²²)...

Chris: Going to the Bo Lung Hill by Wessex then walking down the hill.

Volunteer 3: Is it permitted to enter (now)?

Chris: (No. I am only permitted to enter the venue) simply because of work.

Volunteer 4: Chris Sir wanna “reswim” here?

Chris: I already “reswim” here, so there is no need to “reswim”.

(Chris, Facebook post, 2014)

Having artful or creative dialogues on Facebook is another common practice among the virtual CoP. In the above Data extract 5.8, Chris and another volunteer make a joke by using two ambiguous words in Cantonese. In Cantonese, the pronunciations of the words ‘swim’ and ‘visit’ are the same but their meanings are different, as they are homophones. This pun is a form of word play representing

²² The Rigid Raider is a fast patrol craft which is common in military forces.

humour (Swann, 2006). The superficial meaning of the question is whether Chris wants to ‘reswim’ in this swimming pool, but its underlying meaning is whether Chris wants to revisit this place.

Another example showing life history is Sam Tong’s case (see Data extract 5.11). Sam’s volunteer friend (Volunteer 5) posted an old newspaper article entitled “Students can be pilots!” on her timeline. Among the HKACC community, there is always a rumour that members who come from 123 Sqn can gain weight very easily and Sam Tong is regarded as a ‘leader’.

Data extract 5.11 Informality and humour through Facebook interactions

27 March 2014

Volunteer 1: U (You) still keep it!!!

Sam: We are still young...

Volunteer 2: What? Training Camp can [let members] lose weight?

Volunteer 3: You have to ask CHAN Tai Man (another volunteer friend) then.

Sam: 123 Club.

Volunteer 4: Sam ... Form 7...

Volunteer 5: Sam Tong ... he is a such a great leader [in gaining weight] ... hoho...
(*Sam, Facebook post, 2014*)

Among all the research participants, Holiday is the one who frequently posts multimodal messages and updates. For example, Holiday combined text with an emoticon and an image in the same post when she wanted to express her feeling of achievement with her teammates in the Annual Footdrill Competition, namely, the Albatross Award (shown in Data extract 5.12).

Data extract 5.12 Multimodal update on Facebook

6 December 2009

Yeah! We are the best 456 [Squadron]²³!



456! Eventually we have a chance to win in the Albatross Award. Thank you for xxx everybody's effort ☺ How touching!

(Holiday, Facebook post, 2009)

My research participants' timelines become techno-biographies with their frequent inputs, they are like diaries with posts about their own feelings and photographs. Since 2013, Facebook has created a special slideshow to review users' highlights from the past year. In each slideshow, those photographs with the largest numbers of 'likes' are included.

5.4.3 Personal Communication

In the digital era, participating in Facebook is voluntary and forms part of adult volunteers' volunteering life. Apart from face-to-face interaction and communication, Facebook becomes an alternative platform for personal communication within the HKACC community in which traditional types of texts such as letters have been phased out (cf. Barton & Hamilton, 2012). On the one hand, virtual Facebook serves as an extension of their real volunteering life, supporting interactive dialogue and strengthening the already-established social network. On the other hand, generally, volunteers who have joined my research study also continued their interactions and discussions from the virtual world in the real world.

At the time of writing this thesis, based on my participant observation, my research participants have been frequently sharing useful information with fellow officers through other electronic means, like Facebook. The following example comes

²³ It is a common practice to mention the squadron number only, instead of the squadron number plus the word 'squadron', within the HKACC.

from one of the images on Sam's Facebook page, as shown in Data extract 5.13 (The whole image has been modified to maintain the anonymity of the cadet member. For example, the Sqn number is blurred, the rank slide is amended and a photograph is used to replace the original image, which is a painting). I took the image as intended to convey the sense of achievement of a cadet member who underwent training conducted by Sam before. This cadet expressed that he was proud of his acting appointment in a parade even though the duration was only 24 hours. The armlet in the middle of the image is the core part showing a cadet's classification, badges such as AYP and other achievements, e.g. First Aider Badge. Each small photo and each piece of writing involve a tag (he tagged his officers and other cadet members who went through tough training activities with him for years). Underneath this photo, Sam gave a 'like' to show his support for the cadet.

Data extract 5.13 A cadet's Multimodal Image



5.4.3.1 Different Types of Communication Platforms

The rapid development of smartphones gave rise to the spread of Facebook from computer Web browsers to mobile device applications on mobile operating systems like Android and Apple's iOS.²⁴ Facebook first emerged as the most popular and best-known Web-based communication tool throughout the HKACC, regardless of age group, gender or rank. This traditional Web-based communication tool launched its Facebook app in 2012, which altered the previous communication practices and strengthened the connections, interactions and relationships between our research participants and the rest of the HKACC members in the digital world. Visiting Facebook in different places, namely, on a home computer, work computer or

²⁴ iOS is a mobile operating system created and developed by Apple Inc.

mobile device, is the common practice of our participants. Such details recorded for all the second semi-structured interviews are summarized in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2 Participants’ Preferences on the uses of different devices through which Facebook can be accessed

	Home computer	Work computer	Mobile device
Chris	✓		✓
Holiday	✓		✓
Jayden	✓		
Sam			✓

Two younger participants explained further why they preferred mobile devices for accessing Facebook. For example, Holiday preferred using a ‘mobile phone which is the most frequently used. It’s convenient!’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Holiday further explained when using Facebook was less desirable: she did not want to let others see her Facebook usage in the workplace. Similarly, Sam reported that he also used mobile devices more often, though he implied that a home computer was also used if he was free. Sam argued, ‘Mobile device, or, whenever I am free. There are no differences!’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*).

As for the frequency of accessing Facebook, Chris simply said that it depended on the situation, while the other participants claimed that they had particular patterns for accessing the platform. Sam accessed it once per hour while Holiday did so ‘possibly several times per day’ or whenever she was ‘tired at work’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Jayden enjoyed checking what he ‘can see on Facebook before sleep’ (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). In other words, Jayden intentionally visited Facebook in the evening before his bedtime.

5.4.3.2 Language Choices and Formal & Informal Literacy Practices

Facebook users can freely decide which language they want to use on Facebook. All they have to do is to click on the ‘language tab’ on the ‘accounts page’ and select their preferred language out of the 84 available from a drop-down menu, as shown in

Figure 5.4. In Hong Kong, the dominant languages used by Facebook users are English and Chinese (including Cantonese and Putonghua).

Figure 5.4 Facebook can be viewed in 84 languages



My research participants from the aviation youth group had different preferences for the languages they prefer to use on the SNS. The participants were asked to explain when they generally chose a particular language in the second semi-structured interviews. Chris said Chinese was his favourite simply because it is his mother tongue. Holiday preferred using two languages, depending on the situation: ‘Depending on which language they (cadets) use first. If they use English first, then I continue to use English. If they use Chinese first, then I use Chinese’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). On the other hand, both Jayden and Sam felt that using English was their favourite, but their reasons for language choice were slightly different. Jayden explained that he felt more comfortable when he wrote in English than Chinese, because his Chinese proficiency in vocabulary was not good enough: ‘Using English is more accurate than Chinese since there are some Cantonese slangs I don’t know how to write’ (*Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Sam opted for English when he was asked to decide his preferred language for writing due to a lack of competency in typing Chinese (see Data extract 5.14 below). Writing (typing) in the English alphabet is easier for him.

Data extract 5.14 Sam: English is ‘easier for input’

Winnie: Which languages do you prefer to use on Facebook? Why?

Sam: English.

Winnie: Why?

Sam: Easier for input, because my Chinese character input skill is...

NOTE: Sam is smiling. I have observed his poor Chinese input method. He has to use the handwriting function of the computer.

Winnie: No other reasons?

NOTE: Sam is shaking his head.

(Sam, *field note and semi-structured interview 2, 2014*)

Facebook use also involves a combination of formal and informal literacies depending on participants' preferences and situation. Chris has long been delineated as a "serious" trainer, but he can look very different in the Facebook world. For instance, when Chris talked about Albatross Award, a large-scale footdrill event he was responsible for, he spoke in a more serious tone, the same as his normal image in the real world (in Data extract 5.15). However, on another occasion, when Chris interacted with another volunteer on a more casual topic: "Birthday", his words became more relaxed and less formal.

Data extract 5.15 Chris's Formal and Informal Literacies

(Example of Formal Literacies)

2 December 2012

Volunteer 1: Today thank you so much for your big help!

Chris: In fact, lots of errors due to my lack of preparation [There is still a lot of room for improvement]. [I hope that] we can cooperate happily.

Volunteer 1: In the past, I rarely organized this type of event. This time [errors] was due to my lack of preparation actually. Thank you for your reminders and paying close attention to details throughout the preparation journey!

Chris: Likewise.

Chris: Let us encourage each other in our endeavours.

(Chris, *Facebook post, 2012*)

(Example of Informal Literacies)

2 February 2013

Volunteer 1: Happy Birthday!

Chris: thnak [thank] you sir. Don't believe FB so much.

Volunteer 1: !!

Chris: Feb 2nd may not be the truth. Hahaha...

Volunteer 1: ooopppss ... !!!!

(Chris, Facebook post, 2013)

Another example to illustrate informal literacy comes from Jayden's timeline. Jayden generally projected a good image as a friendly and approachable trainer. So it was no surprise to see an informal Facebook 'conversation' between Jayden and a cadet member who was well acquainted with Jayden and who cracked a joke about Jayden's picture (see Data extract 5.16).

Data extract 5.16 Jayden's Informal Literacy with fellow members

7 June 2008

[an image about Jayden standing beside a helicopter]

Volunteer 1: WOW~How stylish ... the helicopter XP

Jayden: WOW~Yeah ... How stylish ... I thought you talked about the man
.....but the helicopter. The helicopter is more important than me!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Volunteer 1: HAHAHAHA ^v^ Don't be angry la, I know Jayden Sir is not that stingy ... hehe~

Volunteer 2: ah sir is stylish!

Jayden: Ah, no wonder why you are my good colleague, good brother.

Volunteer 3: Wah Ha Ha Ha~~~both the man and the helicopter are stylish!!!!
(Jayden, Facebook post, 2008)

5.4.4 Private Leisure

Individual writers' Facebook pages, in my research, as portrayed in the previous sections, are like databases of personal leisure activities, including routine volunteering activities and associated literacy practices. The same as Barton & Hamilton's (2012) findings, personal leisure can appear in public spaces. Some of the volunteering literacy practices can be classified as either self-generated or imposed, or labelled as either Air Cadets-related or beyond the scope of the Air Cadets. To illustrate how volunteers write for themselves and for others as private leisure, one well-known example that prompts controversy among the HKACC community but

was not initially generated by any of its members was the Ice Bucket Challenge in 2014. This was a popular charity activity involving dumping a bucket of ice water on someone's head with the aim to raise the awareness of a disease, 'Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis' (ALS). As Vaidya (2014) said, "...a social media phenomenon known as the Ice Bucket Challenge had raised more than \$100 million toward solutions and increased awareness for this progressive and fatal neuromuscular disease that affects about 5 in every 100,000 people worldwide". Thanks to social media, like Facebook, people, including our volunteers, like tagging their friends to participate in order to mobilize their friends to make a donation. Such fund-raising activity was increasingly popular from June to August 2014. Jayden personally enjoyed commenting on fellow members' Facebook posts, especially those posts related to the Ice Bucket Challenge, as shown in Data extract 5.17.

