

The Rise of Putonghua in Hong Kong: An Analysis of Language Use by Hongkongers and
Mainland Chinese Education Migrants

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Abstract

Language use in Hong Kong is complex and ambiguous as the population comprises migrant groups globally. English enjoys a supreme status in this former British colony, and Cantonese reinforces Hong Kong's nativism. Yet, the current return to China under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework reshapes Hong Kong’s linguistic environment. Putonghua rose from a marginalized position to a critical role as a product of China’s political domination and the social interactions between Mainland and Hong Kong individuals.

This thesis argues that the rise of Putonghua in Hong Kong is in part due to the influx of Chinese education migrants, raising Putonghua linguistic capital in the city. An autoethnography portrays the growing Putonghua use in present-day Hong Kong. Interview results with Chinese education migrants uncover their navigation and, specifically, their contribution to the rise of Putonghua in society.

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Introduction

In June 2020, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government published the National Security Law in Chinese. The absence of an official English version marks a departure from Hong Kong's bilingual conditions by not giving equal weight to both languages ("Chinese Text of National Security Law Prevails over English" 2020). English, Cantonese, and Putonghua are the three major languages of Hong Kong. They have been interchangeably used across formal and informal settings. English has enjoyed its high status since British colonization in the 1840s. Typically, official documents are available in both Chinese and English, and often an additional line suggests that "the English version shall prevail" should discrepancies arise. Evident in civil service and legal settings, as the Department of Justice of HKSAR writes: "This Disclaimer has been translated into Chinese. If there is any inconsistency or ambiguity between the English version and the Chinese version, the English version shall prevail" ("Department of Justice - Important Notices" 2020). The Civil Service Bureau website shows a similar concept, though the inclusion of Chinese into the civil service since the 1997 Handover supposedly gave both languages an equal status. However, the National Security Law indicated a new direction where Chinese would prevail over of English.

As the National Security Law emerged from the Chinese state, English translation was offered for comprehension and reference only, undertaking legal effects solely in its Chinese text. Concerns arise from stakeholders involved in court hearings who do not understand the effective Chinese text when taking legal actions ("Hong Kong Urged to Release Official English Version of New Security Law" 2020). Remarkably, English's universality is absent as this document takes effect in Chinese, challenging the predominant use of English to the rising application of the Chinese language in Hong Kong. As the National Security Law example reflects a broader trend of the increased use of Chinese, this

thesis specifically reveals the increased use of Putonghua in present-day Hong Kong. First, I explore the history of language use in Hong Kong, implicated in sets of social relations, imbued with authority powers, and embroiled in group conflicts. Through my research data collection, I uncover the experiences of the Chinese education migrants in facilitating the rise of Putonghua in the city, and I show instances and conversations where Putonghua is preferred to English in local, everyday settings. By investigating Putonghua's minimal use in the past and by showing its growing functionality today, I infer the implication behind the rise of Putonghua in Hong Kong.

Language in Hong Kong: Background and Literature Review

Hong Kong was colonized by the British for over 150 years. The Handover year 1997 marks the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China, after which Hong Kong was renationalized as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The "One Country, Two Systems" principle ensures Hong Kong to retain its identity with the promised high degree of autonomy ("One Country, Two Systems" n.d.). Both Hong Kong's colonial history and its return to China influenced and repositioned the city into a multicultural and multilingual society. While a sociolinguistic study by the Social Sciences Research Centre suggests Hong Kong's increasing trilingualism in English, Cantonese, and Putonghua—there remains at least 27 major and minor languages in Hong Kong society by nature of its immigration policies across international geographies (Bacon-Shone, Bolton, and Luke 2015). Language in Hong Kong has been and still is complex and contested; the following sections compare the language dynamics before and after the 1997 Handover.

Linguistic market: Pre-Handover Hong Kong

Successive generations of economic migrants fled the war-torn parts of Mainland China. Political instability and socioeconomic despondency drove many to hunt for brighter prospects in Hong Kong (D. C. S. Li 2017b). Individuals from Guangdong province make up a large Chinese population, where *Yue* (粵語) was the dominant lingua franca of the region. Cantonese (白話) as a sub-dialect under *Yue*, originally from Guangzhou, popularized in the city. Upon migrants' settlement, generations of this major migrant group grew up in a Cantonese-dominant environment through socialization and education.

Despite the small English-speaking population in this British colony, English enjoyed a supreme status as the language of the colonizer in this bilingual dynamic. Hong Kong's superposed bilingualism is clear as its bilingual situation emerged due to colonialization, as

opposed to a natural bilingual development (Poon 2004). An imbalanced language use presents a diglossia where the compartmentalized use of two “codes” is hierarchically related (Ahearn 2011, 129). The high code is used more widely in domains and activities with an official purpose. Conversely, the low code is confined in informal and domestic domains. Unlike bilingualism, diglossia intricately depicts the hierarchical linguistic situation between languages and dialects. The community experience of diglossia unravels Hong Kong’s bilingual scene where English was the high code, and Cantonese was more applicable to informal domains. English was made the sole official language for more than 130 years until the enactment of the Official Language Ordinance of 1974. The Ordinance gave equal status to English and Chinese as the territory's official languages. As Chinese dialects adopted the same Chinese character in their written forms, the Ordinance does not specify which spoken Chinese dialect may serve as its official language. Cantonese was the main spoken language of the local population; hence the Ordinance gives rise to Cantonese in its new role of official communication. The Ordinance confronts the idea of diglossia in the linguistic situation of Hong Kong by recognizing both languages of equal importance. However, it complicates the situation and continues to challenge Chinese as a co-official language. English government documents were still treated as the ultimate correct version when discrepancies arose (Poon 2004). Diglossia in Hong Kong confirms that language use is different across settings, which may continue to shift with time and other critical variables to be discussed.

