



**“Chinese Language Requirements in the Hong Kong Job Market:
A Survey on Job Advertisements”
Executive Summary**

Language barrier often constitutes a major obstacle to non-Chinese speakers in Hong Kong with regards to their studies and employment opportunities. Hong Kong Unison conducted a research to investigate whether job seekers in Hong Kong who do not speak and/or write Chinese encounter difficulties in seeking local employment.

The research surveyed 1,500 internet job postings in April 2014 and December 2015 from 16 Hong Kong-based internet job search databases. Stratified random sampling methods were used to ensure different occupations are well-represented in this survey. There were 839 job ads that either did not mention spoken-Cantonese requirement or did not mention written-Chinese requirement; in order to clarify missing or ambiguous information on language requirements, researchers also called and successfully spoke to 82 employers whose job postings that did not explicitly mention their Chinese language requirement or preference.

Key Findings

(1) The majority of job ads required Chinese language abilities from applicants

Among the 1500 jobs surveyed, 49% (733) explicitly required spoken Cantonese; 51% (762) required written Chinese; and 26% (389) required spoken Putonghua. Only one out of the 1,500 job postings explicitly mentioned that speaking Cantonese is not a requirement for the position. When we exclude the job postings that did not include requirements on either spoken Cantonese or written Chinese, 97% required spoken Cantonese and 99% required written Chinese (see Table 1).

Table 1. Chinese language requirements stated in job ads

	Spoken Cantonese		Written Chinese		Spoken Putonghua	
	Total %	(excluding “Not mentioned”)	Total %	(excluding “Not mentioned”)	Total %	(excluding “Not mentioned”)
Required	49%	(97%)	51%	(99%)	26%	(79%)
Preferred	1%	(3%)	0%	(1%)	7%	(21%)
Not required	0%	(0%)	0%	(0%)	0%	(0%)
Not mentioned	50%	N/A	49%	N/A	67%	N/A
Total	1,500	755	1,500	769	1,500	493

(2) Spoken Cantonese and written Chinese are both highly valued by employers

The jobs that required spoken Cantonese and the jobs that required written Chinese largely overlap. Table 2 below shows that 43.1% of 1,500 surveyed job ads required both spoken Cantonese and written Chinese, while less than 0.5% of the surveyed job ads indicated either spoken Cantonese or written Chinese is not required or preferred.



Table 2. Requirements on spoken Cantonese and written Chinese in job ads

	Written required	Written preferred	Written not required	Written not mentioned
Cantonese required	43.1%	0.1%	0.0%	5.7%
Cantonese preferred	0.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%
Cantonese not required	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Cantonese not mentioned	7.2%	0.0%	0.0%	42.5%

(3) Most of the jobs that did not explicitly state Chinese language requirements still expected job seekers to have command of the Chinese language

Among the 82 telephone calls we made to clarify Chinese requirements, 66% (51) of the telephoned employers require job applicants to know spoken Cantonese, while only 12% (9) explained that they did not require Cantonese skills. Similarly, 67% (53) of employers that did not state their Chinese writing requirements clarified that they indeed require the skill; only 10% (8 employers) explained that they do not require Chinese writing skills. According to this trend, it may be deduced that although close to half of the surveyed job postings did not mention their Chinese language requirement, most of them still require Chinese speaking and writing skills, and simply took for granted that applicants from Hong Kong would speak Cantonese and write Chinese.

Table 1. Responses from phone calls to employers for jobs that did not mention spoken-Cantonese or written-Chinese requirements

	Spoken Cantonese	Written Chinese
Required	66%	67%
Preferred	9%	10%
Not required	12%	10%
Unable/ unwilling to clarify	13%	13%
Number of job ads that did not mention this language requirement	77	79

** Out of the 82 employers called, 77 did not mention spoken Cantonese requirement while 79 did not mention written Chinese requirement in their job posting. The percentages in this table are based on 77 and 79 respectively.*

(4) Many job ads are inaccessible to job seekers who cannot read Chinese

Among the 1500 job ads surveyed, 16% were written in Chinese only, while 22% were partially bilingual but had essential information written in Chinese only. When combined, 39% of the job ads surveyed was inaccessible to non-Chinese reading job seekers. 61% of the job ads were written entirely in English.