Data extract 5.17 Jayden: 'I have seen this (Ice Bucket Challenge) on Facebook. I have commented on their posts'

[Commenting on] Facebook is ok. Nowadays there are videos apart from images, so we can watch Youtube videos too. Recently dumping ice ... that Ice Bucket Campaign is common, little Sussie (a junior officer who is the mutual friend of Jayden and me) has done so too. I have seen this on Facebook. I have commented on their posts.

(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Lurking on Facebook, as Jayden calls it, becomes his private leisure. The traditional meaning of lurking on Facebook refers to the great amount of time one can spend on reading, observing or browsing information on the SNS without any involvement (Pempek, Yermolayeva and Calvert, 2009). However, Jayden has a greater level of involvement as he likes beautiful pictures and comments on posts created by people whom he contacts from time to time. This is a case of the distinction between a self-reported account (emic) and my analysis and interpretation (etic).

On the other hand, among the research participants, Jayden was the only one who drew a sharp distinction between his reactions to positive and negative comments. During the second semi-structured interview about Facebook, Jayden asked me if I knew some officers who were our mutual friends and became Cadet Pilots. I managed to see the updates on Jayden as well as on those future captains

whom I knew through their online conversations on Jayden's posts, along with positive comments on those Cadet Pilots' achievements. The same as his face-to-face interactions with fellow Corps members, Jayden encouraged positive interactions online. He appreciated posting positive comments online but tried to avoid critical comments to minimize the possibility of irrational discussions, confrontations or the possibility of being attacked (see Data extract 5.18). Jayden's viewpoint was largely affected by Occupy Central, which is a civil disobedience movement initiated by a group of Hong Kong scholars and students in September, 2014. After all the controversial debates and arguments between both supportive and opposition parties, Jayden explained how some people who supported Occupy Central tended to go to extremes, which he perceived as wrong. So he perceived criticism as negative and tried to block any extreme friends online.

Data extract 5.18 Jayden Avoids Negative Comments and Irrational Discussions

Negative comments are only limited to issues such as Occupy Central and student strike though I don't want to talk about these issues [on Facebook] that often. Some [Facebook] people are very crazy. If you mention something which is not their cup of tea, they investigate your background, attack you and make troubles.

(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

The same as Jayden, Holiday also enjoyed providing encouraging feedback on her HKACC friends' Facebook posts. The only difference is that Holiday paid more attention to her cadets' Facebook pages. For Holiday, having a deeper understanding of her cadets' online practices and showing her support for her cadets' Facebook writing are her private leisure (see Data extract 5.19). Holiday likes being involved in her cadets' social circle, contributing to their discussions and is willing to make donations in order to support her cadets' kindness shown to those who are in need in society, e.g. those who suffer from ALS in the campaign.

Data extract 5.19 Holiday: 'Yes, I enjoy doing so (commenting on Facebook) especially on my cadets' Facebook pages'

Winnie: In general, do you enjoy commenting on Facebook? Why?

Holiday: Yes, I enjoy doing so especially on my cadets' Facebook pages.

Winnie: Ah..you like your cadets so much!

Holiday: I have to know what happens to them. They are the kind of people who

even like posting dumping ice buckets. Haha!

Winnie: So, just in case one of them here like dumping ice buckets, you are willing to support him or her, right? I have heard they (cadets) just talked to each other about tagging

Holiday: Yes, I support them.

Winnie: They said they wanna tag Robert?

Holiday: They tag Robert [for the challenge] then he has to donate money. I must support

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2 and participant-observation, 2014)

Interestingly, Chris was the only participant whose self-reported account differed from his digital practice. Chris claimed he was less willing to comment on Facebook because of time constraints. Chris felt time was precious. He did not like the idea of commenting on Facebook because ‘it will spend a lot of time to write and respond’ (*Chris, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). However, the Facebook screenshots I collected show that he was very active in commenting on others’ posts.

Another type of private leisure is shopping practices that were also brought into this online CoP. For example, Sam and Aaron, another active volunteer, are friends both online and offline. Due to their common concern over the quality and quantity of local uniform suppliers, HKACC volunteers are quite keen to place bulk orders through Cadet Direct, a UK supplier of military clothing, footwear and equipment, on an irregular basis. From time to time, Aaron creates a post entitled ‘Call for orders’ (for example, Data extract 5.20); then, those who are interested can either send messages to his inbox or reply to his post publicly. All the items are first delivered to Aaron’s flat, then the buyers can contact Aaron to collect their order or wait until a Corps events for distribution. As can be seen from his Facebook posts, Aaron is always willing to do extra work to help his fellows and cadets, because he wants to minimize the shipping cost for the orders. In order to avoid having an order disclosed in public, Sam asked for Aaron’s help in purchasing a few cans of parade gloss by ordering through WhatsApp in 2013.

Data extract 5.20 Screenshots of Online Shopping Practices



(Sam likes Aaron's Facebook post, 2013)

5.4.5 Sense Making

In the past, there was a traditional culture of overreliance on textbooks as the main teaching and learning resources. The transformation from textbooks to diversified learning resources was a drastic change in the field of education and training (Rennie & Morrison, 2013). Volunteers nowadays, as members of the digital generation, have a strong need to acquire “the abilities to ‘read’ a range of printed, electronic and visual texts; master the new communication technologies via spoken and written language; locate, manage, evaluate and use information or knowledge; and engage critically with media and other texts” (Lonsdale & McCurry, 2004, p.32). More opportunities via communication technologies put more demands on volunteers’ literacies.

5.4.5.1 Assessing Information

Using a search engine regularly has become a common trend in the Web 2.0 world. For example, visiting Hong Kong Observatory’s website to check the weather forecast (Data extract 5.21) and referring to “General Guidelines for Conducting Training Activities” (Appendix 7) issued by the Skills Development Wing of Training Group is a common practice of project officers, including Holiday.

Data extract 5.21 Holiday ‘[I] hope the Observatory’s weather forecast is accurate this time’

23 April 2012

The weather forecast shows it keeps raining throughout the week, which makes me feel worried indeed! The Squadron Camp is approaching soon!

2 May 2012

[I] hope this Saturday and Sunday can be sunny. [I] hope the Observatory’s weather forecast is accurate this time.



(Holiday, Facebook post, 2012)

Youtube is a very useful source for teaching and learning. Searching for videos and sharing them with fellow volunteers, friends, family and the world on the most popular video-sharing website in Hong Kong, YouTube, has become another common practice. For example, the capsule of China’s Shenzhou 9 spacecraft came down in north China’s inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on 29 June 2012. In Data extract 5.22, Kim, Jayden’s volunteer friend, asked about the possibility of watching the video about the return of China’s first female astronaut and two other astronauts to Earth from a 13-day mission. As an experienced YouTube video creator and viewer, Jayden suggested YouTube as a possible option immediately, since viewers can locate videos using titles, keywords or tags as part of the video descriptions set by the video owners. From time to time, the YouTube videos created and shared by him on his own Facebook timeline attracted many ‘likes’ and comments posted by his ‘fans’ – other members who clicked ‘followed’ his updates on Facebook and are also aviation enthusiasts.

Data extract 5.22 Jayden: ‘U tube (YouTube) should have this footage’

29 June 2012

Our country’s astronauts arrived home safely. Very touching, they seem to have a bit hard landing. Nowadays China’s Astronautics Industry, no matter what, can be described with one word – brilliant!

18 like this.

Volunteer 1: Was the landing video shot by UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles)? Mi-171 (a helicopter) was captured!

Kim: Where we can see the video?

Jayden: Do you like to watch TV news?

Kim: OK

Jayden: Little Kim, go back home to watch TV. u tube (YouTube) should have this footage

Kim: Yes. [I] need to watch the TV at home / cannot see it in the office!

Volunteer 2: How touching! With best wishes of prosperity for our country!
(Jayden, Facebook post, 2012)

5.4.5.2 Problem Solving

Facebook is like a communal database full of experts from different disciplines. In the mixed-methods research of Cain and PolICASTRI (2011), Facebook proved to be an informal learning environment for students exploring contemporary, real-world topics with experts in the field of pharmacy management, leadership and business. As well as using search engines, Facebook users in my research can look for solutions to problems with the help of fellow volunteers within their social networks. Because of such networks for support, the nickname ‘Facebook God’ emerged in recent years. Posting problems on volunteers’ own timelines can elicit responses within a short timeframe. For instance, in Data extract 5.23, Holiday expressed her concern over the difficulty in arranging a One Day Refresher Course (ODRC) organized by Hong Kong St. John Ambulance for valid First Aid Certificate holders on any Sunday. She intended to ask for a solution because of her unavailability on Saturdays. Other volunteers who were more familiar with First Aid Courses gave her some suggestions after reading her puzzled message.

Data extract 5.23 Holiday's call for solutions to her problem

30 November 2014

Just realized the First Aid card is expiring soon. No st john one-day refresher course on Sunday. What should I do!

Volunteer 1: Self-study, or making use of the chance to organize a EFA course for doing some practice XD

Volunteer 2: Red Cross refresh

Holiday: Thanks for everyone's concern: If there is no st john one-day refresher course, then self-study is useless.

Volunteer 1: Candidate holding an expired First Aid Certificate not more than 6 months can apply for the ODRC course

Volunteer 1: http://www.stjohn.org.hk/b5/fa_c_ODRC.shtml
(Holiday. Facebook post. 2014)

5.4.6 Social Participation

HKACC members' social participation on Facebook can be portrayed in terms of reading and writing themselves, and reading and writing with images and videos. This subsection explains the use of text and visual literacies in social participation in the virtual community.

5.4.6.1 Reading and Writing in Social Participation on Facebook

Attending meetings regularly and participating in unit activities are two major highlights of the social participation of Air Cadets' members, as mentioned in Chapter 4. These volunteers also engaged in a certain amount of reading and writing related to the organisation on the popular SNS in different ways. For example, Sam reported that 80 per cent of his Facebook posts were related to the HKACC. He treated Facebook as an alternative platform for broadcasting messages to other members, as shown in Data extract 5.24.

Data extract 5.24 Sam: 'It is easier to spread my messages around'

Winnie: Do you enjoy posting Corps-related messages on Facebook? Why?

Sam: I like doing so since many people have the same platform as me, which means it is easier to spread my messages around.
(Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Though the other three writers said they made relatively fewer relevant posts, they were still active in posting and replying to messages. Chris regarded posting messages on Facebook as a method of ‘chatting’ (*Chris, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Holiday reported that approximately one third or one quarter of her posts were relevant to her life and her cadets in the HKACC. Holiday enjoyed interacting with her cadets on Facebook, as shown in Data extract 5.25. Holiday is like a chaperone for the teenagers in her unit. She cares about her cadet’s training activities and community service in the Corps, and also the cadets’ psychological and social development.

Data extract 5.25 Holiday: ‘30–40% [of my posts] are related to ACC since my cadets have Facebook’

Holiday: I think 30–40% [of my posts] are related to ACC since my cadets have Facebook.

Winnie: Oh, for those we have just seen, you have added them?

Holiday: Yes, I have added them. They said, “Ma’am, I have done this. I have gone out to do a service (community service). I have met this batch of friends ... or a new one (boyfriend or girlfriend)”.

Winnie: So, you have seen [their Facebook posts]?

Holiday: Yes, I have done so. Meeting a girlfriend is something I must know for sure. Haha!