Globalization has led to centralization and standardization in the greater use of dominant languages like English (Ahearn 2011, 135), which shapes and reshapes people’s perception of language use. With Hong Kong’s transformation from a sleepy fishing village in the 1840s to an international center of trade and commerce, English became much more widely used in the city (Johnson 1994). Poon postulates a shifting perception of English from a colonial language to a language for universal communication; meanwhile, the perception of

the Chinese language changed as Hong Kong people cultivated a sense of identity for their indigenous language and the local culture (Poon 2004). Such change in perception of languages gave way to bilingualism, where the growing international status of Hong Kong rationalized and boosted the demand for bilingual individuals.

China instigated an open-door policy in 1978 where more Chinese immigrants, tourists, and businesspeople flooded into Hong Kong. Around the same time, the Chinese state policy-making devoted great effort to popularize Putonghua use nationwide. Article 19 of the Constitution of 1982 officially incorporates the national promotion of Putonghua (Zhang and Cai 2021). Subsequently, Putonghua emerged as the third most popular spoken language in Hong Kong society (Poon 2004). The previously discussed idea of diglossia yielded to triglossia, where English remained the “high” language of British rule and Cantonese and Putonghua deemed the “low” languages.

Official languages since the Handover

The political transition in 1997 brought significant impact to Hong Kong society in ways that continue to shape Hong Kong’s multilinguistic dynamic. Under the framework of “One Country, Two Systems,” Hong Kong SAR’s constitutional document—the Basic Law—enshrines that:

In addition to the Chinese language, English may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. (“Basic Law - Basic Law - Chapter I (EN)” n.d.)

Article 9 above confirms Hong Kong as an officially bilingual territory while raising two questions: 1) It is unclear what the article refers to as “the Chinese language,” and 2) There are no further directions on using language beyond the stated professional settings. Unpacking these two ambiguities will aid the understanding of my research objectives.

The latter issue, a lack of instruction on language use beyond the circumstances stated in the Basic Law Article, challenges Hong Kong's multi-layered linguistic dynamics. Hong Kong is a multilingual society different from the regulations of Mainland China's linguistic environment. All three languages, Cantonese, English, and Putonghua, are vital in everyday Hong Kong. However, one may argue (and this study will continue to explore) that one language is more "convenient" than the other. Unlike the absence of language use guidance in Hong Kong, the Language Bill 96 of the Quebec Government pushes for rigorous regulations to respect French as Quebec's official and common language ("Pearl Eliadis on the Overreach of Bill 96" 2021). Also influenced by British colonization, Bill 96 protects the decline of the French language by extending its mandatory use beyond official settings in Quebec. Small and medium-sized businesses would face more regulations and intricacies to ensure they are operating in French (Bilefsky 2021) due to this act to readdress the language imbalance in multilingual Quebec. Though Bill 96 has its flaws in undermining English as a universal language globally, it has shown a form of governance that fosters language use regulations or guidelines to aid one's linguistic navigation, which Hong Kong's policies lack in such provisions.

China is a vast country with rich cultures and historical milestones, reflective in its impressive linguistic diversity of many hundreds of dialects and languages. Though the distinction between a language and a dialect may vary, there are officially 302 living languages in China ("Languages in China | Chinese Dialects | Spoken Chinese Languages" 2021). The official language of China is Putonghua (普通話), known as Mandarin Chinese internationally. Putonghua translates as the "common speech," serving as the parlance in Mainland China. However, the colonial history and socio-cultural context in Hong Kong challenge the applicability of Putonghua as the sole Chinese language claimed in the Basic Law.

Cantonese-speaking individuals from Southern China dominated colonial Hong Kong's population. A 1993 survey reveals a continuing vitality of Chinese dialects and sub-dialects of Cantonese in Hong Kong, suggesting a shifting pattern of intergenerational language to a “standard” Hong Kong variety of Cantonese (Bolton and Luke 1985). 94.6% of Chinese respondents in the survey claimed they knew “standard Cantonese,” or Hong Kong Cantonese, which diverged significantly from the traditional standard Cantonese (widely used in the Guangdong province of China) in terms of accent, its adoption of English terms, and the use of code-mixing and code-switching between English and Cantonese (Johnson 1994). The different kinds of Cantonese in Chinese languages—Hong Kong Cantonese and Mainland Cantonese—is apparent, and Basic Law recognizes the version of Hong Kong Cantonese as one of Hong Kong’s official languages. To support this beyond linguistic features, another extensive study examined the linguistic features, sociolinguistic backgrounds, and social attitudes in answering whether Cantonese suits as a “language” or a “dialect” (Groves 2010). As one of the criteria of evaluation in the study, historicity assesses the linkage between the Hong Kong culture and the Cantonese language. The study surveyed respondent groups of Hong Kong Cantonese, Mainland Cantonese, and Mainland Putonghua speakers, which found a stronger connection for Hong Kong Cantonese speakers to consider Cantonese inseparable from being a “Hongkonger” (Groves 2010). This study reveals a discrepancy in Cantonese language ideologies through the surveyed responses of different groups (i.e., Mainland versus Hong Kong language users), which validates Hong Kong Cantonese is critical to being a Hongkonger. In this thesis, I will refer to Hong Kong Cantonese as Cantonese. Emerged from the pre-Handover era, Cantonese continued to hold a critical position as Hong Kong underwent multiple pivotal stages in history. Against this backdrop, Cantonese and Putonghua are shaped into a political spectrum of liberal populism versus pan-nationalism. Cantonese appeared on this territory long before Putonghua; hence it

remained affiliated with an individual's sense of localism. The Chinese state later introduced Putonghua, which remained associated with the state representative of the nationalist sentiments of China. However, as the two languages share formal linguistic similarities under the Sinitic linguistic family, they should not be dichotomized. Meanwhile, English's role as a co-official language complicates the Cantonese-Putonghua tension.