Table 4. Language in which the job posting was written

Language	Tally	Percentage
In Chinese only	245	16%
Some vital information in Chinese	337	22%
Entirely in English	918	61%

(5) Job seekers who do not know Chinese only has 19% of all advertised jobs available to them

Referring to the table below, if a job seeker can only read job ads that are written in entirely in English, and does not apply to any jobs that stated written Chinese, spoken Cantonese, and/or spoken Putonghua as a requirement or preference, then this job seeker essentially only has 19% of internet-advertised job vacancies available to him.

Table 5. Job leads from the sample that are available to job seekers who do not know Chinese

	Language in which the job posting was written			
	Can only read ads entirely in English		Can read ads in English and ads that have some information in Chinese	
Ads that are written in a language the job seeker can read	918	61%	1255	84%
Job seeker does not write Chinese	386	26%	577	38%
Job seeker also does not speak Cantonese	313	21%	495	33%
Job seeker also does not speak Putonghua	288	19%	461	31%

(6) The ability to speak other languages may not offset the disadvantage of not knowing Chinese

Among the 1,500 job ad surveyed, only 25 (less than 2%) listed a preference or requirement for a language other than English or Chinese. Among those 25 jobs, 13 (52%) also required or preferred the job seeker to speak Cantonese, while 17 (68%) of them also required or preferred the job seeker to speak Putonghua.

Table 6. Chinese language requirements among the 25 job ads that listed a preference or requirement for the ability to speak a language other than English or Chinese

Stated Chinese language requirements	Tally	%
Require or prefer Cantonese	13	52%
Require or prefer written Chinese	10	40%
Require or prefer Putonghua	17	68%
Did not mention Cantonese, written Chinese or Putonghua	5	20%
Not require any Chinese skills	0	0%



Conclusion

This survey concludes that non-Chinese speakers who do not have Chinese language proficiency have fewer opportunities in employment seeking in the local job market. Chinese language poses as a barrier to non-Chinese job seekers.

Policy Suggestions

(1) Labour Department

The Labour Department should develop an employment programme for ethnic minorities with reference to the “Employment Programme for the Middle-aged” and other similar measures. The programme should provide adequate support to ethnic minority job seekers to overcome language barriers and other difficulties, and provide encouragement and incentives for employers to hire ethnic minorities. The Labour Department should initiate such project at the department and be a role model to other employers.

The Labour Department should raise the awareness of employers on whether the job really requires Chinese proficiency when posting the vacancies. Employers should be reminded that they must be able to justify any language requirement or condition by showing that it is relevant to and not more demanding than what is required for doing the job as an unjustifiable requirement can lead to claims of indirect discrimination.

(2) Adult Chinese language classes

The government should enhance its efforts in providing accredited adult Chinese classes to residents who need them. Although some organizations (including the Employees Retraining Board, HAD-funded support service centres for ethnic minorities, and tertiary institutions) operate government-funded Chinese language classes, there is a lack of coordination between these courses. Classes provided by community centres are mostly beginners’ level, and the lack of coordination makes it difficult for learners to progress to advanced classes in other institutions. There are also few Cantonese-based Chinese classes in the private market.

(3) Chinese language learning in post-secondary education

The Education Bureau should encourage and support post-secondary education institutions to provide appropriate Chinese language learning opportunities to students to whom Chinese is a second language, in order to increase their competitiveness for the job market after graduation (bridge GCSE/GCE level to higher proficiency).

(4) Chinese language education for second-language learners

Many ethnic minority residents graduated from the public education system without adequate Chinese language skills because there has not been an effective Chinese as a second language policy. The government should implement an effective Chinese as a Second Language policy that includes appropriate curriculum, teaching materials, learning objectives, assessment tools and teacher training in order to help ethnic minority students access the full range of employment opportunities. The government should also study the level of Chinese needed to allow full access to economic opportunities and community life in Hong Kong, and design the Chinese-language curriculum accordingly.