(*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*)

The amount of time spent on reading and writing may vary. Chris’s preference was to have more reading than writing: ‘on the average an hour a day’ (*Chris, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Jayden also preferred reading, which is the reason why he managed to spot his own images on many HKACC project banners. Jayden admitted he still commented on fellow members’ posts depending on the type of activity, such as those activities organized by me with the aim to give spiritual support to me (see Data extract 5.26).

Data extract 5.26 Jayden: ‘I did comment on these activities!’

Winnie: How much reading and writing related to our Corps do you do on Facebook?

Jayden: Yes, sure. For example, I have seen [posts about] Commandant’s Award and CVQO activities are those that I have read.

Winnie: I have seen your photos and will put your photos into promotional banners in the future.

Jayden: I did comment on these activities!
(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Through Jayden’s Facebook posts, his dedication to the HKACC is reflected. For example, Data extract 5.24 shows that he tried his best to recruit his friends as supporters or donors for the annual fundraising campaign on Facebook, despite his job demands at the airport at the same time (Data extract 5.27). This fundraising campaign is called Flag Day and is approved by the Hong Kong government. On HKACC Flag Day, most HKACC members and other volunteers serve as volunteers, carrying bags and flags (Corps logo stickers) to collect money from passers-by.

Data extract 5.27 Jayden: ‘Please support HKACC flag day, Thanks’

15 June 2012

Jayden: Please support HKACC flag day, Thanks
13 like this.

Volunteer 1: Will you attend? If yes, see you in Central.

Volunteer 2: Please come to Aberdeen to support us!

Friend 1: HK island?

Friend 2: when is it?

Volunteer 2: Tmr morning...

Friend 3: Wait for me. I am on the way.

Jayden: All HKACC Colleagues, bon courage. I am working hard at the airport.

Friend 4: well done, bon courage.
(Jayden, Facebook post, 2012)

5.4.6.2 Sharing Images about Social Participation on Facebook

All writers are experienced in sharing images showing their social participation on Facebook. When looking further into Facebook data for the period of 2007–2014, it can be seen that all four writers were quite active in terms of reading and writing and including images about the Corps. For instance, among all the images shared by Jayden on Facebook, the majority of them related to training activities or flying activities he organized regularly. For example, an aviation trainer made a paper glider with his partner at the end of a lesson and uploaded a photo onto his Facebook timeline, which attracted feedback from other aviation enthusiasts (see Data extract 5.28).

Data extract 5.28 Jayden shared an image of a paper glider

6 August 2012

Air surfing glider



13 like this.

Volunteer 1: brilliant~ when will the course commence?

Jayden: Very soon. Very soon. It will be around September to October this year!

Volunteer 2: Please count me in!
(Jayden. Facebook post. 2012)

There are also regular posts with images about both Corps-level and Sqn-level activities that show writers' attention to and enthusiasm for Corps affairs. For example, Jayden left a comment on a group photo taken at the end of a large-scale outdoor competition at Corps-level, it was 'the moment of happiness, cool ... and cold' (Jayden, Facebook post, 2010). That competition involved the coordination and effort of over a hundred members. A group photo successfully captured the team spirit in a strong wind and chilly weather. On the other hand, at the Sqn-level, Holiday always does something extra on top of her 'mandatory' volunteer duties as an OC Sqn, as can be seen from her frequent posting or sharing of images related to her feelings, attitudes and unit activities on a weekly basis, shown in Data extract 5.30, and as she reported in Data extract 5.29.

Data extract 5.29 Holiday: ‘Yes, photos must be uploaded after each meeting based on cadets’ request’

Holiday: Once per week since I attend squadron meetings once per week. After each meeting, photos are uploaded [onto our Facebook].

Winnie: Every Saturday?

Holiday: Yes, photos must be uploaded after each meeting based on cadets’ request. “Ma’am, when will you post them (photos) on Facebook?”

Winnie: So they ask you to post?

Holiday: Yes, they do so.

Winnie: Is it because they let you decide which photos can be posted or is it like a practice?

Holiday: Just because I am the one who holds the camera normally. It is more convenient [for me to hold the camera]. Since they have to do footdrill practice, it is not that convenient for them to hold cameras. That’s why I take photographs for them.

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Data extract 5.30 Examples of Holiday’s weekly posts with images

18 October 2014

Today I can see my Cadets – 🌟 feeling excited.
13 like this.

18 October 2014

PT section (i.e. session)@20141018 – someone who was overconfident challenged Ah Fai



11 like this.

26 October 2014

I support you all wholeheartedly. You all grow up now and know how to be thoughtful for me. I feel so touched indeed. Your progress is my driving force.

[an image which is a group photo]

31 like this.

(Holiday, Facebook post, 2014)

Among all the Corps-related photos on her Facebook timeline, Holiday had a literacy choice. As shown in Data extract 5.31, her willingness to add comments or captions to photos about the HKACC depends on whether the owners of the photos are nodding or casual acquaintances and whether she feels the need to support a particular event.

Data extract 5.31 Holiday's Literacy Choice: Familiarity with the Posts' Owners and Level of Understanding

Winnie: Do you like writing things about your Corps-related photos?

Holiday: Yes, certainly for those [members] whom I am more familiar with. Or depending on whether those events need my support, for example, I must write for those events organized by Winnie. Haha!

Winnie: Haha! Thank you!

Holiday: Depends on whether I am familiar with those volunteers or whether I understand the events' nature. If I understand the events and know what happens, then I leave messages quite often.

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Data extract 5.31 also indicates the rapport established between me as the researcher and those researched. As mentioned in my previous discussion on ethics in Chapters 1 and 3, I am always aware of my position in the organisation. The dialogue between Holiday and me shows some essence of the rapport: friendship, honesty and trust (Springwood & King, 2001). Holiday had already offered support and assistance to me, both mentally and physically, even before she joined my research as a participant and collaborator. Her above claim about the willingness to write depends on the familiarity level of HKACC friends, as demonstrated in Data extract 5.32. After she posted a photograph about Donald, her former coursemate in the OCTC, she showed her concern for this fellow who lost his voice at the end of the Annual Parade.

Data extract 5.32 Holiday's practice to write about those friends whom she is more familiar with

26 November 2007

Holiday: Today Donald Sir had to give commands, so had lost his voice. Take care!

Volunteer 1: Take care ... He is sick whenever there is a parade ... get well soon!

Volunteer 2: It seems to be true.....Donald, next time please drink Chinese herbal tea before you go to PARADE GROUND!

(Holiday, Facebook post, 2007)

To illustrate further the influence of social participation on Facebook literacy practices, the HKACC Flag Selling Day, an annual fund-raising campaign, held on 26 October 2013 is a notable example. Thanks to the positive impact of a television series about pilots and other aviation professionals entitled ‘Triumph in the Skies II’, the HKACC became a popular topic in the city in 2013. Hence, a television station sent a crew to interview four of our adult and cadet members as representatives. The Administrator of the HKACC Facebook page realised that fellow members might have missed the chance to watch a TV show entitled ‘The Green Room’, because it was broadcast in the afternoon on a weekday, which was within volunteers’ office hours, so he decided to take screenshots and upload Data extract 5.33 to his Facebook page for promotion and information sharing. Sam first clicked the ‘Like’ button then shared the images to his own page to show his support for the organisation virtually, in addition to his physical support on Flag Day. In addition, Sam enjoyed sharing images taken at ‘major events such as Annual Parade or functions of my own unit more often’ (Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014).

Data extract 5.33 Screenshots of Interviews in ‘The Green Room’ on TV



5.5 New Landscape of Communication Practices on Facebook

5.5.1 Mutual Communication

Facebook, as a popular social medium in both Hong Kong and the UK, enables more direct dialogues between superiors and juniors, which helps to boost mutual communication between members of uniformed youth groups and make activities visible. Compared with ‘Twitter’ in the UK, Facebook has a larger influence on Hong Kong volunteers’ life, as it is the most popular social network platform in the aviation community. My research findings match the comment made by the Commandant (Comdt) of the HKACC’s sister organisation in the UK – the ACO, known as the ‘Air Cadets’, as shown in Data extract 5.34.

Data extract 5.34 Message from Commandant Air Cadets (UK) – Direct access/ social media, 13 March 2015

One of the great benefits of social media is that it allows direct access between the Comdt, staff, volunteers and cadets and there is no doubt I am better informed on cadet activity as a result of my engagement via Facebook and Twitter.

Moreover, cadets, staff and volunteers have much greater visibility of what the “Big Boss” is doing and this seems to be widely welcomed.
(*Commandant Air Cadets’s Facebook page, 2015*)

All four writers in my research generally agreed that Facebook has a positive impact in terms of enhancing the mutual communication between Corps members. This echoes one of the key findings in the quantitative research of Hurt, Bradley et al. (2012), in that Facebook users cultivate a deeper understanding of their classmates. All four writers have online social interactions with their peers from the Corps. Facebook performs the function of an online discussion group. Thanks to Facebook, mutual communication between Corps members is more ‘close and real’ and ‘informative and frequent’ to use the exact phrasing of Chris and Holiday, respectively mentioned in their semi-structured interviews.

Chris did not elaborate his point further about ‘close and real’ communication in an interview but his literacy practice on Facebook did prove this claim. Data extract 5.35 shows a non-synchronized conversation between Chris and two other volunteers after a photograph of Chris’s lecture was posted in one of the Facebook public groups, and where he was tagged. The way Chris interacted with this female volunteer was more casual than a real life conversation they had, based on my unstructured

observation at a passing-out parade in 2014. As Williams (2008) notes about the slight differences between online and offline images, “the idea that individuals can create online personas that are in some ways different from the way they present themselves in their face-to-face encounters is well known” (p.683). In spite of the serious and formal image projected by HKACC volunteers in general, casual and informal digital writing is more typical among adult volunteers on the SNS platform. In short, the identities our volunteers present online can be quite different from face-to-face occasions.

Data extract 5.35 Informality found in computer-mediated communication

<p><u>15 October 2012</u></p> <p>Male Volunteer: Chris was grinning happily!</p> <p>Female Volunteer: How smart!!!!!!</p> <p>Chris: Ma’am, don’t laugh at me please. There is a need to make jokes sometimes. (Chris, Facebook post, 2012)</p>
--

Holiday, on the other hand, provided some examples to justify her comment on ‘informative and frequent’ mutual communication in an interview. As an active user of Facebook, Holiday admitted that she managed to find out what fellow volunteers from other squadrons did in routine squadron meetings and on hikes, since this it was the common practice of adult volunteers to ‘share what we do in daily lives on Facebook’ (*Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). From Holiday’s point of view, HKACC life is one part of ‘daily lives’.

Sharing feelings about cadets’ promotions or achievements on Facebook is a common practice amongst our adult volunteers. In fact, presenting new rank slides for cadets who win promotion from a duty officer or the Officer Commanding in either open formation or close formation has become a frequent literacy event. For instance, Holiday uploaded a photograph about a cadet’s promotion to the rank of Cadet Corporal. The caption she wrote was: ‘A historical moment of 456 Squadron!’ This post attracted two fellow members who showed support for both Holiday and her cadet since Holiday had waited for her promotion for a long time. Holiday also used this successful case to encourage other cadets in her Sqn (see Data extract 5.36).

Data extract 5.36 Sharing a cadet member's achievement

1 November 2009

A historical moment of 456 Squadron!



8 like this.

Volunteer 1: Finally after waiting for long...

Volunteer 2: Congratulations!

Holiday: Yes ... 3 years already! Today her father was so excited to see her daughter's promotion ... and even said 'thank you' to me! [Her achievement] lets every single adult member of 456 [Squadron] feels immensely relieved! Cool~ other cadets have to work harder. It will be your turn next time!