“Biliterate and trilingual” policy

In October 1997, the first Chief Executive, Mr. Tung Chee Hwa, pushed for language policy reform through the “biliterate and trilingual” policy (BTP) (兩文三語) to create a combination and a balance among the three principal languages of Hong Kong (D. C. S. Li 2017d). Conditioned by Hong Kong's geopolitical position as a gateway between Mainland China and the rest of the world, biliterate and trilingual competencies became indispensable (D. C. S. Li 2017d). In addition, the rise of China trade activities with the rest of the world accentuated and emphasized the need for fluency in all three languages. BTP aims to graduate students with a high level of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English in response to the need for such linguistic capital for Hong Kong's socioeconomic vitality.

BTP may have become the de facto language policy for schools and the civil service, which may clarify language use applicable to a wider societal context. Biliteracy and trilingualism were conceived in September 1995 as the Civil Service Branch promulgated the use of Chinese across civil service functions (“Panel on Public Service (Papers) 27 Oct 97” 1997). Guidelines were established on the use of Chinese in civil service with Putonghua training practices, elucidating a shift of language use, at least through the reassignment of official functions shown in civil service from solely English to adherence of BTP even before the 1997 Handover. The mentioned idea of triglossia continues, however challenging the previously “low” function of Putonghua through its newly assigned symbolic functions after

the 1997 Handover. The symbolic power and function of all three languages discussed will continue in later sections.

BTP also brings about concerns and problems as individuals become biliterate and trilingual. Two issues stem from Hong Kong's ethnolinguistic patterns and the linguistic dissimilarity between the languages (D. C. S. Li 2017e). First, it points to a wider issue of Hong Kong's predominant Cantonese-speaking environment. The SAR's 2021 Population Census found that 88.2% of the population spoke Cantonese "at home" which was used by the Census and Statistics Department of the SAR in place of what each respondent recognized and reported as their "usual language." Though the figure does not directly mirror the population's first language as Cantonese, the high percentage still supports the continued widespread use of Cantonese in daily settings in Hong Kong since the Handover to Hong Kong today. Earlier sociolinguistic research recognized Hong Kong as a (relatively) ethnically homogenous society, reflecting Cantonese as an unmarked language choice for communication (D. C. S. Li 2017e). Because of Cantonese's predominance, Hongkongers prefer Cantonese over English and Putonghua as their primary language for meaning-making (D. C. S. Li 2017e). Though the demographic is mostly Cantonese-speaking, ethnically Chinese Hongkongers, we cannot deduce the absence of English or Putonghua usage in daily utterances. 58.7% and 54.2% of the population can speak English and Putonghua, respectively ("C&SD : Hong Kong 2021 Population Census - Summary Results" 2022). Both figures grew from the percentage in the 2011 Census Report stably, demonstrating Hong Kong people's continued ability to acquire linguistic capital across Cantonese, English, and Putonghua. All three languages continue to hold their critical positions in language usage and practices in Hong Kong. By referencing these figures, I hope we do not jump to the conclusion that Cantonese outweighs English and Putonghua. Instead, it confirms the

population's preference to use Cantonese, while English and Putonghua grow in their significance locally and internationally.

Biliteracy is closely associated with the receptive and productive domains in Chinese and English. The population who could read Chinese increased from 89.4% in 2011 to 90.1% in 2021, and those who could read English increased from 68.2% to 70.2% in 2021 (“C&SD : Hong Kong 2021 Population Census - Summary Results” 2022). These data sets provide a macro-overview of linguistic capabilities and language use patterns in Hong Kong. Despite the drastic linguistic dissimilarities between Chinese and English in phonology, lexicogrammar, and orthography, literacy in both written Chinese and English are not low. Chinese adopts a logographic, non-alphabetic writing system with no way to deduce its phonemic sound values from its written character shape (D. C. S. Li 2017d). Independent linguistic capabilities are required for the mastery of English, as neither Cantonese nor Putonghua has any reference value in the strenuous process of English language acquisition. The same cannot be said about Putonghua language acquisition: though it “shares cognates with Cantonese lexicographically and adopts the same orthography” (D. C. S. Li 2017e, 195), its difficulties require further explanations. BTP is not an easy task, but the Hong Kong people should continue to work toward this linguistic reality that puts them in favor of Hong Kong’s language needs. Li regards this linguistic reality as “thrust upon Hongkongers as the former British colony gradually evolved into a knowledge-based economy toward the end of the last century” (D. C. S. Li 2017e, 197). Li raises questions about the voluntariness of language acquisition for Hongkongers or in general. As society shifts through social or political transitions, the new societal dynamic poses new perceptions of languages that the individual will choose to act upon. The failure or absence of such acquisition may disrupt individuals' social mobility or statuses. Linguistic capital is inherently tied to power and social mobility, which I will elaborate in later sections.

