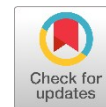


A critical EAP perspective on “Glory to Hong Kong”: Language, identity, and resistance

Ka Hang Wong

PhD Candidate, School of Communication, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
kahang.a.wong@student.uts.edu.au



ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 12 June 2025

Revised 12 July 2025

Accepted 4 August 2025

Keywords

Critical English for Academic Purposes

Critical Discourse Analysis

Counter-discourse

Language of resistance

Political displacement

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Hong Kong’s protest anthem “Glory to Hong Kong” as a site of linguistic and ideological resistance. It adopts a three-pronged approach: first, it uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover how the lyrics construct themes of resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation; second, it situates this analysis within political discourse constructed by leading politicians from the People’s Republic of China and the United Kingdom; and third, it explores the pedagogical potential of applying a Critical English for Academic Purposes (CEAP) framework to the anthem. The paper argues that analysing protest discourse in this way offers possibilities for English language classrooms, particularly for exiled learners and migrant communities, equipping them to critically engage with language, power, and identity. By linking textual analysis to classroom practice, it positions the anthem not only as a cultural artifact but also as a resource with the potential to empower learners to interrogate dominant narratives. This study is particularly timely in the wake of China’s imposition of the National Security Law in Hong Kong and the global repression of exiled Hongkongers.



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How to Cite: Wong, K. H. (2025). A critical EAP perspective on “Glory to Hong Kong”: Language, identity, and resistance. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 8(2), 92-104.
<https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v8i2.14037>

1. Introduction

In 2024, the Hong Kong government succeeded in asking the courts to issue an injunction against performance of Hong Kong’s anthem “Glory to Hong Kong”. The anthem originated from the 2019 Hong Kong protests but has since been played as Hong Kong’s national anthem during sports matches. Although the High Court initially rejected the government’s request, citing concerns for freedom of expression, the Court of Appeal overturned this ruling and sided with the government. The injunction criminalises any performance of the song with illegal intentions. Despite a ban on the song, the anthem has continued to be sung by the Hong Kong diaspora as an act of resistance against a totalitarian-party state’s assault on Hong Kong’s freedoms.

The recent exile from Hong Kong has been facilitated largely by the British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) scheme. BN(O) status was granted to the people of Hong Kong to maintain a limited form of legal connection with the United Kingdom beyond Hong Kong’s transfer of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to China on July 1, 1997. For instance, Hongkongers could travel with the BN(O) passport and receive British consulate protection while abroad. Due to China’s violation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the United Kingdom has now expanded the rights of Hongkongers to allow them to live, work, and study in the United Kingdom ([GOV.UK, 2021](#)). It is estimated that 5.4 million people of Hong Kong are potentially eligible to settle in the United Kingdom ([House of Commons](#)

Library, 2021). Other Commonwealth countries such as Australia and Canada have also offered lifeboats to the people of Hong Kong escaping China's political repression.

This article explores "Glory to Hong Kong" as a text of linguistic and ideological contestation. The paper serves a threefold purpose. It first applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the implicit meanings and identity-building functions of Hong Kong's anthem "Glory to Hong Kong". Second, it grounds that analysis in a reading of political discourse articulated by leading political figures from the People's Republic of China and the United Kingdom. Building on this analysis and drawing on the framework of Critical English for Academic Purposes (CEAP), the paper explores the pedagogical potential of teaching the song in non-academic English classes for exiled learners, illustrating how it could empower students to critically engage with discourse, ideology, and historical memory. This paper argues that "Glory to Hong Kong" functions as a text of resistance that engages critically with dominant narratives of power and control. This is a timely study particularly in the context of the Chinese-imposed National Security Law and, more recently, transnational repression by the totalitarian party-state, as evidenced by the extraterritorial application of the security law against exiles.

1.1. Sociopolitical Context

The 2019 Hong Kong protests were triggered by an extradition Bill that raised fears of returning political dissidents to mainland China. Although initially framed as a legal amendment following a murder case in Taiwan, the Bill sparked mass protests that escalated into broader concerns over China's influence and Hong Kong's autonomy.