(Holiday, Facebook post, 2009)

Jayden, in spite of being more advanced in technology, such as utilising more online communication tools including WhatsApp with his HKACC fellows more often, also recognized the importance of Facebook for enhancing mutual communication: 'Yes, since they [Facebook] do not only have ACC activities, but also their personal activities' (Jayden, *semi-structured interview 2, 2014*). Jayden acted as the middleman to link up two volunteers, namely, Patrick and Sarah, who did not know each other before though both interacted on Jayden's Facebook timeline, as seen in Data extract 5.37. Later, these two volunteers were able to communicate with each other effectively in offline settings thanks to Jayden's connection.

Data extract 5.37 Jayden linked up two volunteers²⁵

13 August 2009 ·

Patrick: hey Ku Sir! how are you?! your profile pic looks sooo cool !!!

Jayden: Dear Patrick,

I will have lunch meeting with your Mr. Cheung, Hope you enjoy the training in your company'

²⁵ The original messages were written in English, so no translation was needed.

Patrick: Dear Ku Sir, oh yeah, will something new happen in the university curriculum after lunch? maybe a course about helicopter maintenance. It would be great then!!

Jayden: Dear Patrick, do u know your class mate ,Sarah Ng, she is in year 2, same subject. Mech Eng. Communicate her.

Sarah: hello, thanks for coming today!! before overage, much of my time was spent on the rehearsals for numerous deployments. now finally i have time to work on such interesting things, n with your help too! sure i can learn many things from you ;))

Sarah: hahaha, your r my idol now. i ll have to work harder, n be less lazy

Jayden: you must know to lazy in sometime, otherwise you will be lost many things in the world.

Jayden: Sarah, You have a C hing (male senior schoolmate) called Patrick ,last year in your programme, He is doing the intern in your company. Can add his face book.

Jayden

(Jayden, Facebook post, 2009)

Jayden further highlighted the recent trend of mutual communication within his unit and in the foreseeable future within the organisation. As shown in Data extract 5.16, Jayden distinguished between Facebook and WhatsApp functions: Facebook is a public platform whereas WhatsApp is entirely private. Jayden's comment on this difference matches the practice in my unit. The VQU Facebook group habitually uploads official posts, such as calling for applications for training activities or VQ schemes, whereas I create several WhatsApp groups with my VQU fellow volunteers for private communication. But my research is concerned with the relatively public communications on Facebook and my research design does not seek to delve into more private areas and channels. For this reason, WhatsApp usage is deemed to be beyond the scope of this research.

Data extract 5.38 Jayden: 'If you wanna disclose things to others, then you can use Facebook'

In fact, for [mutual communication between] our Corps members, we don't use Facebook, but Whatsapp. We have a whatsapp group. Actually we can have a Facebook group but the public has access to it. There are things we don't want to disclose to others. That's why we use [Whatsapp]. If you wanna disclose things to others, then you can use Facebook. If you don't wanna disclose, then whatsapp.
(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Sam, like the other three writers, agreed that he was able to get to know members in both width and depth, as already reported in Data extract 5.3. Sam also made a link between online and offline communication, and even friendship (see Data extract 5.39). Enhancing mutual communication does not only result in a deeper understanding of members, it also facilitates liaison and collaboration work between units and members.

Data extract 5.39 Positive impact of Facebook on Face-to-Face communication and Friendship

Winnie: Do you get to know more Corps' members on Facebook in terms of both quantity and quality?

Sam: After getting to know more about them, we will have more common topics when we chat next time. When we have more common topics, face-to-face communication is enhanced, and then the friendships can be enhanced.

Winnie: Yes, any more comment please?

Sam: Also when I manage to see they have other interests (hobbies) on Facebook, I can then ask for their help with reference to their interests shown on Facebook because our Corps' activities are diversified.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

5.5.2 Non-existence of the Chain of Command

On the other hand, the emergence of Facebook communication has significantly reshaped the communication methods of HKACC members. 'Chain of Command' has long been the core spirit of our 'Customs and Courtesies' training curriculum. All members, no matter whether they are cadet or adult members, have long been trained to report issues, problems or even complaints to their immediate supervisors. Nobody is supposed to break this rule, no matter whom s/he is. For example, when an issue or problem arises, a training officer in the squadron is supposed to report to his or her immediate supervisor, which is the Officer Commanding Squadron but not the Officer Commanding Wing. Data extract 5.40 briefly shows the meanings of 'Chain of Command' and 'Customs and Courtesies'.

Data extract 5.40 The Chain of Command should be observed and followed by all members of the Corps

Customs and Courtesies (C&C) play an important part in all Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps (HKACC) activities and they contribute to build up a sense of discipline and an 'Esprit de Corps' in every member. There is a fine line separating customs from courtesies but each is rooted from the same source – respect between two individuals for each other. Both customs and courtesies must be observed by all members of the HKACC. (Page 2)

Official channel of approach and communication is through CHAIN OF COMMAND. It should be observed and followed by all members of the Corps. (Page 3)

Do not criticize the Corps in front of non-members. If you feel an improvement can be made, forward a suggestion to your superior through the chain of command. (Page 4)

Do not bypass the chain of command. (Page 4)
(*Student Resource Materials – GST02 Customs & Courtesies, 2009*)

However, on Facebook, all members, regardless of rank or post, can communicate and share any issues or problems with each other freely. In this case, 'one to one' becomes a 'one to many' communication practice. I can illustrate how Facebook alters the message delivery mechanism within the organisation. Traditionally, the communication practice is either top-down or bottom-up, as shown in Figure 5.5 which is a simplified version of the cadet squadron's communication mechanism with reference to its table of unit organisation and establishment.²⁶ Top-down communication means the Officer Commanding Squadron (OC Sqn) passes a command or instruction to his Second-in-Command (2IC) who will then disseminate the information to his subordinates, who are the commanders of flights, including Administration & Support Flight (A&S Flt), Operations and Training Flight (Ops & Trg Flt), A Flight (A Flt), B Flight (B Flt) and C Flight (C Flt). All these Flight Commanders (Flt Cdr) will then deliver the message to their respective Flight Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (Flt SNCOs). On the other hand, if any Flt SNCO plans to report an issue to OC Sqn, s/he is supposed to report it first to the Flt Cdr concerned, who will then pass the message to OC Sqn through 2IC, which is bottom-up communication. Based on what I have observed in the Corps, Figure 5.5 shows a

²⁶ Only adult members are shown in this simplified version of the cadet squadron's table of unit organisation and establishment.

new communication practice because of the emergence of Facebook. A Flt SNCO, e.g. B Flt's Flt SNCO, can bypass his immediate supervisor (i.e. B Flt's Flt Cdr) and pass a message to anyone on his Facebook friends' list: ranging from Sqn WO to OTO, or even OC Sqn.

Figure 5.5 Routine 'One to One' Communication Practice

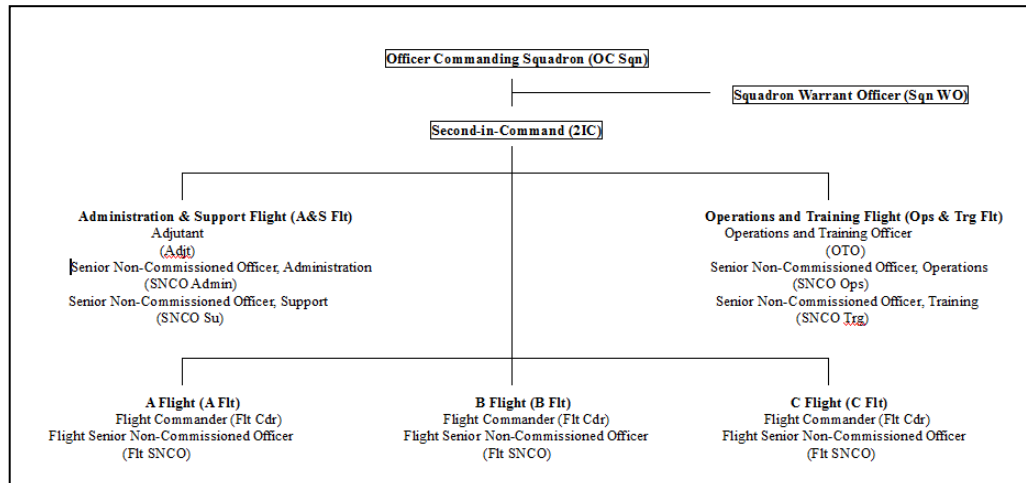
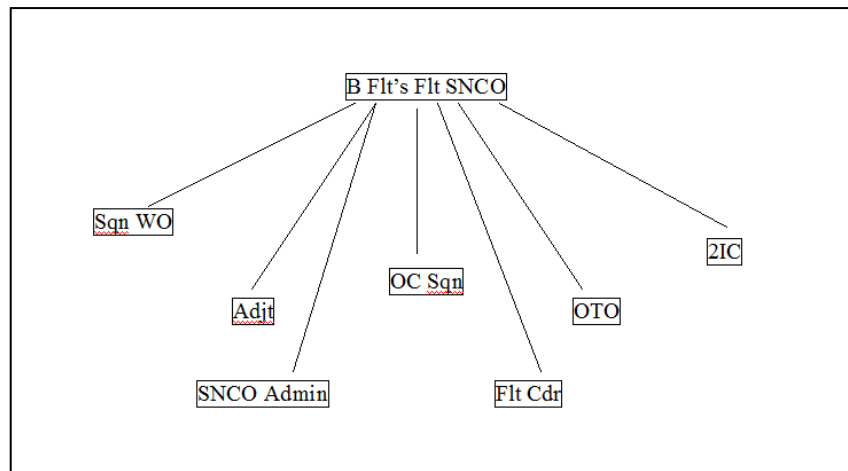


Figure 5.6 New 'One to Many' Communication Practice



It has been brought to the attention of the Commandant of ACO, UK that the Chain of Command is at risk on Facebook since there have been increasing numbers of complaints delivered to her office directly after her active engagement in social media. Data extract 5.41 is a public message broadcast to nearly 10,000 Air Cadet members subscribed to the Comdt's Facebook fan page. It is advised that all problems or issues should be handled at respective levels, but not sent to the top layer – the Comdt directly. In spite of being two different organisations, both Air Cadets Hong

Kong and Air Cadets UK share the same principles for handling social media and the Chain of Command.

Data extract 5.41 Sending complaints direct to the Commandant ‘undermines the chain of command’, 13 March 2015

The downside is that this can create the impression that the Comdt is highly accessible and approachable for issues not associated with social media and there has been a noticeable increase in ACO personnel sending complaints direct to the Comdt, normally via my Blackberry or email address, often in writing to my office. This undermines the chain of command, as the lower levels of the Organisation are denied an opportunity to address any problems or concerns before the details are exposed to me and other HQ staffs. We have a policy in the ACO of always trying to resolve an issue at the lowest level possible.

Therefore, if anyone has a complaint or concern they wish to raise, they should do so at the appropriate level, be that at Sqn, Wg or Reg level, or equivalents in the CCF and VGS communities. Only if you don’t achieve a satisfactory response to your complaint at that level should you escalate to the HQ and to me.

I am, of course, always interested if you feel things are not quite right in the Organisation and I will always investigate complaints that require my attention. But, before you send a complaint direct to me, cutting out the rest of the chain of command, ask yourself if someone lower down the chain might be able to address your concerns.