Linguistic comparison between Cantonese and Putonghua

Cantonese and Putonghua are similar; their complications lie beyond their spoken practices. A brief comparison of Cantonese and Putonghua linguistic distinctions would aid the understanding of why speakers of Cantonese find Putonghua language acquisition challenging. Putonghua and Cantonese differ in lexis, syntax, pronunciation, tone, and phonology. To clarify, Putonghua follows Modern Standard Chinese (現代漢語), literally “modern language of the Han Chinese,” which refers to either spoken or written version of the standard variety of Chinese (D. C. S. Li 2006). Under such an umbrella, the spoken and written standards separate into Putonghua and Standard Written Chinese (SWC), respectively (D. C. S. Li 2006). Though Cantonese belongs to the Modern Chinese varieties, proficiency in Cantonese doesn’t translate directly into one’s mastery of SWC. Unlike Putonghua speakers who write SWC in the way they speak, native Cantonese speakers cannot do the same because SWC follows the lexis and grammar of Putonghua which is not their mother tongue (D. C. S. Li 2017a). As a result of the People's Republic of China’s careful language planning since the 1950s, Putonghua was its product alongside the implementation of simplified Chinese characters. Under “One Country, Two Systems,” Hong Kong continues to use traditional Chinese characters, meaning each character generally contains more strokes. As the national lingua franca adopts simplified Chinese, it takes more effort to comprehend traditional characters with more complicated strokes, and one could also argue vice versa. Li recognizes a linguistic mismatch between spoken (Cantonese) and written Chinese (SWC) in Hong Kong and deviations from SWC norms are frowned at on formal occasions (D. C. S. Li 2017d, 3). Therefore, native Cantonese speakers must remain conscious and vigilant when adhering to SWC norms unusual from their everyday Cantonese usage.

There is a difference between Hong Kong's written Chinese and the conventional adoption of SWC. Chinese characters are used as “a syllabary to construct a written form of

colloquial Cantonese” (Johnson 1994, 180). Such a colloquial written form is apparent in newspapers, journalism, and personal communications. As a result, literacy training of SWC takes an additional step as some basic SWC vocabulary words are seldom used in speech. For example, Cantonese vernacular-based vocabulary like eat (食, *sík*) and sleep (瞓, *faan*) is only used in informal writing because their Putonghua-SWC equivalent is eat (吃, *chī*) and (睡, *shuì*). Cantonese and Putonghua are not mutually intelligible, as they were “dialects” of Chinese varieties. To some degree, one may be able to guess the meaning through their logographic familiarities. Apart from differences in written domains, English words or expressions were inserted into Hong Kong Cantonese to further the established linguistic distance between Cantonese and Putonghua. The borrowed practice of English terms has fully assimilated into everyday Cantonese discourse. For instance, the English word “file” is used as “*faai lou*” in colloquial Hong Kong Cantonese (Johnson 1994), while the formal SWC or Putonghua is “*dǎng àn*” (檔案). He elaborates that such mixing is “a feature of the speech of the young, the (English) educated, and the upwardly mobile, and it is rapidly gaining ground” (Johnson 1994, 179). English loanwords, or the practice of code-mixing and code-switching in general, may have shifted towards universality as common practice as Hong Kong intermingles with the three languages. Moreover, Cantonese interacts with English to produce an affinity to honor Hongkongers' social and cultural identities. This practice is popularized in the mainstream Hong Kong linguistic use, furthering its linguistic distance from Putonghua.

Language-in-education policy

The compulsory language-in-education policy in September 1997 served a role in facilitating the perceived importance of Chinese in Hong Kong. About 70% of schools turned to Chinese-medium teaching (Poon 2004). The Guidance for Secondary Schools outlines the

benefit of mother-tongue teaching, henceforth encouraging Chinese as the medium of instruction (MOI) as means to discourage the use of mixed code in teaching and learning (“[Archive] Medium of Instruction” 1997). In the past, sociolinguists have argued for both sides of code-mixing or a larger linguistic pattern of translanguaging—to acknowledge and celebrate one’s full linguistic repertoire without limiting to a single language. The policy-making is premised on the concern around the practice of mixed code in classrooms, which impact the general decline of students’ language proficiency (D. C. S. Li 2017c). Arguably, this compulsory Chinese medium instruction policy could be a political gesture to appease China. Implementing this policy was logical to valorize the Chinese language for Hong Kong on its brink of return to China (Poon 2004). The duration of such policy implementation did not demonstrate the efficacy of shifting language use in Hong Kong. The policy partially impacted the employment needs of “biliteracy and trilingualism” in Hong Kong. There exists a flaw behind this policy as the vernacular Cantonese teaching undermines the position of Putonghua as a critical element for Chinese literacy development (D. C. S. Li 2017e). As Hong Kong public schools teach SWC texts in Cantonese, Hongkongers lack Putonghua proficiency to a certain extent, enhancing the obstacles in achieving biliteracy and trilingualism in Hong Kong. The language-in-education policy has shown that education is imperative in transmitting thought and culture through Cantonese. If the medium of instruction of the Chinese language subject were to change from Cantonese to Putonghua in schools (Poon 2010), Cantonese would be relegated to being a home language. This proposal would also raise the status of Putonghua, albeit its position already as a national language, to allow better amalgamation with the Mainland. The intricacy lies in the overarching “One Country, Two Systems” framework and the consideration that Hong Kong retains its status as “Asia’s world city” to justify its language policy prospect. On an individual level, it remains

a challenge to juggle three languages as these Cantonese-dominating speakers live in the buffer zone between China and the English-speaking world.