"Glory to Hong Kong" was composed during the protests and released online on August 31, 2019. Originally written in Cantonese and later translated into English and other languages, the anthem incorporates the slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times" (光復香港，時代革命) in its chorus. The Hong Kong government claims the slogan violates the National Security Law; Tong Ying-kit became the first political prisoner jailed under the law for carrying a flag with it. Since then, the anthem has become a symbol of resistance among Hong Kong exiles, from St Pancras railway station to concerts such as "The People United" in Toronto on November 2, 2024.

Since the imposition of the National Security Law in 2020, political repression has extended into education and electoral systems. State narratives now emphasise loyalty to Beijing, and opposition politicians have been jailed, creating the conditions under which "Glory to Hong Kong" continues to function as a counter-hegemonic discourse articulating alternative histories, identities, and forms of resistance.

1.2. Brief Review of Literature

A number of scholars in applied linguistics have examined Hong Kong's political discourses and their role in shaping the city's identity of resistance and democracy. A key figure in the field of EAP, John Flowerdew has conducted multiple studies on Hong Kong's political rhetoric since the transfer of sovereignty. His research covers the ways in which the last British governor, Chris Patten, framed Hong Kong's bedrock principles (Flowerdew, 1997, 2016), as well as how Tung Chee-hwa, the city's first Chief Executive, discursively constructed a Chinese identity (Flowerdew, 2004b). Flowerdew and Leong (2007) examine the metaphorical representation of patriotism in Hong Kong. Flowerdew (2017) contends that opposition to authoritarianism has played a defining role in the formation of Hong Kong's identity. He identifies metaphors of war and conflict within the discourse of the 2014 Umbrella Movement. His book *Critical Discourse Analysis in Historiography: The Case of Hong Kong's Evolving Political Identity* compiles research that illustrates the transformation of political discourse from colonial rule to the post-handover government (Flowerdew, 2011).

Other scholars have also contributed to this discussion since the 1997 handover. Following the sovereignty transfer, Jackson (2002) explores how English major students conceptualised their postcolonial identity. Jackson's study reveals that the students employed familial metaphors to express their sentiments about Hong Kong's transfer to China. J. Wang (2017) analyses twenty-two policy addresses to examine how both colonial and post-handover administrations have discursively shaped Hong Kong's identity over time. W. Tang (2014) investigates the discourses of the Hong Kong diaspora, focusing on how they construct and reconstruct narratives of both colonial and post-colonial Hong Kong. Ng (2020) investigates how Chief Executive C. Y. Leung and pro-democracy politicians differently recontextualised Beijing's rhetoric. In another article, I analyse the 2019 Hong Kong

protests and the political responses of Chief Executive Carrie Lam, which preceded China's imposition of the National Security Law (Wong, K. H., 2024).

More recent studies have begun to examine the linguistic and ideological significance of the key protest slogan from the 2019 movement. Leung (2024) conducts a linguistic analysis of "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times". Leung's findings indicate that the slogan conveys a call to rectify a perceived issue and restore Hong Kong to a preferable state, though it does not explicitly define the problem or the envisioned ideal. A. Tang (2022) examines how protesters' appeals to President Trump to "liberate Hong Kong" function as infelicitous speech acts, reflecting their democratic aspirations, desire for freedom, and resistance to control by the People's Republic of China. Tang suggests that these calls contribute to the emergence of an anti-globalist activist subculture that resonates with movements elsewhere in the world. While many of these studies provide valuable linguistic analyses of Hong Kong texts, their engagement with power, ideology, and hegemony through a CDA lens varies. Flowerdew, in particular, has been a major contributor to CDA studies of Hong Kong political discourse.

CDA is a qualitative approach that seeks to understand power relations in the social context of discourse and challenge inequalities (Grant, 2018). According to Grant (2018), CDA typically involves three steps: (1) identifying themes from initial coding; (2) considering power relations in the data; and (3) drawing inferences and presenting findings. For example, historical documents such as the Joint Declaration or British declassified files can reveal how power was exercised and ideologies maintained. CDA thus uncovers "hidden ideologies and power in texts and discourse practices" (Ng, 2020, p. 542) and can be understood as a combination of "critique of discourse and explanation of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 6).