This will enable me to focus on the business of leading this great Organisation and investigating the more serious complaints that merit my personal attention.
(Commandant Air Cadets’s Facebook page, 2015)

In the Facebook community comprising HKACC members, on some occasions, the chain of command can be bypassed ‘legally’ to a certain extent, as long as all members who are online observe the implicit rule about following C&C. Preserving C&C in the online world is the common understanding of all these volunteers which establishes a social norm, it specifies the ‘shared repertoire’ dimension of the CoP (Wenger, 1998), as can be seen in Data extracts 5.42 and 5.43. The social norm is that research participants like Chris and Holiday still address their fellow members in a more senior position as either ‘Sir’ or ‘Ma’am appropriately.

Data extract 5.42 Chris: ‘It is my pleasure to have a group photo with you, Sir’

29 December 2012

Chris: It is my pleasure to have a goup [*sic*]²⁷ photo with you ... Sir.

Volunteer 1: More than happy to be with a dedicated member like you ... Thank you for your contribution through these years.

(Chris, Facebook post, 2012)

Data extract 5.43 Holiday: ‘Raymond sir ... come back to see your sons and daughters’

4 November 2009

Holiday: 456 Sqn:²⁸ good things come in pairs! We have a Cpl plus the “first in class” cadet at JN! Yeah!

Volunteer 1: YEAH YEAH YEAH! Then we can get the champion!!~

Volunteer 2: good good la

Volunteer 3 (Raymond): Feeling touched...

Holiday: Raymond sir ... come back to see your sons and daughters⁵ when you are freer (Holiday, Facebook post, 2009)

5.5.3 Influence of Online on Offline Communication

This subsection seeks to identify the kinds of social practices with digital texts that volunteers bring to the offline real world from their online and virtual encounters with communication technologies. A majority of the research participants gave positive feedback to the impact of Facebook on offline communication with fellow Corps members. The common ground of Jayden, Sam and Holiday was that Facebook served as a good channel to disclose both outer and inner images of a user. The SNS enabled my VQ writers to have an all-round understanding of their fellow members, which could contribute to generating more common topics in real conversational contexts, such as on squadron bases, as explained previously. What is more, Jayden sounded a note of warning to a few misbehaving members. He values the importance of preserving a positive image on Facebook, no matter when, as a professional trainer in front of cadet members in the organisation (see Data extract 5.44).

²⁷ This word should be ‘group’.

²⁸ Son and daughters are the general nicknames of cadets.

Data extract 5.44 Jayden: ‘Yes, since they (Facebook timelines) do not only have ACC activities, but also their personal activities’

Yes, since they [Facebook timelines] do not only have ACC activities, but also their personal activities. Then I can see if there is any contrast between their ACC and personal activities. Let’s say, if someone looks formal in ACC activities, but s/he smokes, drinks a lot of alcohol, karaoke and is addicted to drugs behind the scene, then I know s/he is a bad guy.
(Jayden, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Sam’s viewpoint was the same. He said that Facebook revealed how volunteers behaved both in and out of uniform, as shown in Data extract 5.45. The term ‘in uniform’ refers to the volunteering context, whereas ‘out of uniform’ means other contexts like daily life.

Data extract 5.45 Sam: ‘On Facebook, I am able to see their feelings, aspects about their private life ... or the subjects they take’

Whenever I see Corps’ members, they are in uniform (i.e. Corps events) or social events. On Facebook, I am able to see their feelings, aspects about their private life such as family members, friends or the subjects they take ... I am able to know more about them for sure.
(Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Having more interaction and communication with other members online can facilitate one’s self-reflection regarding offline activities as well. For example, Holiday managed to review the room for improvement in her unit after a glimpse into the life of another Facebook volunteer, Pat (see Data extract 5.46).

Data extract 5.46 Holiday: ‘This let me reflect on how I can improve things’

Positively more since I know their daily life. For instance, after I read Pat’s Facebook, I know how her squadron cadets are like and also her squadron activities. Then I reflect and wonder if it is the time for me to organize activities. So, [Facebook is] for my reference. This let me reflect on how I can improve things.
(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

5.5.4 Attitudes to Privacy

Out of all the writers, Holiday and Sam were the ones most conscious about disclosing private things on a public platform. Holiday was more conscious about posting Corps-related messages on Facebook since her private Facebook page was

open to the public. The content of her HKACC-related posts was restricted to general information, such as squadron meetings and activities (see Data extract 5.47).

Data extract 5.47 Holiday: ‘Handling ACC-related messages on Facebook is an Art!’

Well, regarding messages [on Facebook], we have to be more careful. Handling ACC-related messages on Facebook is an Art! Only more general messages such as attending squadron meetings can let my friends know easily. Messages among officers are rare. I normally only share messages about what happen to my cadets with my friends [on Facebook].

(Holiday, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

Similarly, Sam’s comment ‘ideas can be misunderstood easily’ (*Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014*) showed his slight reluctance to express his ideas on Facebook. Based on my observation, how Sam commented matched his practice on Facebook. He was less active in writing or posting messages on the public platform. In addition, his messages were generally shorter than those of other writers. However, he was willing to contribute to online ‘conversations’ when events were significant and could create ‘noise’ (see Data extract 5.48). Sam’s active engagement in the Facebook community is also shown by another aspect – clicking (on the Web) or pressing (using his mobile phone device) the ‘like’ button to show his recognition of pieces of content written by friends, or images shared by friends, very frequently.

Data extract 5.48 Sam: ‘Only write (comment) when the occasions can evoke resonance among readers’

Sam: Only write (comment) when the occasions can evoke resonance among readers.

Winnie: Does it depend on whether the volunteers are your friends or not?

Sam: No, it depends on whether the events themselves can evoke resonance or not, or whether it is an occasion for feasting or celebration, for example, passing-out, the birth of babies.

(Sam, semi-structured interview 2, 2014)

5.6 Summary

As Hyland (2007) asserts: “Writing is a social activity” (p.152). Adult volunteers participate in different literacy activities in different ways and on different platforms. On Facebook, frequent interactions and connections between writers and

viewers are a core component of participation. These writers' practices can be constructed by texts and reflected in a social group as members in a particular social context. The same applies to the digital context, the only difference is that the platform is shifted from print to online. In my study, online culture has gradually become part of volunteers' practices and social reality because of the emergence of new modes of textual practice on the platform of Facebook, supplemented by emails and Youtube. Social media and their associated practices are deeply embedded in adult volunteers' lives.

In this chapter, I have explored the technology-related life history of my four research participants. Generally, they are all knowledgeable computer or Facebook users, no matter how old they are or what rank they hold. Then, I examined their common Facebook purpose in connecting with friends online, who are the same types of volunteers as in the physical world, in the volunteering context. Their Facebook screenshots showcased their solidarity with other fellow members. I argued that the relatively informal communications on Facebook help to strengthen the bonding among volunteers. Furthermore, I discussed the key patterns of how these four research participants used Facebook to connect with their volunteer peers, juniors or seniors. I observed that these four Facebook users did not have a completely separate cyber realm of new contacts and interests. So some of their social actions, such as sharing information about a fundraising campaign or some ways of doing things, such as using appointment diaries to record schedules and making connections with people, are similar on Facebook and in the physical world. Finally, a key finding and one way in which volunteering literacies have become different through Facebook is the disruption of the chain of command, which offline is aligned with military-like practice conventions. This is at least a potential challenge to existing discipline practices. However the challenge can be mitigated if our volunteers observe some general protocols of our Corps when they are online. Facebook as a global village is manifested. This is also an opportunity to enhance interpersonal communication and mass communication. Connections become easier across time and space in the contemporary era.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Overall Summary

There is every hope that the thesis has provided a guided tour of some of the literacy practices of four dedicated adult volunteers from a uniformed group with aviation education as their core mission and common interest in Hong Kong. The data on literacy practices were collected over two years through face-to-face interactions, written texts and online social networks.

In the thesis, I began with a brief introduction to an aviation-focused uniformed youth group, I then moved through a literature review, developing the theoretical and methodological approaches underpinning my volunteering literacies study. I presented two chapters on how and why individual adult volunteers used literacies in different contexts within the uniformed group as a social world and Hong Kong society at large. Volunteers are engaged in a volunteering environment full of print-based and digital texts. The volunteering culture, with a key feature of ‘learn by doing’, has been reinforced by a further education programme and shaped by social media.

In this conclusion chapter, I plan to bring together all the major arguments presented in this thesis, first by summarising briefly the highlights of the literacy practices of the four case studies of adult volunteers and how these emerged. Then I can showcase the implications of my study. Moreover, I will discuss the limitations of my research project and suggest directions for future research on this topic. Finally, I will consider what the study has contributed to literacy studies.

6.2 Summary of Findings and Discussion

This section presents an overview of the findings of the thesis, it is organised around the following two research questions, as discussed in Chapter 2. Now I will revisit both research questions and summarise my findings and answers to the research questions stated in the literature review chapter.

6.2.1 Vocational Qualification Programme

Research Question 1:

How do adult volunteers develop new literacy practices when pursuing VQs?

The VQ programme illustrates how the volunteering domain is a learning site. Volunteering refers to learning by doing. Pieces of VQ written work are a reflection and documentation of adult volunteers' literacy practices as a social practice. Volunteers have to draw on different resources to complete written assignments. VQ written work also showcases their dedicated participation and engagement. The analyses of six aspects of vernacular activities and literacy practices, namely, organizing life, documenting life, personal communication, private leisure and social participation, indicate the relationship between the literacy and social practices of adult volunteers.

I have also argued that all four research participants took part in the organisation with a shared endeavour to serve the community, in spite of subtle differences in terms of their motivational factors and personal and professional backgrounds. These volunteers shared a common sense of two major potential rewards of volunteering: community service can both positively influence their English language learning and enhance their workplace expertise.

6.2.2 Facebook

Research Question 2:

(2) What are adult volunteers' Facebook literacy practices? What is the connection between Facebook and physical world literacy practices among adult volunteers? How does Facebook break down geographical and hierarchical boundaries?

Facebook has become an indispensable social medium that promotes social interaction between adult volunteers. This SNS serves as an alternative communication platform for these volunteers and their seniors, peers and subordinates across the city or even in the UK. Their close bonding is revealed thanks to their well-established offline relationships. Spoken, written and multimodal discourses on Facebook facilitate mutual and mass communications among the volunteers. A message sent by a leader (i.e. adult volunteer) can be transmitted to a cadet in a moment. Any volunteers who do not have Facebook access might easily miss out on an update in the volunteering world. My research also enhances our understanding of

the engagement of Facebook users from examining literacies as a cultural practice, which is a type of situated literacy (Barton, Hamilton & Ivanič, 2000).

In both online and offline communities, through two overlapping but not duplicated literacy practices, i.e. VQ writing and Facebook use as social practices, as seen in Wenger (1998), a CoP's three interrelating claims can be applied to the HKACC context. First, HKACC adult volunteers have established norms and collaborative partnerships, which is mutual engagement. Secondly, they share goals and milestones as well as a shared understanding of regulations, such as the chain of command after negotiation and interactions, which is a joint enterprise. Thirdly, the organisation has a shared repertoire by having its own communal resources.

6.3 Implications

My research, as specified earlier, is a study of the literacy practices drawn upon when writing and the impact such practices have on volunteering practices in a specific community service context. To put it more simply, writing VQ assignments and expressing one's viewpoint on Facebook cannot be 'context-less' (Blommaert, 2006) nor a simple transfer of skills, but rather a social practice, shaped by leaders' own personal, cultural and social factors (Barton & Hamilton, 2012).