Linguistic Capital

Language is enmeshed with social power and cultural values, and that linguistic practices and social contexts mutually constitute each other. Recognizing language as “capital” is rooted in Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Capital. “Capital” buys one higher position in society and decides one’s social role as the foundation of social life. Social theorists like Bourdieu seek to grasp social and power relations that characterize the social conditions among individuals. Bourdieu establishes habitus, a set of dispositions to orient agents on action and response, forming habits and behaviors. The dispositions generate attitudes, practices, and perceptions through gradual inculcation (Bourdieu 1991, 82), thereby structured to reflect the social conditions within which they are acquired. An individual act should not be viewed merely as the product of habitus; it is also the “product of the relation between the habitus and the specific social contexts or ‘fields’” (Bourdieu 1991, 62). He defines a field or market as a structured space of positions of interrelation, determined by different forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991).

Linguistic capital interacts with different forms of capital. Economic capital represents material wealth like money and assets. Cultural capital consists of knowledge, skills, and other cultural acquisitions. Social capital derives from one’s existing social positions and status to exert power over resource mobilization. Symbolic capital accounts for the honor and prestige of an individual. Linguistic capital falls under cultural capital as the knowledge and the capacity to produce expressions for a particular linguistic market. Such a market endows linguistic products by assigning them to a value facilitated by social, political, economic, and historical forces. The knowledge and capacity of a specific language extend beyond language rules like grammar. It is also the mastery of speaking that language in the

way society expects in a specific linguistic setting. Accents and slangs in day-to-day utterances allow a successful production of expressions valued or judged by that market. For Hong Kong, it would be one-dimensional only to discuss linguistic capital in association with English. Each speaker in the linguistic community possesses varying levels of linguistic capital in each language. The more linguistic capital one possesses, the better one can convert such capital into other forms of capital to improve social mobility and social networks. Therefore, we cannot only assess English linguistic ability in the linguistic market of Hong Kong. Cantonese and Putonghua are undergoing shifts in their values and usages, leading to their respective linguistic capital appreciation. Taking a systematic approach to situate one's linguistic capital into levels or segments, we should acknowledge the linguistic capital (perhaps to a lesser degree) one possesses even if one only speaks one language. How to measure one's level of linguistic capital? One way to do so is by the number of languages one speaks—the more, the merrier—for communication with different groups, thereby exerting symbolic power via different forms of capital. But this cannot be the only metric, as each language has its level of linguistic capital. In the context of Hong Kong, speaking four minority or migrant group languages (because migrants are of a smaller population) brings one to the same extent of linguistic capital as someone who masters Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. Would two individuals speaking the three main languages equally well have the same level of linguistic capital? That is also unlikely, justified by Bourdieu's elaboration on linguistic exchange:

Linguistic exchange – a relation of communication between a sender and a receiver, based on enciphering and deciphering, and therefore on the implementation of a code or a generative competence – is also an economic exchange which is established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit (Bourdieu 1991, 66).

As linguistic capital converts into other forms of capital, utterances are signs of wealth and authority divorced from the literary uses of language as a pure instrument of communication. This linguistic production can sometimes be an unconscious pursuit of symbolic profit that leads to a social value and a symbolic efficacy. Symbolic power, exercised on markets that enable actors to convert linguistic capital into another, is determined by neither the utterance sender nor the receiver. It is constantly shaped and reshaped by society and language policy—both mutually influencing one another, as explored in earlier sections. Individuals and groups act upon to speak and use the language to give rise to linguistic capital and sculpt its related symbolic power. It is undeniable that globalization has led to increases in migration and communication for the transnational flow of ideas and languages, creating complex and creative mixtures of languages (Ahearn 2011). The following section investigates migrant groups in Hong Kong and how their migratory movements contest the language environment.

In a simple sense, linguistic capital entails the knowledge and capacity, or proficiency, in languages of high status in groups and societies. For example, English is widely regarded as a form of linguistic capital for its indispensable value in achieving upward and outward mobility. Hong Kong's job market manifests linguistic capital, specifically English, for its universality and high status. The praised English linguistic capital is challenged by ethnic preferences associated with perceived linguistic capital for Hong Kong employers and human resource recruiters (Y.-T. Li 2022). In a pool of Anglo-Saxon, Mainland Chinese, and local Hong Kong applicants, the study compared callback rates from those demographics to infer discriminatory or preferential treatment. The typical perception of "English dominates" was unexpected: Resumes with Hong Kong local names received more callbacks than Mainland Chinese applicants, and Anglo-Saxon names received the lowest callback rate (Y.-T. Li 2022). This echoes the growing need for a trilingual capability

to satisfy the needs of an international company with Hong Kong's nature to serve as an economic linkage between stakeholders from China to the rest of the world. The distinction between three groups of applicants also yields questions of identity, which I will elaborate in later sections. English, a previously highly regarded linguistic capital, is no longer the most lucrative feature of an applicant. Employers desire Cantonese proficiency to ease communication between local actors and demonstrate an increasing favorability of Putonghua (Y.-T. Li 2022). Government language policy would be a driver behind the scenes; Putonghua is emerging as a critical language with high linguistic capital. Both educational institutions and the job market are implicated in the production and reproduction of advantage in society, exemplified by linguistic capital, as both the means and the outcome of the pursuit of enhanced life chances (Morrison and Lui 2000). Putonghua linguistic capital is challenging English linguistic capital as the parties that possess the economic, social, and political power in the local society has shifted in post-colonial Hong Kong. The following section zooms into a group of Chinese migrants in Hong Kong and how their contribution to language use in Hong Kong facilitates a Putonghua's rise in linguistic capital.