Power in CDA can be conceptualised in two dimensions. The first is domination, where power is enacted from above through institutions such as the law (Statham, 2022). For instance, states can secure compliance through legal or punitive measures. The second dimension is hegemony, where discourse persuades subordinate groups that state values are legitimate. In this way, discourse can legitimise authority by framing resistance as illegitimate. CDA seeks to deconstruct these processes to "expose and demystify those guiding ideologies" (Statham, 2022, p. 7).

While Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides tools for examining power and ideology in texts, Critical English for Academic Purposes (CEAP) extends these insights into pedagogical contexts, enabling learners to engage critically with social and political discourses (Chun, 2015). CEAP emphasises how uncovering power relations and ideological mechanisms can enhance students' critical awareness and foster engagement with social issues. Previous studies have applied CEAP to classroom interventions addressing politically sensitive topics, including tuition fee protests (Benesch, 1996), identity, power, and social belonging (Morgan & Ahmed, 2023), critical citizenship education (Fleming & Morgan, 2011), and social issues projects (Morgan, 2009). CEAP has also been used to examine the discursive dynamics of international political debates, such as the ways in which Chinese students in Australia countered the Free Tibet movement (Fenton-Smith, 2014). However, its potential application in non-academic English teaching contexts, such as English classes for exiled Hongkongers under conditions of political repression, remains largely unexplored.

Despite its global circulation and rich counter-hegemonic content, "Glory to Hong Kong" has not been studied from a CEAP perspective, likely because the anthem emerged in a rapidly evolving sociopolitical crisis and is primarily circulated online rather than in formal classroom settings. As a result, its pedagogical potential in English language teaching remains unexplored. A useful precedent can be found in the Tibetan anthem, "Rise Up (Long Shog)", which, as Yeh (2007) observes, enables Tibetans to sustain their resistance in exile. While this precedent does not come from a TESOL setting, it illustrates how protest anthems function as vehicles of identity and opposition. Building on this insight, the present article examines "Glory to Hong Kong" not only as a genre within Hong Kong's broader discourse of resistance, but also through the lens of CEAP, highlighting its potential to foster critical language awareness and political engagement in TESOL contexts. Conceptually, the study positions the anthem as a pedagogical tool that complements CDA, offering exiled Hongkongers and other learners opportunities to critically explore power, identity, and resistance through English language education.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study of Hong Kong's anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" is derived from a larger doctoral study on how BN(O) status evolved from being a token of British nationality to a tool of resistance against China's assault on Hong Kong. The overarching research method is documentary research. Rather than relying on traditional data collection methods, documentary research utilises existing sources, including official records, YouTube videos, news articles, and physical materials. Such documents provide valuable insights for understanding society (Grant, 2018).

2.2. Data Collection

For this study, I obtained both the Cantonese and English versions of the anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" through publicly available online sources. As the lyrics are widely circulated and consistent across platforms, the precise website of retrieval is not material to the analysis. English translations, while unofficial, generally follow a common rendering of the lyrics. For the purposes of analysis, I referred only to the most widely shared versions, while excluding parody or altered adaptations.

2.3. Data Analysis

The lyrics were read iteratively in both Cantonese and English to identify recurring themes of resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation, drawing on my lived experience as a Hongkonger. These themes were then analysed using Flowerdew's model of critical discourse historiography (CDH), a historiographical approach to CDA. Developed by Flowerdew in the early 1990s alongside Wodak's discourse-historical approach (DHA), CDH emphasises the role of discourse analysis in the writing of history and the importance of historical context (Flowerdew, 2017).

The analysis focused on four discursive strategies described by Flowerdew—foregrounding, presupposition, othering, and framing (Flowerdew, 2004b; Flowerdew & Leong, 2007). To strengthen the interpretation, the reading of the lyrics was triangulated with supplementary materials, including news articles, YouTube videos of performances, and official documents, as well as insights from interdisciplinary scholarship. In this way, the study traces how "Glory to Hong Kong" articulates narratives of resistance, identity, and struggle against China's encroachments, and contributes to the historiography of Hongkongers-in-exile.