6.3.1 Implications of the Study with respect to the Vocational Qualification Programme

Understanding volunteers' motivational factors and their writers' needs can pave the way for learning resources development (Kerka, 2003). The major implication is pedagogical. Curriculum designers and education practitioners can take a glimpse at this first empirical work on literacy practices in the volunteering domain in order to improve the VQ programme and the training curriculum in the long run. Learning resources such as training packages for the VQ programme can be both online and print-based. The experience of my research participants shows that community service and education can be intertwining branches. I am convinced that continuous learning should be an important part of the volunteering curriculum.

The development of vocational writing skills becomes crucial in the VQ programme's training curriculum in this voluntary organisation. In general, adult volunteers in the Corps who speak English as a second language have relatively lower English writing proficiency compared with their native English-speaking counterparts from partner organisations, but mainly the ACO in the UK. In spite of having intermediate-to-advanced English language proficiency, many opportunities to interact with target language groups during incoming visits and their diverse leadership and management experience in their own units, our volunteers, from time to time, express that they encounter difficulties in reflecting and documenting their experience in English VQ assignments.

Therefore, as a consequence of undertaking this study, I have decided to put forward for consideration by others the following suggestions. It may be useful to put the teaching and learning focus of the vocational writing module on general academic conventions and the disciplinary writing requirements of VQ assignment writing. I plan first to invite our participants to select and organise information appropriately for effective reflective reports, then describe activities and achievements in appropriate detail through buddy interviews, and also reflect on their experience in the HKACC through writing. To further improve the quality assurance of the VQ programme, it is suggested that curriculum designers and education practitioners review the training curricula, such as the one for the writing workshop. Based on all my findings, I have formulated a proposed writing workshop course plan and hope we can widely implement it in other UGs in Hong Kong. By the end of a three-hour lesson (see Appendix 8 for a module outline), volunteers should be able to identify practical ways in which their own written work for the VQ programme can be planned, drafted and completed with reference to the student guide book, understand how best to meet the criteria when writing and exchanging knowledge and experience with academic advisers and graduates, before further consultations with their own academic advisors in the formats of telephone conversations and/or email exchanges, and the official submission of written work to the CVQO assessor authorised by the CGLI.

6.3.2 Implications of the Study with respect to Facebook

It could be the case that the rise and popularity of Facebook will change the way the HKACC thinks about the dynamics that can lead to both challenges and opportunities. The dilemma of the findings is a potential source of reflection for those volunteers who take up management roles relating to a traditional core value within the organisation: the chain of command. On the one hand, how adult volunteers communicate and interact on Facebook may pose a challenge to Management's authority. On the other hand, the instructions given by Senior Management can be disseminated to junior cadets in a moment as long as they are Facebook friends, which ultimately enhances efficiency to a certain extent.

6.4 Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The main limitation of the study is its inevitable selectivity. The scope of the study has been limited by the time available. Space constraints on this thesis also prevent me from detailing all aspects of my findings relating to the literacy practices of adult volunteers in a voluntary youth group. However, the ultimate goal of my ethnographic study has been to explore and develop a deeper understanding of the real nature of a phenomenon rather than attempt to generalize my findings (Rowan & Huston, 1997). The sample in this study is relatively small and cannot be used to generalize to a larger population. However, my research can offer insights for examining other contexts and cultures, such as other UGs in Hong Kong and the UK.

The initial scope for further research relates to the new VQ programme launched by the CGLI – the Professional Recognition Awards (PRA) which replaced the Senior Awards after August 2013. The PRA are qualifications that are mapped onto the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and available at levels 4 to 7, i.e. LCGI, Affiliateship (AfCGI), GCGI and MCGI. Comparing these two types of qualifications, in terms of vocational writing, there is a demand for more portfolio evidence in line with more sub-standards. In terms of recognition, the PRA are officially accredited by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. In terms of eligibility, the PRA are more comprehensive since no limitations on

volunteers' areas of employment are imposed, which implies that VQ writers may include a wider range of inputs in their writing.

Further scope for research is the possibility of having more empirical studies on virtual CoPs as a new learning practice through different communication technologies in the volunteering context. To enrich the picture painted by the current research, a similar study could explore more in-depth and comprehensive interview data about participants' perspectives on their own literacy practices on Facebook as well as textual discourses from other digital platforms such as WhatsApp.

6.5 Contribution of the Research

As a concluding remark, my research work is the first substantial study of volunteering literacies in the field of New Literacy Studies. Having reviewed the existing literature on NLS and digital literacies, I have documented the online and offline literacy practices of adult volunteers from a UG in Hong Kong, with a hybrid purpose for writing, as well as their digital literacy practices in both online and offline CoP. Such literacy practices are still undergoing change, mainly because some writing processes are shifting from paper-based to digital platforms (Kress, 2003), e.g. VQ assignment writing. The research demonstrates a unique understanding of volunteers' lives and the social phenomena co-constructed by them. The significance of literacy practices cannot be considered in isolation from their unique sociocultural context.

An additional contribution of the study is that it is an empirical investigation of the trajectory of New Literacy Studies. I argue that this research can contribute to the field by providing a description of the functions of written language in the volunteering lives of adult volunteers in Hong Kong as well as their sociocultural views with the aim of improving the current institutional reality. Yet, my research may not have provided concrete information on the curriculum design. The combination of multiple research methods and the diverse and rich ways of negotiating the particular challenges and enjoyment of a volunteering CoP can be useful and insightful for educators. I have also demonstrated how I negotiated and coped with the potential challenges arising from my dual role as a researcher and a key volunteer involved in the VQ programme. The idea of exploring the literacy

practices of adult volunteers through a VQ programme and Facebook vis-à-vis the HKACC with its heterogeneous formal and nonformal education can be generalized to other UGs or other countries.

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Appendix 1 List of Uniform Groups in Hong Kong (as at 18 December 2014)

1. Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps www.aircadets.org.hk

Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps is a uniformed group under the policy aegis of the Home Affairs Bureau and has been nurturing manpower resources for the local aviation industry since 1971. As a registered charitable body and a member organisation of the Hong Kong Community Chest, the Corps offers quality aviation education programmes to prepare young people for possible future service in the local Aviation industry, thereby contributing to the economic well-being of Hong Kong.

2. Hong Kong Adventure Corps <http://www.hkac.org/index.html>

The Hong Kong Adventure Corps is a voluntary uniformed group subsidised by the Hong Kong government and the Hong Kong Jockey Club, created in 1995 with ties to the British Army's Army Cadet Force and Combined Cadet Force. The Corps is an army-orientated, disciplined youth organisation, which aims to promote qualities of responsibility, self-reliance, resourcefulness, endurance, perseverance and a sense of service to the community, and to develop their leadership and social awareness through the community

3. Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps <http://www.seacadet.org.hk/>

The Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps was incorporated in 1968. The Corps is not a vocational training institute but a government subsidized Uniformed Youth Organisation with cadet members aged 12-18. All cadets are required to wear uniform and to observe discipline: they will participate in training and activities during weekends and school holidays only.

4. Hong Kong St John Ambulance <http://www.stjohn.org.hk/b5/index.shtml>

Hong Kong St. John Ambulance is a charitable organisation with a long history stretching back over a century and has been serving the community since 1884. St. John is dedicated to promoting and encouraging all works of humanity and charity for the relief of distress, suffering, sickness and danger without any distinction as to race, class or creed. The principle and spirit of St. John's mission in Hong Kong is encompassed in its motto: "For the Service of Mankind".

5. Scout Association of Hong Kong <http://www.scout.org.hk/en/>

Scout activities were first brought to Hong Kong in 1909. In September 1913, the 1st Hong Kong Group of St Joseph's College was established. It was registered at The Boy Scouts Association of the United Kingdom in 1914. Vision: To be the best voluntary organisation for the development of young people in Hong Kong for the betterment of our society.

Mission: To operate an education movement for young people providing them with challenging and progressive training programmes for their physical, intellectual, social, spiritual and aesthetic development.

6. Hong Kong Girl Guides Association http://www.hkgga.org.hk/eng_index.php

Guiding Movement continues to thrive and grow. Nearly ten million girls and young women are members, in 145 Member Organizations worldwide.

Mission: To enable girls and young women to develop their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world.

Aims: The Corps aims at providing nautical skills, team-building and discipline training to its cadet members through maritime activities and to develop in them such qualities of leadership, positive value, devotion to duty, self-respect and civic awareness so that they will become contributing citizens of our community.

7. Auxiliary Medical Service Cadet Corps <http://www.ams.gov.hk/chi/cadet.htm>

The Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS) is a government financed volunteer organisation established under the Auxiliary Medical Service Ordinance. Its main role is to augment the regular medical, health and ambulance services during emergencies and to supplement such services in non-emergency situations. AMS has an establishment of 100 civil servants. A simplified and streamlined structure with an establishment of 4 418 volunteer members, was instituted in 2001. The volunteer members come from all walks of life, and include medical practitioners, nurses and paramedical personnel.

8. Civil Aid Service Cadet Corps <http://www.cas.gov.hk/eng/welcome.html>

CAS is a uniformed and disciplined, government-financed, auxiliary service. The Service has an establishment of 3,634 adult members and 3,232 youths aged from 12 to 17. It was formed in 1952 as a wartime-oriented civil defense unit. Since then, it has grown into a multi-tasked auxiliary organisation, capable of undertaking a wide range of emergency duties and helping to relieve the pressure on Hong Kong's full-time emergency forces.

Vision: To be an outstanding auxiliary force in Hong Kong, providing civil support services on the occasion of any emergency, while at the same time help nurture and develop future leaders and responsible citizens in both Adult Service and Cadet Corps.

9. Hong Kong Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org.hk/>

The Hong Kong Red Cross was established in 1950 as a branch of the British Red Cross Society. Since 1 July 1997, upon the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, the Hong Kong Red Cross has changed its affiliation to become a highly autonomous branch of the Red Cross Society of China.

Vision: We strive for a world in which people respect and protect human life and dignity, and where people are ready to offer impartial and voluntary aid to help improve the lives of vulnerable people.

10. The Boys' Brigade Hong Kong <http://www.bbhk.org.hk/>

The Boys' Brigade, Hong Kong is a branch of the Boys' Brigade. It is a uniform youth organisation founded in 1959, currently with more than 200 companies.

11. The Girls' Brigade Hong Kong <http://www.gbhk.org.hk/>

The Girls' Brigade is an international and interdenominational Christian youth organisation. It was founded in 1893 in Dublin, Ireland. The Aim of The Girls' Brigade is to help girls become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ thought reverence, self control and a sense of responsibility to find true enrichment of life.

12. The Hong Kong Road Safety Association <http://www.rsa.org.hk/>

The Hong Kong Road Safety Association, a voluntary organisation whose primary objective is the promotion of the pedestrian safety in Hong Kong, was founded in 1961 by a group of civic-minded individuals.

13. Junior Police Call http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/16_jpc/index.html

Junior Police Call Scheme (JPC) was launched by the former Chief Superintendent of Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB), Mr. Rennie, in 1974. With its membership expanding rapidly over the years, JPC has become one of the largest youth organisations in the world with strong Police ties.

14. Hong Kong Army Cadet Force

Through drills and training camps, the new voluntary uniformed youth group established in December 2014 aims to promote civic awareness. An inauguration ceremony was held on 18 December 2014 at one of the bases of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Hong Kong. The wife of the city's Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying is the cadet force's commander-in-chief.