《從招聘廣告看香港就業市場對中文能力的要求》

研究摘要

語言障礙往往令香港的非華語人士在升學及就業機會構成重大阻礙。許多調查和媒體報導亦表示，語言障礙實是少數族裔南亞和東南亞裔在香港經常面對的困難。香港融樂會進行了是次研究，探討不諳中文的求職者在香港求職過程中遇到的困難。

香港融樂會於 2014 年 4 月及 2015 年 12 月期間於 16 個本地求職網站以分層隨機抽樣的方法收集了 1,500 份招聘廣告。其中有 839 份的招聘廣告並沒有明確列明對粵語或中文書寫的要求，研究人員抽樣用電話跟當中約 10% (82 個) 僱主進行跟進，以釐清僱主對粵語或中文書寫的要求。

主要研究結果：

(1) 大多部的招聘廣告都要求求職者懂得中文

是次調查的 1,500 個招聘職位中，49% (733) 明確列明需要求職者懂粵語；51% (762) 明確列明需要求職者懂中文書寫，26% (389) 明確列明需要求職者懂普通話。在眾多的招聘職位中只有 1 份有明確列明不需要求職者懂粵語。排除了一些沒有列明粵語或中文書寫要求的招聘廣告後，有高達 97% 招聘職位需要求職者懂粵語，而高達 99% 需要需要懂中文書寫。(見表 1)

表 1 · 招聘廣告中列明的中文能力要求

	能說粵語		書寫中文		能說普通話	
	總共 %	(不包括沒 有列明)	總共 %	(不包括沒 有列明)	總共 %	(不包括沒 有列明)
需要	49%	(97%)	51%	(99%)	26%	(79%)
優先	1%	(3%)	0%	(1%)	7%	(21%)
不需要	0%	(0%)	0%	(0%)	0%	(0%)
沒有表示	50%	N/A	49%	N/A	67%	N/A
總共	1,500	755	1,500	769	1,500	493

(2) 粵語和中文書寫能力同樣重要

一份招聘廣告若果要求求職者懂得中文，通常會要求粵語和中文書寫兩樣皆精。圖表 2 顯示，在 1,500 份的招聘廣告中，有 43.1% 的招聘廣告列明要求求職者懂得粵語及書寫中文。相反，不要求求職者兩樣皆精的招聘廣告都佔整體不多於 0.5%。



表 2 · 招聘廣告的中文能力要求

	需要書寫	懂書寫優先	不需要書寫	沒有列明
需要粵語	43.10%	0.10%	0.00%	5.70%
粵語優先	0.50%	0.40%	0.00%	0.50%
不需要粵語	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
沒有列明粵語	7.20%	0.00%	0.00%	42.50%

(3) 大部份招職廣告就算沒有列明中文能力要求，其實亦需要求聘者懂得中文。研究員隨機抽樣用電話向 82 個僱主釐清招聘廣告的中文要求，當中 66% (51 個) 的僱主表示該招聘職位其實要求求聘者懂粵語；相反，只有 12% (9 個) 僱主表示其招聘廣告的職位不需要粵語。同樣地，67% (53 個) 僱主表示其招聘的職位其實是需要中文書寫能力，而只有 10% (8 個) 僱主表示他們不要求職者懂得書寫中文。換言之，雖然接近一半的招聘廣告沒有列明對粵語及中文書寫能力的要求，但我們可以從結果推論大部份僱主都要求職者懂粵語及書寫中文，而且假設了所有香港的求職者都懂得粵語及書寫中文。

表 3 · 招聘廣告中沒有列明粵語及中文書寫能力的要求的僱主回應

	粵語	書寫中文
需要	66%	67%
優先	9%	10%
不需要	12%	10%
不能/不願以釐清語文能力要求	13%	13%
沒有提及語文能力的招聘廣告總數	77	79

* 我們共致電了 82 位僱主，77 位沒有於招聘廣告中表示需要求職者懂粵語，79 位沒有招聘廣告中表示需要求職者懂中文書寫。上圖的百分比分別根據 77 和 79 計算的。