A conceptual illustration of the relationship between lyrics, CDA, and CEAP-informed interpretation is as follows:

"Glory to Hong Kong" lyrics → CDH (identifying discursive strategies and power relations) → CEAP-informed pedagogical/civic potential (highlighting critical language awareness, counter-discourse, and learner engagement)

3. Finding and Discussion

The anthem employs emotionally charged lexis to construct themes of suffering, anger, perseverance, and hope (see Appendix 1). Lexical choices signalling suffering include "tears", "slaves", "deep", and "dread". Those conveying anger include "wrath", "arms", and "fight". Vocabulary associated with hope includes "pledge", "reign", "faith", "grow", "wisdom", "break", and "liberate". Finally, terms denoting perseverance include "stride", "tread", and "valour".

"Glory to Hong Kong" also draws on metaphoric imagery of a battlefield, symbolising resistance against invading forces. This is evident in the line "a solitary trumpet flares". These metaphors employ imperatives to convey urgency ("let blood rage afield!", "now, to arms!", "break now the dawn, liberate our Hong Kong"), alongside modal expressions that articulate hope and aspiration ("yet still, with our faith, on we tread", "may people reign, proud and free, now and evermore", "for Hong Kong, may Glory reign!"). The consistent use of plural pronouns constructs a collective identity of Hongkongers, while positioning the government as the Other. Expressions such as "our Hong Kong" and "our times" invoke a shared sense of democratic freedoms experienced before the 1997 handover. Together, these linguistic choices foreground recurring motifs of resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation, which will be explored further in the following thematic analysis.

3.1. Themes of the Anthem

By examining the lyrics of “Glory to Hong Kong”, themes related to Hongkongers’ struggle against aggression from a totalitarian party-state can be found. This present article has identified four major themes of the anthem: resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation. The selection of these themes was guided by their central significance in the lyrics.

1) *Resistance*

The phrase “Arise! Ye who would not be slaves again” employs both presupposition and othering strategies. It presupposes that Hongkongers are being subjugated by an external power, implying a loss of prior freedoms. It constructs China as the Other that must be resisted. This phrase mirrors a line from China’s national anthem: “Arise! Ye who refuse to be slaves!” (起來! 不願做奴隸的人們!). This is an instance of intertextuality, where the meaning of one text is shaped by another (Flowerdew, 2004a).

While China’s anthem originally framed Western imperialists as oppressors, Hong Kong’s own anthem has reframed the narrative to position China itself as the oppressor. This reframing serves as a powerful example of counter-discourse in the spirit of CEAP. By 2019, Hong Kong had been brought under Chinese rule for twenty-two years, and China’s anthem had been legally enforced in the region. Rather than embracing China’s call to resist foreign domination, Hongkongers redirect the same rhetorical structure to resist oppression under Chinese rule. In doing so, they signal a rejection of Beijing’s authority and its encroachments on Hong Kong’s freedoms.

Furthermore, the phrase bears resemblance to “Rule, Britannia!”, particularly the line “Britons never, never, never shall be slaves”. The invocation of British patriotic rhetoric suggests a lingering ideological connection to the freedoms once experienced under British protection. This cultural and historical affinity with Britain likely influenced the choice to adapt a phrase from “Rule, Britannia!” rather than directly translating the original Cantonese lyrics, 昂首 拒 默 沉 吶 喊 聲 響 透, which more literally express perseverance and vocal resistance. The waving of the British colonial flag during the 2019 protests, as well as in exile, suggests the plausibility of this interpretation.

“Let blood rage afield” is a powerful expression of resistance. Hong Kong’s sovereignty was transferred from Britain to China under the Joint Declaration, with Beijing pledging to uphold Hong Kong’s freedoms. However, China’s violations of these obligations have sparked widespread anger. The phrase frames China as the betrayer. It can be interpreted as a call for Britain to recognise this betrayal and push back against China’s undue influence. In the context of Hong Kong exiles, it adds another layer to the meaning. The phrase can be interpreted as a desire to persevere in the face of transnational repression and continue the fight for Hong Kong’s identity and autonomy from abroad.

2) *Perseverance*

The lyrics “though deep is the dread that lies ahead, yet still, with our faith, on we tread” convey the perseverance of Hongkongers in the face of uncertainty. During the 2019 protests, Hongkongers made five key demands, including full withdrawal of the extradition bill, an inquiry into police brutality, and dual universal suffrage. At the time the anthem was released online, none of these demands had been met. The phrase foregrounds not only the looming hardship but also the determination to press ahead. The word “faith” reflects a collective belief in the necessity of perseverance. It draws on past experiences in protests that pressured the government into making concessions.