Appendix 2 Direct Appointment of Uniformed Senior Members

HONG KONG AIR CADET CORPS

Guidelines for the direct appointment of uniformed Senior Members

1. Introduction

The Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps has a long history of attracting to its ranks suitably qualified individuals with the required technical, disciplined/auxiliary force, military or uniform group background for appointment as directly appointed senior members, without requiring the appointees to go through the normal basic training (viz Officer Cadet Training Course, Warrant Officer Training Course, Recruit Instructor Training Course). The Headquarters reckons that such direct appointments should continue to be made as and when the opportunity arises to broaden the knowledge base of the Corps and to bring in new talents to fill management, supervisory, instructional and specialist positions.

2. Procedures for appointment

Applications for direct appointment of Senior Members should in the first instance be made to the Commanding Officer. Supporting documents should be provided along with application to assist the Commanding Officer to ascertain the suitability of appointment. Direct appointment up to and including the rank of Flight Lieutenant shall be made at the sole discretion of the Commanding Officer, whereas direct appointment to the rank of Squadron Leader or above shall be made by the Executive Board, on the recommendation of the Commanding Officer.

3. Introductory training

Where possible, direct appointees should undergo a short period of introductory training to familiarize themselves with the history, organisation, rules & regulations and customs & courtesies of HKACC. A direct appointee may elect to go through the usual basic training programme (e.g. OCTC, WOTC, RITC) but will not normally be required to undertake the prescribed assessment at the end of the programme.

4. General Duties appointments and Specialist appointments

Appointments to the General Duties List will normally be given to candidates with recognized disciplined force, auxiliary force or military experience. Other

candidates shall normally appointed to Specialist List on the basis of their professional, technical or special qualifications.

5. Initial rank of appointment

Direct entry senior members are given initial appointment to a rank commensurate with their position, experience and professional qualifications, as outlined in the table set forth in Appendix A. Cases not specified in the table shall be determined by the Commanding Officer, and in the event of senior officer appointments, by the Executive Board, on the recommendation of the Commanding Officer.

6. Further promotions

After initial appointment, direct entry senior members on the General Duties List may be eligible for future advancements subject to the fulfillment of laid down promotion criteria. Specialist Officers are not subject to the promotion requirements of GD Officers but may be promoted when assuming a position of higher responsibility, for meritorious services, or when higher professional qualifications are gained.

1 July 2003

Appendix 3 OCTC-OTTC Syllabus

HONG KONG AIR CADET CORPS Common Syllabus of the Officer Cadet Training Course (OCTC) and the Officer Trainee Training Course (OTTC)

1. Introduction

The OCTC and OTTC are designed to equip our future officers with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude so that they can be of service to the Corps through high standard of command, leadership, teamwork and esteem thus to maintain the honour, prestige and tradition of the Corps.

The Course consists of up to 150 hours of training as set out below:

Module	Number of Hours
General Service Training	10
Aviation Education	10
General Skills	86
Human Resources / Operations Management Knowledge	25
Discipline/ Moral Standard	Continuous throughout the training
Core Module Hours	131
Optional Topics	19
Total Course Hours	150

For details of each module please refer to Section 2 – Modules.

2. Modules

2.1 General Service Training

2.1.1 Aim and Objectives

To provide basic general knowledge that must be acquired by all members of the Corps.

By the end of the module, candidates will know more about the background, history, establishment and rankings, custom and courtesies and traditions of the Corps such that they can understand and participate in the Corps as well as understand more about the nation's identity as a rightful citizen.

2.1.2 Subjects

Code	Subject	Mode of Delivery	Hours
GST01	HKACC	Lecture	3
GST02	Custom and Courtesies	Lecture	3
GST03	National Flag, Anthem and Emblem	Lecture	1
GST04	Basic Radio Communication	Lecture	1
GST05	Government Flying Service	Lecture	2

2.1.3 Assessment Method

Subjects under this module will be assessed in form of the integrated written examination - “Officer Qualifying Examination”.

2.2 Aviation Education

2.2.1 Aim and Objectives

To provide basic aviation knowledge as required by all members of the Corps.

Being the only Uniform Group in Hong Kong which specializes in Aviation Education, all members of the Corps must have basic aviation knowledge. By the end of this module, candidates will know about the history and development of aviation, both internationally and locally as well as basic understanding and recognition of common types of civil and military aircrafts. Furthermore, candidates will acquire the spirit and professionalism of airmanship as well as fundamental theory of flight.

2.2.2 Subjects

Code	Subject	Mode of Delivery	Hours
AE01	Aviation History	Lecture	2
AE02	Airmanship	Lecture	2
AE03	Civil Aviation in Hong Kong	Lecture	2
AE04	Principles of Flight	Lecture	2
AE05	Aircraft Recognition	Lecture	2

2.2.3 Assessment Method

Subjects under this module will be assessed through the Officer Qualifying Examination.

2.3 General Skills

2.3.1 Aim and Objectives

To provide the candidates with physical and outdoor skills required of an HKACC officer to fulfill the daily operational needs in different units but especially in front-line situation.

By the end of the module, candidates will experience and acquire basic skills in physical achievement training (as equivalent to AYP requirement), first aid, footdrill, as well as wilderness expedition, navigation and survival skills. Apart from the skill acquisition, these also serve as the physical and mental endurance training as well as providing opportunities for leadership and team spirit development.

2.3.2 Subjects

Code	Subject	Mode of Delivery	Hours
GS01	Graduation Camp	3D-2N Wilderness Expedition	- *
GS02	Induction Camp	2D-1N Camp	- *
GS03	Expedition Training Camp	2D-1N Camping/Journey	- *
GS04	Basic Foot Drill	Lecture and Practical	30
GS05A	Advanced Foot Drill	Lecture and Practical	20
GS06	Physical Achievement	Lecture and Practical	6
GS07	First Aid	Lecture and Practical	30

* not included in the Total Course Hours

2.3.3 Assessment Method

Practical exams will be conducted for footdrill, physical achievement and first aid.

2.4 Human Resources / Operations Management Knowledge

2.4.1 Aim

To provide skills as required of an Officer of the Corps to fulfill the daily operational needs of different units in particular for taking up frontline duties.

By the end of the module, candidates will understand the various modes of communications as well as the skills for effective teaching (for training) and briefing (for operation) in different settings. In addition, they will acquire the knowledge and skills on how to plan, organize, and conduct an operation through proper procedures and documentation whether it is in a squadron, Corps or other settings, such as large-scale community services.

2.4.2 Subjects

Code	Subject	Mode of Delivery	Hours
HR/OMK01	Instructional Technique	Lecture	3
HR/OMK02	Effective Communications	Lecture	3
HR/OMK03A	Leadership	Lecture	5
HR/OMK04	Operational Order and Briefing	Lecture	5
HR/OMK05	Service Writing	Lecture	2
HR/OMK06	Squadron Management	Lecture	2
HR/OMK07	Crowd Management	Lecture	3
HR/OMK08	Introduction to HKAYP	Lecture	1
HR/OMK09	Role of Officers, Warrant Officers and Instructors	Lecture	1
HR/OMK10	On job training	Practical Experience	- *

* Training Hour not included in the Minimum Total Course Hours

2.4.3 Assessment Method

Presentations will be graded under Instructional Technique. Candidate-led presentations, mock operations and written assignment on Operational Order and Briefing.

2.5 Optional Topics

2.5.1 Aim

To provide optional training to candidates as deemed necessary by the Directing Staff or as initiated by the candidates.

2.5.2 Subjects

Code	Subject	Mode of Delivery	Hours
OT01	Youth Psychology	Lecture	3
OT02	Flight Commander Drill	Lecture and Practical	16
OT03	Special Aviation Topics	Lecture / Visit	- *

* not included in the the Minimum Total Course Hours

2.5.3 Assessment Method

No assessment is required.

2.6 Discipline and Moral Standard

2.2.1 Aim

To ensure that candidates will observe strict discipline and high moral standard as required of and practised by all members of the Corps.

2.2.2 Subject

Discipline and Moral training is conducted throughout the course and as an integral part of the Custom and Courtesies and Footdrill training.

2.2.3 Assessment Method

Continuous observation by course staff, any special cases will be assessed by a panel consisting of Officer Commanding Adult Training Squadron (in case of OCTC) or Officer Commanding University Squadron (in case of OTTC), Flight Commanders, Squadron Warrant Officer, Flight Senior Non-Commissioned Officers and other personnel deemed appropriate by the Officer Commanding Squadron.

3. Course Requirement

3.1 Course Duration

Up to 150 training hours (excluding hours of the Induction Camp, Expedition Training Camp and Graduation Camp).

3.2 Assessment

3.2.1 Officer Qualifying Examination

The Officer Qualifying Examination (OQE) is a 2-hour paper-based examination which consists of multiple-choice questions, short questions and essay-type questions that cover the subjects under General Service Training and Aviation Education categories. Candidates must attain a minimum of 60% marks to pass the examination. Candidates who have failed in the examination may be permitted to present themselves for re-examination. Candidates who have failed in the second attempt will be required to be discontinued from the course.

3.2.2 Practical Examinations and Written Assignments

Practical examinations will be conducted by Qualified Skill Instructors with “Senior” rating (e.g. Senior Drill Instructor, Senior Physical Achievement Instructor, Senior Expedition Instructors etc.) for subjects under General Skills and Human Resources / Operations Management Knowledge categories. Instructional Technique will be assessed on the basis of the quality of topical presentations given by candidates. Operational Order and Briefing will be assessed by way of candidate-led presentations, mock operations and written assignments.

For First Aid, both written and practical examinations will be conducted by a HKSAR Government recognized first aid training organisation: viz St. John Ambulance, Red Cross and Auxiliary Medical Service.

3.3 Course Attendance

Candidates must attain a minimum of 70% attendance.

3.4 Discipline and Moral Standard

Candidates are expected to observe strict discipline and high moral standard as required of and practised by all members in order to uphold the tradition and honour of the Corps. The Directing Staff will monitor the performance and provide additional assistance/training to candidates as required.

3.5 Discontinuation

A candidate recommended for discontinuation shall be interviewed by a Review Committee where mitigating circumstances, if any, are considered to determine whether a reversion of the recommendation for discontinuation is warranted, and to prescribe remedial measures as appropriate.

A Review Committee shall be composed of

-in the case of OCTC, the OC AT Wg (Chairman), and two members of the rank of Flt Lt.

-in the case of OTTC, the OC No 6 Wg (Chairman), OC University Squadron, and a third member of the rank of Flt Lt.

24 July 2009

amended 1 December 2012

Appendix 4 Graduateship Award Criteria

AWARD CRITERIA

Below are the key criteria that you will need to base your 'Reflective Report' upon. Please note you will ***not*** be expected to individually comment on each of the sub elements, they are prompts / definitions of the key criteria. It is these criteria that the Assessor will formulate their marks against.