(4) 求職者不諳中文無法全面接收招聘廣告內的資訊

調查中有 16% 招聘廣告只有中文版本，而 22% 的招聘廣告則有英文版本，但英文版本裡夾雜了只用中文書寫的重要資訊。數目加起來，不諳中文的求職者看不懂的招聘廣告便佔了 39%。有完整英文版本的招聘廣告佔了 61%。



表 4 · 招聘廣告的書寫語言

語言	數目	百分比	
只有中文版	245	16%	39%
部份重要訊息只有中文	337	22%	
完整英文版	918	61%	

(5) 只有 19% 的招聘廣告資訊適合完全不諳中文的求職者

一個求職者若因不諳中文而只能閱覽有完整英文版的招聘廣告、加上不考慮任何指名要求或優先考慮懂得粵語、中文書寫或普通話的職位空缺的話，從圖表 5 來看，此求職者便只能考慮網上 19% 的招聘廣告。

表 5 · 對不諳中文的求職者有用的招聘廣告數量

	招聘廣告的書寫語言			
	只能閱覽全英文版招聘廣告		能閱覽全英文版、及部份重要訊息只有中文的招聘廣告	
以此語言書寫的招聘廣告總數	918	61%	1255	84%
求職者不諳中文書寫	386	26%	577	38%
求職者亦不諳粵語	313	21%	495	33%
求職者亦不諳普通話	288	19%	461	31%

(6) 其他語言的能力無法抵消不諳中文的缺失

在 1,500 份招聘廣告中，只有 25 份（低於 2%）表示除中、英文之外，如求職者仍懂得另一種語言會獲優先考慮；在此 25 份的招聘廣告中有 13 份（52%）表示需要求職者懂粵語，而 17 份（68%）亦需要或期望求職者講普通話。

圖 6 · 二十五份表示需要求職者懂得除中、英文以外的語言招聘廣告

招聘廣告中的語言要求	數目	百分比
需要懂粵語或懂粵語會獲優先考慮	13	52%
需要書寫中文或懂書寫中文會獲優先考慮	10	40%
需要懂普通話或懂普通話會獲優先考慮	17	68%
沒有表示對粵語，書寫中文及普通話要求	5	20%
不需懂得中文	0	0%



總結：

香港不諳中文的非華語人士，會因語言障礙而較少機會於香港的勞工市場尋找到工作。

政策建議

鑒於上述情況，香港融樂會有以下建議：

(1) 勞工處

勞工處應參考「中年就業計劃」等就業資助計劃，為少數族裔求職者設立「少數族裔就業支援計劃」，為少數族裔求職者提供適當的支援，突破語言障礙等困難。此外，勞工處亦需鼓勵僱主聘請少數族裔人士，協助他們就業。勞工處亦需協助僱主提升他們的敏感度，了解其招聘職位對中文語言能力的需求；提醒僱主必須辨別其招聘職位的語文需求狀況，是否有相關的工作必須用到該種語言，否則可能會構成間接歧視。

(2) 成人中文課程

政府需加強推行具認受性的成人中文教育課程以幫助有需要的香港居民。雖然香港現時已有機構(僱員再培訓局，民政署轄下的少數族裔人士地區服務支援中心，專上學院等)推行政府資助的中文課程，但是這些課程之間缺乏協調及連貫性。地區服務支援中心的課程大部份只提供初學者水平，沒有進修的階梯。而在私人市場裡鮮有教粵語的中文課程。

(3) 專上教育的中文學習課程

教育局需鼓勵及支持專上教育院校推行及提供適切的中文學習機會給予一些中文為第二語言的學生，增加他們於勞工市場的競爭力，協助一些已達 GCSE 或 GCE 中文程度的學生能學習更深程度的中文。

(4) 改善中文教育

香港許多畢業於公立教育制度的土生土長少數族裔居民，一直沒有機會學習到適切的中文課程。因為香港從來沒有一套「中文作為第二語言」政策協助他們有效地學習中文。政府應盡速制定正式的「中文作為第二語言」政策，當中須具明確階段性學習進度目標、適合的教材，師資培訓和各項成果指標的落實計劃等以協助少數族裔學生有效地學習中文，獲得較為公平的就業機會。此外，政府亦需研究現時香港對中文程度的需求，從而制定一套相應的中文學習課程。