Mainland Migration to Hong Kong: Background and Literature Review

Hong Kong is often described as a “city of migrants” home to the Chinese, British, and other Western and South Asian communities. As we have acknowledged in the past sections of the languages and dialects brought over by Chinese migrants and British colonizers, Hong Kong has a long history of migration of varying kinds. A mass exodus of Chinese immigrants from Mainland China to Hong Kong occurred at the end of World War II, resulting in the large ethnic composition of Chinese communities prevalent in Hong Kong society today. The Chinese communities in Hong Kong continue to grow due to Hong Kong’s immigration policy that provides appropriate work visa provisions and lucrative schemes, attracting skilled talents to meet the manpower needs for Hong Kong’s position in the global market. For example, the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme facilitated entry to residence by capital investment entrants (“GovHK: Fact Sheets” 2020). The outcome of this migration policy bolstered Hong Kong’s economic prosperity—investments made under the scheme totaled \$316.6 billion —without entailing the benefits of migration brings to a particular individual.

There are over two million Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong’s overall population of seven million (“C&SD : Hong Kong 2021 Population Census - Summary Results” 2022). Individuals choose to move to Hong Kong for work, family, marriage, and education among this demographic. Because of the migration movement of individuals from China and the intricacy of China-Hong Kong relations as one country, I will be using the generalized term “migration” to depict the migratory movement from Mainland China to Hong Kong. This study zooms into the education migrants, specifically native Putonghua speakers of Mainland China, who move to Hong Kong to pursue an undergraduate education. From here, I will refer to this group as Chinese education migrants. Much literature has suggested Mainland

students in Hong Kong live in a familiar and estranged space due to the unique political and sociocultural relationships between Hong Kong and the Mainland (Yu and Zhang 2016). This intricacy contrasts the migration experience of the same group in Western countries—the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia—which they adapt to English use as its dominating role. Hong Kong society presents a kaleidoscopic interplay between the three languages, which is imperative for the acculturation and integration of the Chinese education migrants.

Shifting language ideologies in Hong Kong

Hong Kong and Mainland China share and mutually influence one another in cultural and social productions. They differ in linguistic capital, as Hong Kong aims toward biliteracy and trilingualism, while Putonghua dominates the language use in the Mainland. The Chinese education migrants grew up in a Putonghua-dominating society where their Putonghua experience forms a language ideology that conceptualizes beliefs and attitudes towards using Putonghua (Gu 2011b). Their unique perceptions create indexical value of language rooted in the linguistic discourse of the social group to which they belong. For multilingual Hong Kong, language ideologies are positioned differently—subjective to historical, social, and political contexts—in the broader linguistic market that shapes dominant-subordinate, majority-minority relations (Gu 2011b). Linguistic practices produce ideologies—speakers exploit indexical processes through the symbolic values of different languages to project their social positions (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). As a result, the Chinese education migrants and Hongkongers share differing language ideologies towards Putonghua. The latter group resentfully associates Putonghua with the Chinese state, pushing Putonghua to a marginalized position under strong Cantonese cultural domination.

The influence of linguistic practice alters one's perception of cultural identity once they arrive at Hong Kong. New social groups and ingroup preference at the host society

influence their language choice (Luo and Wiseman 2000). Putonghua-speaking education migrants manage their previously formed language ideologies when participating in Hong Kong's trilingual discourse. These education migrants readily prepare to enroll in Hong Kong universities and possess high English linguistic capital due to the requirement of English for admission entrance and teaching medium. Speaking English at the university, voluntarily or otherwise, is a practice to transform the identity of an "outsider" into that of a local community insider. The difference in language use reinforces "groupness." By speaking the insider's language, one gains a legitimate position in the local group as they understand the group customs and find a common interest. Identity formation diverges between Hongkongers and Mainland Chinese through their use of language. Cantonese is the de facto, culturally dominating language of Hong Kong, while Putonghua is a marginalized language (Gu 2011b). Against a backdrop of tightened social tensions, Cantonese language acquisition practically brings the two groups closer as they arrive at the same linguistic exchange. However, no matter how hard they try to speak Cantonese for adaptation, their identity as Mainland Chinese intrinsically excludes them from gaining local group membership (Gu 2011b). Cantonese linguistic capital through the migrants' post-arrival language acquisition cannot effectively be on par with their native Putonghua linguistic capital. They may more adequately articulate their perspectives in Putonghua than in Cantonese, which perpetuates a negative stereotype of these migrants as being "less knowledgeable" in Cantonese. For example, Chinese migrants at Hong Kong's secondary schools prefer to comfortably stay within their "minority" group and maintain their cultural group identity in the host society (Gu 2011b). Gu acknowledges the developmental age of the secondary school students in association with familial and friendships, justifying migrants' preferences to remain in their comfortable social circles. Another study on Mainland university students in Hong Kong found shifting identities to manipulate the relationship between languages to find legitimacy

in different interactions (Gu 2011a). Their Mainland Chinese identity invite solidarity with other Mainland students while their cultural identity as students permit exchanges across cultures and maintenance of diversity. Mainland Chinese education migrants deal with multiple identities to negotiate their experience in Hong Kong at both university and societal levels with considerations of professional career trajectories, adhering to their language ideologies.