Self management and development:

Performance criteria

- Has a personal and professional development plan
- Sets realistic, achievable and challenging personal goals
- Works to improve performance and keep abreast of advances in your field

Understanding, application and critical assessment of established practices

Performance criteria

- Implements and maintains systems correctly to monitor quantity, quality, cost and time
- Defines problems and recommends solutions to improve the efficiency of operations
- Understands the Services mission and the social and economic implications of work undertaken

Effective working relationship

Performance criteria

- Establishes and maintains good working relationships with subordinates, peers and senior colleagues
- Resolves conflict in ways that maintain respect
- Provides effective guidance and supervision to colleagues

Clear and effective communication

Performance criteria

- Communicates clearly both verbally and in writing
- Achieves desired outcomes through effective communication
- Communicates in an appropriate style and manner

Appendix 5 Information Sheet, Consent Form and an Email Negotiating Informed Consent

Date: 18 July 2013



INFORMATION SHEET

As part of my Doctoral studies in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, I am carrying out a study on the language learning experiences of adult volunteers from the vocational qualification programme at the Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps. My study will involve interviewing volunteers like you about your community service experience and report writing experience in the Corps and analysing your written report submitted to the Cadet Vocational Qualification Organization (CVQO).

I am going to transcribe portions of the conversations recorded in the individual and focus group interviews and analyse your written report.

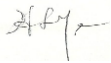
I have approached you because I am interested in what helps volunteers to prepare better-written work. I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in my study.

If you decide to take part, this would involve the following: you will be invited to take part in a 30-minute audio-recorded interview about your service and written report in your squadron base or our Headquarters with an encrypted audio recorder. You will also have the opportunity to join a group interview to give feedback on the VQ programme with the other leaders that you already know.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw while the study takes place or until 1 month after the study finishes, I will not use any of the information that you provided. If you withdraw later, the information you shared with me will be used as part of the study. At every stage, your name will remain confidential. The data will be kept securely, in a locked cupboard, and will be used for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD dissertation and other publications such as journal articles. Unless you instruct me to do otherwise, in my thesis and other publications I will not use your real name.

If you have any queries about the study, please feel free to contact myself at (852) 95330706 or my supervisor, Prof. David Barton, who can be contacted on d.barton@lancaster.ac.uk or by phone on 01524 510823. You may also contact the Head of Department, Prof. Elena Semino, on 01524 594176. The university contact address for Prof. Barton and Prof. Semino is: Department of Linguistics and English Language, County South, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL, United Kingdom.

Signed



Winnie Siu Yee Ho
s.ho4@lancaster.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

Department of Linguistics and English Language

Consent Form

Project title: **The literacy practices of adult leaders in a vocational qualification programme in Hong Kong**

1. I have read and had explained to me by Winnie the Information Sheet relating to this project.
2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation.
3. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, but no longer than 1 month after its completion. If I withdraw after this period, the information I have provided will be used for the project.
4. Winnie agrees not to share my name and contact details with any other person or in any publication.
5. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

from: **Winnie S Y Ho** <siuyee100@yahoo.com.hk>
to: XXX
date: 13 July 2014 at 01:55
subject: Re: Interview with XXX as a CVQO Graduate

Dear XXX,

Thanks for being an interviewee for my research again. Apart from the first consent form on VQ programme, I would like to seek your another consent for access to your Facebook data and conduct a 15-minute interview on your writing experience on Facebook with you.

I will transcribe portions of the conversations recorded in the individual interview and analyse your Facebook data.

Again you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you withdraw while the study takes place or until 1 month after the study finishes, I will not use any of the information that you provided. If you withdraw later, the information you shared with me will be used as part of the study. At every stage, your name will remain confidential. The data will be kept securely, in a locked cupboard, and will be used for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD dissertation and other publications such as journal articles. Unless you instruct me to do otherwise, in my thesis and other publications I will not use your real name.

Many thanks for your help again!

Best,
Winnie

from: XXX
to: Winnie S Y Ho <siuyee100@yahoo.com.hk>
date: 13 July 2014 at 15:23
subject: Re: Interview with XXX as a CVQO Graduate

Hi Winnie,

Sure! I checked with my schedule 23,30/Aug will go on RM. In summer time, my sqn cadets will be absent and remain 5-6 cadets in meeting. Which dates will you available?

Cheers,
XXX

Appendix 6 Chinese Version of the Interview Guide for Interview 1

第一部分 - 第二語言學習經驗

1. 你的第一語言（ L1 ）是甚麼？
2. 你的第二語言（ L2 ）是甚麼？
3. 除了L1和L2，你懂其他的語言嗎？（ L3 ）
4. 你的個人態度L1和它的文化是什麼？
5. 你的個人態度L2和它的文化是什麼？
6. 你有沒有使用英語作為第一語言的好朋友或親戚呢？
如果有，他們對你的英語語言學習有甚麼影響？
7. 以前的學校經歷：你能告訴我你的第一個學習英語的經驗嗎？大概的情況是怎麼的？環境、相關的人和事是什麼樣的？你有沒有參加過任何與英語有關的課外活動呢？
8. 以前的義工經歷：你遇過其他操一口流利英語的義工嗎？你如何評價當時自己的英語水平呢？
9. 有沒有一些本團的義工或事件對你的語言學習有一定的影響呢？
10. 可以談一談你的最佳和最差的語言學習經驗嗎？
11. 於本團裡，在甚麼情況下或活動中你用英語交流呢？
12. 於使用英語溝通的活動中（即受訪者在Q7 –11所提及的），你有沒有意識到任何使用英語的策略、心得呢？
13. 你認為你在本團工作 / 義工服務對你的第二語言學習有沒有作出了貢獻？
如果有的話，你如何評價相關的影響呢？輕微，一般或顯著？
14. 你認為你的志願工作 / 服務對於你的英語語言學習(如發音，語言習得和理解方面) 有產生正面的影響嗎？
15. 你是如何努力學習英語呢？
16. 你對你取得的L2 學習的成果感到滿意嗎？

第二部分 - 職業資格

1. 你如何認識關於CVQO的資格嗎？
2. 為什麼你會選擇參加上述職業資格？是什麼因素使你決定考取這個資格呢？
3. 你打算報名參加多一個職業資格嗎？為什麼會或不會呢？
4. 你認為不用L1而用L2，會否影響你做論文的表現嗎？
5. 與以前的學術性學習經驗相比，當你準備你的論文時，你有甚麼感覺？
6. 如果你認為你不理解學生論文指南中的內容或指示，你會如何處理呢？
7. 你認為語言是否一個影響你做論文的因素嗎？
8. 你如何評論你從CVQO評核員收到的意見呢？它是否有幫助呢？
9. VQ課程中哪一部分使你的功課能完全符合所有條件及成為畢業生呢？是什麼因素使你最終成功？
10. 你認為VQ L2學習有甚麼成功因素呢？
11. 你會推薦這個計劃給其他人嗎？為什麼會或不會呢？

Appendix 7 General Guidelines for Conducting Training Activities

1. Awareness of Potential Hazards

Officers should be aware of the potential hazards of transport, catering, safety and accidents in selecting the time and place for activities.

2. Weather Forecasts/Reports

Officers should always study weather forecasts and reports in advance to decide whether an activity should be allowed to take place.

3. Typhoon/Rainstorm Procedures

(a) When Typhoon Signal No.3 or above, red or black rainstorm signal is hoisted two hours prior to an outdoor activity, that activity must be cancelled and rescheduled.

(b) When Typhoon Signal No.3 or above, red or black rainstorm signal is hoisted, all outdoor activities must cease and all members must return home or take shelter in a safe place.

(c) When Typhoon Signal No.8 or above, black rainstorm signal is hoisted, all indoor activities must cease and members must return home or take shelter in a safe place.

4. Heat Exhaustion

Officers should be aware of the likelihood of the participants to suffer from heat exhaustion if the outside air temperature is over 30°C. All outdoor activities should halt if the temperature is over 33°C.

5. Leader/Participant Ratio

Officers should ensure that a proper Leader/Participant (L/R) ratio is maintained to achieve optimal training and safety effect. For cadets aged below 14, the proper ratio is 1:8. For cadets aged 15 and above, the proper ratio is 1:15.

6. Parents' Consent

Officers must seek the parents' consent in writing for the cadet aged under 14 to participate in any activities which involve potential risks of injury and safety, such as hiking and camping.

7. Activity Reports

Officers should file an activity report to HQ for record purpose one week prior to the activity. If needed, officer should file an activity report to Police one week prior to the intended activity with the relevant route plan attached.

8. Accident/Incident Reports

Officer must report any accidents to the Police for immediate action and to HQ within 24 hours for record purpose and insurance coverage. For incidents without injuries, officer should file a report to HQ for record purpose.

Note: The term "Officers" is defined as *Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, Officer Cadets* and *Instructors* of the HKACC for the purpose of this Guidelines.

1 July 1999

Appendix 8 Writing Workshop Course Plan

HONG KONG AIR CADET CORPS Vocational Qualifications Unit

Module Outline

Module Title	Vocational Writing
Level	I
Mode of Study	Tutorial
Total Contact Hours	3
Category	Core
Pre-requisite	Nil
Assessment Method	Reflective Report
Course Description	The module prepares students to think about and understand their learning experiences and service in the Corps.
Learning Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Select and organise information appropriately for effective reflective reports2. describe activities and achievements in appropriate detail3. reflect on their experience in the Corps
Content	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Stage 1 Introduction to vocational writing2. Stage 2 Self-reflections-Reflective writing (outline)3. Stage 3 Buddy interviews: reflecting on my community service4. Stage 4 Reflective Writing
Instructions	See Page 2
Essential Reading	CVQO Student Guidebook
Reference	http://www.aircadets.org.hk/

Instructions

Stage 1 Introduction to Vocational Writing (30 minutes)

1. Introduction of Academic Advisors
2. Introduction of academic conventions and disciplinary writing requirements

Stage 2 Self-reflections (30 minutes)

Reflective writing (outline)

1. You will draw up an outline of your reflection (in not more than 300 words) based on your service experience in the Corps i.e. what you have learnt about yourselves through conducting training and/or through organizing a project.
2. You may draw up the outline in point form.
3. The outline will form the basis for the questions of the buddy interviews (Stage 3).
4. Suggested guiding questions:
 - a) About the Corps
 - What did you learn from this community service?
 - What was your first impression?
 - Do you think you would like to continue to serve in the Corps?
 - b) About personal attributes
 - How often is English used in your unit?
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
 - What have you learnt about yourself?
 - What is your plan for developing your personal attributes?
 - c) About team work
 - What role do you feel most comfortable taking up in a team?
 - Did you have any difficulties working in a team?
 - What did you do to overcome these difficulties?

Break (10 minutes)

Stage 3 Buddy interviews (50 minutes)

The aim of the buddy interviews is to ‘stimulate’ reflection on YOU. In pairs, you will interview your partner to find out how much s/he has learnt from this experience.

1. Drafting interview questions

- a) Read the reflection outline of your buddy;
- b) Devise questions relating to your buddy’s experience
- c) Some possible questions include:
 - How did you collaborate with your teammates to complete a task / project?
 - What role did you play in a unit / project in the Corps?
 - How did you/ did not deal with diverse/ opposing opinions from your teammates?
- d) Go through the questions with your buddy before the interview begins.

2. Buddy Interviews

- a) Interview your partner using the interview questions to find out how much s/he learnt/ changed in the past few years;
- b) Try to discuss the responses or even ‘dig deeper’ into your buddy’s experience and give each other comments;
- c) Each interview should take about 15 minutes.

3. Academic Advisor’s feedback

Stage 4 Reflective Writing (60 minutes)

1. In-class task

- a) Look at some samples of reflective writing that your teacher will show you. What makes a reflection ‘thoughtful’, ‘logical’ and ‘original’?
- b) Look carefully at the content, organisation and language of the samples and discuss your comments with your partner.

2. **Revise your reflective document**, discuss with your academic advisor and ask him / her for comments.