For the Hong Kong diaspora, the phrase takes on a different meaning. Rather than referring to immediate demands on the Hong Kong government, it can be interpreted as a call to continue advocating for international support through political recognition and humanitarian policies. For instance, former governor Chris Patten has supported the expansion of the BN(O) scheme (Hong Kong Watch, 2022). Following such advocacy, the United Kingdom government now allows the post-handover generation to apply for the scheme independently of their BN(O) parents, provided they can demonstrate a parental connection to a BN(O) status holder.

3) *Struggle*

The imagery of the “solitary trumpet flares” amid darkness evokes the atmosphere of battle. Metaphors are not confined to literature and poetry; they serve as “means of representing one aspect of experience with another” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 136). Just as a bugle call in war signals soldiers to

advance, the phrase “now, to arms” is a direct call to fight “with all might”, demanding both valour and wisdom. During the 2019 protests, many clashes took place at night, with police deploying tear gas grenades against protesters. The command “to arms” is issued “through the mists”, symbolising the disorienting effect of tear gas and the chaotic conditions of street battles. It is a call to break through the fog, not only in defiance, but in physical confrontation against totalitarian forces.

However, in exile, the imagery of war shifts from an immediate call “to arms” to a call to remember those who fought for Hong Kong’s freedoms. Just as Remembrance Day honours soldiers who died in the line of duty, the lyrics serve as a commemoration in exile, paying respect to those who struggled on the frontlines in 2019. Furthermore, Hongkongers have revived their democracy movement in exile, with many grassroots organisations established in the United Kingdom and beyond (Chen, 2023). In this new context, the call “to arms” can be reinterpreted as a struggle for resistance and advocacy through discourse and identity.

4) *Liberation*

Liberation is the most salient theme of the anthem. Hong Kong’s slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times” is repeated in its chorus, presupposing that the homeland is under totalitarian oppression and must be freed through a revolution. Just as “The Last Post” is played at dawn to signify the fallen soldiers’ liberation from suffering, “break now the dawn” can represent the end of darkness and the emergence of new hope for Hong Kong. Similarly, just as the silence following the performance of “The Last Post” is a collective act of honouring the fallen, “in common breath” symbolises the shared resilience and unity of Hongkongers. The final line, “may people reign, proud and free, now and evermore”, expresses an aspiration for a Hong Kong free from Chinese totalitarian rule and a return to its former glory under the British.

3.2. Opposing Views

The findings suggest that “Glory to Hong Kong” embodies four key themes: resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation. The anthem calls for United Kingdom’s intervention, given its status as a signatory to the treaty. It expresses a desire for liberation through perseverance and struggle.

However, perhaps the most debated issue that has led to the confrontation between China and Hong Kong is the interpretation of Hong Kong’s political status. The Chinese government asserts that Hong Kong is an inherent part of China and enforces legal measures against any perceived separatist threats. This view of Hong Kong has led to the imposition of the National Security Law, and later, the ban on the performance of Hong Kong’s anthem.

States exert power through dominance and control to ensure its subjects comply with its laws (Statham, 2022). The National Security Law is an illustration of this form of power. Despite the law’s extraterritorial power, many Hongkongers-in-exile continue to advocate for alternative visions of Hong Kong’s status, as reflected in the use of the British colonial flag, alongside the slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times”. In this section, I examine the reasoning behind these opposing narratives and propose strategies for teaching the anthem.

1) *Deng Xiaoping’s “legal fiction” and historical revisionism*

The Chinese government’s assertion is rooted in a “legal fiction” created by Deng Xiaoping (Lim, 2022). During the Sino-British negotiations, Deng maintained that Hong Kong had always been a part of China, but that it was merely “occupied” by Britain. However, this claim has never been tested by any international court. He dismissed the treaties under which Britain acquired Hong Kong as “unequal” and refused to recognise them. This interpretation disregards historical treaties such as the Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong to Britain in perpetuity.