Chinese cultural identity and Putonghua

Identity maintenance and new identity formation are imperative to the experiences of Chinese education migrants in Hong Kong. Socially constructed identities are unique to Hong Kong's historical, social, and political contexts. Language and Cantonese linguistic capital are inseparable from a Hong Kong identity for local and migrant individuals. Individuals construct and negotiate cultural identities through culture, social class, citizenship, interests, and religion as the global cultural supermarket brings "a flood of information and potential identities every corner of the world" (Mathews 2000, 9). Individuals are shaped by language and social practices and reactions to state apparatus to cultivate a (or an absence of) national identity. To a large extent, these are the given ethnic and cultural identities assigned by the circumstance one is born into. The later acquired languages (other than one's mother tongue) alongside other interests and passions that one chooses to allow some degree of social mobility and identity shift, refreshing one's perceived cultural identity (Mathews 2000, 15). Cultural identity is a cultural performance embedded in our social world, censoring one's choices within the cultural supermarket through the variables one lives by. Making sense of one's ethnic and cultural identity in Hong Kong, thanks to globalization, post-modernization, and nationalism, is to recognize the constraints imposed by society in our perceptions and ideas about the socially embedded cultural supermarket.

The use of Putonghua in Hong Kong could implicate a political identity to identify and affiliate with the Chinese state. A Chinese ethnic identity is not interchangeable with Chinese as a national identity. Hong Kong nativism, bolstered through its colonial past, lacks nationalism which is an instrumental function of national identity. Since the 2000s, this city has been viewed as a city of protests, with the 2003 Article 23 protest fearing the loss of free speech, the 2005 protest demanding universal suffrage, the 2014 Umbrella Movement against the city's electoral system, and the 2019 Anti-Extradition demonstrations concerning Hong Kong's separate jurisdiction from the Chinese Communist Party's legal systems. A common denominator of this series of social movements is that some Hongkongers do not want to be a part of China, extending to a dislike of the Chinese government. The older generations fled China to Hong Kong and other parts of the globe, escaping the political chaos, which rationalized the dislike of the Chinese state as Hong Kong returned to the hands of the Chinese in 1997. These protests demonstrate Hongkongers' strong civic identity and the Hong Kong nativist sentiments. One way to embrace such a political sentiment is through Cantonese use. Because of how Putonghua relates to the Chinese state, not speaking Putonghua is also a political gesture failing to acknowledge the state and its people. For some Hongkongers, such a resistance to speaking Putonghua is symbolic of a larger resistance to political domination, failing belong to an authoritarian nation. Unlike Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong people lack nationalist sentiments and an appreciation of the Chinese state as they choose not to embrace Putonghua. As language is imperative to the transformation of identity, will Putonghua in Hong Kong bridge the respect between Hongkongers and Mainland Chinese? How can Putonghua serve as a catalyst for a growing Hong Kong-Mainland integration as a sensitized issue?

Despite its cultural and symbolic importance to Chinese education migrants, Putonghua in Hong Kong was a neglected peripheral language that the importance of the

other two languages exacerbated Putonghua's unpopularity. Liu compares the attitudes of the three languages in Hong Kong. English has become the key to success and upward social mobility and serves as an interactional language between the Mainland and local students (Liu 2018). Cantonese is rooted in most daily communications and represents locals' positive attitude toward this language, but the Mainland students do not share the same strength of positive attitude towards Cantonese. Cantonese is an emblem of Hong Kong nativism, and this high cultural relevance neglected Putonghua's position as a national identity marker (Sautman and Xie 2020). Political landscape shapes language use through policy pressure and individual actions. Policies may enforce linguistic homogeneity while individual actions generate political identities and affinity drawn from individual political ideologies to resist nationalist hegemony (Sautman and Xie 2020). 25 years have elapsed since the end of British sovereignty. Hong Kong's localization in addition to Chinese rulings raised both Cantonese and Putonghua usages. English has transitioned from the British colonial language to accumulate universality and neutrality against a global backdrop of the perception of English, resulting in a neutral, communicative channel between the locals and Chinese migrants.

A migrant's formation and maintenance of one's cultural identity reflect an individual's self-perception as a member of a cultural group (Ngo and Li 2016). A Mainland identity correlates with a migrants' perceived discrimination, influencing one's socio-cultural adaptation (Ngo and Li 2016). Putonghua reveals one's Chinese national identity as the language ideologies between Mainland and Hong Kong individuals diverge. The Chinese education migrants, as they familiarize themselves with the multilingual situation in Hong Kong, recognize the different symbolic power of each language identity collides within ethnicity, nationality, culture, and social group. To comfortably adjust one's identity under a specific context, one grasps the interchange of languages to make themselves more conveniently heard and respected. Scholarships and literature have touched on the migrants'

linguistic struggles in making sense of their experiences in Hong Kong. Among non-local communities in Hong Kong, Mainland Chinese students reported being harassed when they speak Putonghua on the streets in Hong Kong (Mathews 2019). A series of social movements furthered these students' sense of fear and alienation to use Putonghua, extending a sense of inferiority. While Putonghua has gained presence since the Handover as one of the official languages of Hong Kong, the language is still inseparable from the connection to a minority or a marginalized community of Hong Kong. However, Putonghua's position as marginalized is shifting as the Chinese state asserts more power over Hong Kong. The rise of Putonghua in Hong Kong seems to have paralleled an influx of Chinese education migrants as part of Hong Kong's immigration policies. These migrants are agents of Putonghua users, presenting a positive feedback to the increase of Putonghua in the city.