Nevertheless, Deng recognised the different sociopolitical realities of Hong Kong and assured Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher that Hong Kong could maintain its way of life for fifty years after the handover. This arrangement, later formalised as “one country, two systems”, was framed under the principle of “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong”. This principle embodied an implicit recognition of Hongkongers’ distinct British-influenced identity and right to self-government. Deng’s promise of autonomy reinforced Hong Kong’s separate political and legal identity that aligns with its British heritage, even as he claimed Hong Kong to be under Chinese sovereignty.

Despite Deng’s goodwill, his flawed understanding of sovereignty has led the Chinese government to assert a hegemonic claim over Hongkongers’ Chinese nationality. This claim is central to

understanding how the Chinese government has justified disregarding its agreements with the United Kingdom, as will be discussed in the next section. During the negotiations that resulted in the Joint Declaration, China claimed all Hongkongers of Chinese descent are Chinese nationals irrespective of their British Dependent Territories Citizenship (BDTC) or BN(O) status at the time. Despite being British nationals, Hongkongers only had a limited legal relationship with the United Kingdom, leaving their futures tied to China. However, following the British offer of a citizenship pathway to BN(O) Hongkongers, China again violated its agreement with the United Kingdom by derecognising the BN(O) passport as a valid proof of identity in Hong Kong beyond January 31, 2021.

The erasure of inconvenient historical events has long been a tactic employed by the CCP to foster nationalism within the Chinese mainland. As Statham (2022) explains, states enforce their power and control by persuading the public of their legitimacy. For instance, in the years following the Tiananmen Square massacre, the CCP successfully convinced the public that the 1989 student movement was counterrevolutionary and shifted its focus to demonstrating legitimacy through economic growth. Similarly, the Hong Kong government, under the Communist regime, began to rewrite Hong Kong's status. This effort has intensified in the post-National Security Law era. The school curriculum has been revised to indoctrinate Hong Kong children with a revisionist version of Hong Kong's status, erasing its history as a British crown colony (see [Citizenship and Social Development Web-based Resource Platform, 2021](#)). As Flowerdew (2004b) notes, politicians naturalise myths by constantly repeating their narrative. In this case, the continuous repetition of revisionist history gradually becomes naturalised.

2) *Deconstructing the Distortion*

CDA offers tools to deconstruct distortions in discourse. Flowerdew (2004b), for instance, has pointed out that Chris Patten's framing of Hong Kong's four bedrock principles as defining its way of life was itself a misrepresentation, as these concepts were subject to debate. In the context of the BN(O) offer, China's then Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Liu Xiaoming (刘晓明), asserted Hong Kong should be regarded "as a part of China, not as a part of the UK" ("[Hong Kong protests: UK should not interfere, says Chinese Ambassador](#)", 2019, para. 11). The Ambassador's statement can similarly be deconstructed.

By asserting that Hong Kong is a part of China, Liu frames Hongkongers as Chinese, despite their BN(O) status and British heritage. This framing disregards Hongkongers' legal relationship with the United Kingdom and negates Hong Kong's values established under British sovereignty, which Deng Xiaoping had promised to maintain for fifty years under the "one country, two systems" framework. Liu's argument that the United Kingdom has no right to "interfere" with China's treatment of its "own people" rests on a presupposition—that Hongkongers universally accept their identity as Chinese nationals, despite historical and legal counterarguments.

This links to my earlier argument that the Chinese government's assertion of sovereignty over Hongkongers' nationality, without consulting those affected, has been instrumental in its disregard for the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The assumption that all Hongkongers are Chinese enables Beijing to claim that British intervention is unwarranted. If the Chinese government had recognised Hongkongers as British living under its claimed territory, it might have been more compelled to respect their democratic freedoms under the treaty.

The Ambassador's assertion is a clear example of manipulation, which occurs "if speakers wilfully make assumptions about their hearers which they know not to be the case" (Flowerdew, 2004b, p.1561). In this case, Liu assumes that British politicians accept Hong Kong's exclusive belonging to China while knowing that his audience does not necessarily share this view. The BN(O) passport's inside cover contains a presupposition trigger: the reference to a "right of abode in Hong Kong" presupposes that Hong Kong is territorially administered under the United Kingdom, parallel to other British Overseas Territories. By issuing BN(O) passports that highlight permanent residency in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom created a document whose wording continues to imply a British connection to the territory, even after the sovereignty transfer. Thus, given the United Kingdom's jurisdiction over its nationals, particularly those with BN(O) status, this instance exemplifies how presupposition can function as a tool of rhetorical control.

The Ambassador's distortion of historical realities is revealed through the words of Chris Patten. The term "primary definers" refers to official voices that possess the power to shape discourse and establish dominant interpretations of particular situations (Flowerdew & Leong, 2007). As the last

governor of Hong Kong who oversaw the handover and a member of the House of Lords, Chris Patten serves as a key authoritative voice in framing Hong Kong's struggle for freedom. Flowerdew and Leong (2007, p. 279) describe such figures as those who "take the lead in framing a debate", which is evident in Patten's remarks:

Here is an example of freedom, and the sort of freedom we take for granted in most Western societies, being under assault. If we allow it to go under, if we allow it to be buried in Hong Kong, then sooner or later it'll threaten everyone (BBC News, 2023, 48:51).

Patten characterises freedom in Hong Kong as "the sort of freedom we take for granted in most Western societies". When he was the Governor of Hong Kong, Patten argued that Hong Kong's political and legal institutions had developed under British rule that fostered a free market economy, the rule of law, democratic principles, and freedom of the individual (Flowerdew, 1997, 2016). The process of democratisation, which included a fully elected legislature prior to the handover, was swiftly reversed by Beijing after 1997 (Wang, 2017). These foundational institutions, rooted in British governance, reinforce Hong Kong's alignment with liberal democratic traditions.

Patten's rhetoric employs an othering strategy that aligns the plural indexical "we" with democratic societies, implicitly contrasting them against China's totalitarian model. By situating Hong Kong within the broader ideological framework of Western democracy, Patten constructs an urgent moral appeal: Hong Kong's erosion of freedoms is not merely a localised issue but a direct challenge to the democratic world. Through this framing, Patten positions Hong Kong as ideologically and historically linked to Britain and its democratic values, reinforcing its distinctiveness from China's governance system.

The United Kingdom and Hong Kong thus share deeply rooted values of freedom and autonomy (Yu, 2022, 2023). Hong Kong's national identity, shaped by its historical ties to Britain, situates its cultural and political principles with those of the United Kingdom (GOV.UK, 2021). The Ambassador's statement disregards this historical connection and ignores the United Kingdom's obligation toward some 2.9 million British nationals and their dependents currently facing political persecution under a totalitarian regime. In total, the United Kingdom could be seen as having responsibility for up to 5.4 million Hongkongers (Ullah & Azizuddin, 2022; Wong et al., 2023).

While Liu Xiaoming may lay claim to Hong Kong's physical territory as of July 1, 1997, the cultural identity and legal nationality status of its people remain tied to Britain under the "two systems" promised by Deng. Hong Kong is therefore still a part of the United Kingdom in terms of its national and cultural character, despite its physical territory now being under Chinese subjugation. By deconstructing the Ambassador's narrative using CDA tools, it becomes clear that Liu's distortion of reality stands in stark contrast to the actual situation.

3.3. Pedagogical Applications

The analysis above aligns with how Hongkongers have identified themselves. BN(O) emigrants often refer to themselves as "British Hongkongers" (Yu, 2023, p. 25), a label not formally recognised in official documents. Despite this, they embrace the term to preserve their Hong Kong identity while integrating into the United Kingdom.

"Glory to Hong Kong" therefore offers a rich text for English classes designed for BN(O) learners. Its lyrics serve as a counter-discourse to Beijing's narratives and provide opportunities to explore principles such as governance, human rights, civil liberties, and resistance to oppression. Intermediate-level learners can engage with the English text while referring to the Cantonese version for comprehension, allowing them to negotiate meaning across languages and cultural contexts.

Specific classroom applications could include:

- Lexical focus: Highlight emotionally charged words (e.g., "liberate", "faith", "fight") and their Cantonese equivalents. Learners match words with meanings, images, or short examples from their own experience.
- Guided questioning: Ask students questions such as, "Who is 'we' in this line?" or "What feeling does this line express?". This form of questioning encourages attention to pronouns, perspective, and power relations.

- Sentence frames and reflection: Provide simple prompts like, “This line makes me feel ____ because ____”, or “I would like Hong Kong to ____”, supporting learners to express ideas without complex grammar.
- Discussion and comparison: Learners work in pairs or small groups to compare English and Cantonese interpretations, exploring how meaning, tone, and ideological positioning shift between languages.

Through these activities, students indirectly engage with discursive strategies identified by CDH. While terms such as foregrounding, presupposition, framing, and othering are used in academic analysis, teachers can translate them into accessible classroom practices, such as noticing repeated words, identifying hidden assumptions, comparing alternative wordings, and reflecting on pronoun choices.

The principles illustrated here can extend beyond the British context. For example, similar approaches could be applied in Australia or Canada, where exiled Hongkongers and other displaced communities encounter similar challenges related to identity, history, and civic participation.

4. Conclusion

This study has pursued three goals: to analyse the implicit meanings of Hong Kong’s protest anthem “Glory to Hong Kong”; to situate these meanings within the political rhetoric of China and the United Kingdom; and to consider their pedagogical potential in English language programmes for Hongkongers resettling abroad. The anthem embodies themes of resistance, perseverance, struggle, and liberation, countering Beijing’s distortion of “one country, two systems”. By drawing on English and Cantonese, as well as symbols of British heritage, Hongkongers articulate an alternative vision rooted in liberal democracy and collective struggle. Beyond the Hong Kong case, the framework developed here could be adapted to other protest texts, such as Tibet’s “Rise Up (Long Shog)”, also sung in exile, and potentially to other contexts where English is taught as a medium for exploring protest and resistance texts. Such comparative studies would allow us to trace how resistance discourses are locally rooted yet globally resonant.

Nevertheless, the study has clear limitations. It focuses on a single anthem, and its interpretation may not capture the full diversity of Hong Kong voices. Political sensitivities may also limit the willingness of classroom participants. However, given the specific context of BN(O) English classes for Hong Kong exiles, the risks of presenting politically sensitive content are minimal, as students already share the lived experience and perspective reflected in the anthem. Future research should extend the framework to a wider corpus of protest texts, explore audience reception across different diaspora communities, and pilot the proposed pedagogical applications in BN(O) and other settlement-focused English classes. Such work would deepen our understanding of how language, protest, and pedagogy intersect in contexts of displacement and resistance.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank all the participants who have shared their voices so that this study could be accomplished. The authors’ gratitude also goes to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and substantial feedback so that this manuscript could be published and reach wider readers.

Declarations

- Author contribution** : The author is responsible for the entire research project, from initiating the ideas to revising the manuscript.
- Funding statement** : The research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.
- Conflict of interest** : There is no conflict of interest in this work.
- Ethics Declaration** : As the author, I confirm that this work has been written based on ethical research principles in compliance with our university's regulations and that the necessary permission was obtained from the relevant institution during data collection. I fully support ELTEJ's commitment to upholding high standards of professional conduct and practicing honesty in all academic and professional activities.
- Additional information** : No additional information is available for this paper.

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Appendix 1**Glory to Hong Kong 願榮光歸香港**

We pledge: No more tears on our land. In wrath, doubts dispell'd we make our stand. Arise! Ye who would not be slaves again: For Hong Kong, may Freedom reign!

Though deep is the dread that lies ahead, yet still, with our faith, on we tread. Let blood rage afield! Our voice grows evermore: For Hong Kong, may Glory reign!

Stars may fade, as darkness fills the air. Through the mist a solitary trumpet flares: Now, to arms! For Freedom we fight, with all might we strike! With valour, wisdom both, we stride!

Break now the dawn, liberate our Hong Kong. In common breath: Revolution of our times! May people reign, proud and free, now and evermore. Glory be to thee, Hong Kong!

何以 這土地 淚再流，何以 令眾人 亦憤恨，昂首 拒默沉 吶喊聲 響透，盼自由 歸於 這裡！

何以 這恐懼 抹不走，何以 為信念 從沒退後，何解 血在流 但邁進聲 響透，建自由 光輝 香港！

在晚星 墜落 徬徨午夜， 迷霧裡 最遠處吹來 號角聲，捍自由 來齊集這裡，來全力抗對，勇氣 智慧 也永不滅！

黎明來到 要光復 這香港，同行兒女 為正義 時代革命，祈求 民主與自由 萬世都不朽，我願 榮光歸香港！