This thesis presents an observation of the rising Putonghua linguistic capital in Hong Kong, an understanding of the city's shift in language dynamic, an analysis of the Chinese education migrants' role in facilitating Putonghua's rise, and an acknowledgment of the language shift reflecting Hong Kong's relationship with China.

Methodology

To show the rise of Putonghua's linguistic capital in the city, I evaluated phenomena and circumstances where Putonghua is a preferable language. First, I took an autoethnographic approach to compare the use of the three languages in Hong Kong's ordinary settings. These settings included supermarkets, grocery shops, bakeries, convenience stores, coffee shops, and fruit stands. As I confirmed Cantonese's predominating role in everyday communication, I focused on comparing the usefulness of English and Putonghua across these settings. I communicated with the person in dialogue in either English or Putonghua for each interaction. As I recorded and reproduced our conversations, I specified and showed which languages are used in that interaction. I hypothesized that Putonghua, in these settings, is preferred and more practical than English as a result of the language shift since the Handover.

As aspects of the autoethnography may be limited and subject to my individual experience navigating in these settings, I also conducted individual interviews with six Mainland Chinese education migrants from the University of Hong Kong. Findings from the interview helped strengthen my execution and results of the autoethnography. These interviewees represented the influx of Chinese migrants that naturalizes the use of Putonghua in the city. The interviews uncovered their reasons to migrate, comparison of home and Hong Kong, language use on campus, language use in Hong Kong society, migration aspirations and plans, and language attitudes. Their language use on campus with various language users also complicated the language dynamic in Hong Kong, pointing to a shift in language use since the Handover. I hypothesized that Putonghua's presence and language attitudes are showcased through its practical use by different groups and in society-at-large, and they influenced Putonghua's usefulness and practicality in the city.

Both data collection approaches have been reviewed and approved by Tufts Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research Institutional Review Boards as the research protocols involve human subjects. The execution of both the autoethnography and interview adhered to human subject standards and ensured regulatory compliance.

Language Use in Everyday Hong Kong: An Autoethnography

“去香港購物，講粵語打八折，講英語打六折，講普通話打骨折！”

“When you go shopping in Hong Kong, you can get 20% off if you speak Cantonese, 40% off if you speak English, and beaten up if you speak Putonghua!

A popular internet joke emerged in the 2010s as a result of individuals' experiences using different languages in commercial settings in Hong Kong. The difference in discount offers between Cantonese and English illustrates a preference for using either of the two languages to receive better treatment or service. Though it may be exaggerated that one can get almost half off an item just by speaking English, the joke thoroughly reflects the anglocentric language attitudes set by Hong Kong society. According to the joke, speaking Putonghua would result in being beat up, or literally, “bone-broken,” which uses a wordplay—the Chinese word 折 can mean “discount offer” and “fracture”—to highlight the tension and antagonism attached to the act of speaking Putonghua. For Hongkongers, Cantonese is the default language, so English or Putonghua is of secondary importance in their shopping experiences. The joke is popularized among Mainland Chinese residents and tourists as they alter language choices when shopping in Hong Kong, legitimizing their experience as tourists and migrants as they lived through a period of Hong Kong-Mainland social movements and tensions in Hong Kong. This perception of Putonghua as an inferior language is perpetuated by Hong Kong protestors' resistance against the Chinese state. The Chinese people seem to take inseparable blame as Hongkongers view the state, its language, and its people as a collective force.

A sense of inferiority in Putonghua is heightened by a series of discriminatory acts as Mainland tourists and migrants flooded Hong Kong to purchase goods. Although

Mainlanders' participation in Hong Kong's commercial activities boosts the economy and the livelihoods of Hong Kong businesses, some blame the Mainlanders for taking away resources from locals and driving up prices. For example, luxury housing developments in prestigious neighborhoods are coveted by Mainland buyers, accounting for 25% to 40% of luxury apartment sales in Hong Kong (ABC News 2012) and driving up real estate demands. Living in the world's priciest residential property market, Hongkongers bear the consequence of unaffordable housing in their city, and Mainlanders are blamed for the tightened supply. Ethnic racism is reinforced and reciprocated alongside the nostalgia toward British rule as Hong Kong returns to the hands of China. Derogatory slurs popularize under the backdrop of Hong Kong-Mainland tension. Hongkongers seem to view the Chinese government and its people as inseparable, and often they express frustrations and anger toward ordinary Mainlanders as scapegoats for state action. The term "locust" is used in social media, protests, and other localist mediums to describe how Mainlanders strip away Hong Kong's resources, with escalating tensions in Hong Kong over China's increasing influence and the influx of Mainland visitors ("Hong Kong Advert Calls Chinese Mainlanders 'locusts' - BBC News" 2012).

About ten years have gone by since the beginning of the marginalization of Mainlanders in Hong Kong, and the National Security Law of 2020 is steadily restoring order. Chinese visitors continue to shop in Hong Kong because of its no customs tariff as a free port and, at least before the Covid-19 pandemic, the convenient and accessible travel means from the Mainland. The use of Putonghua has departed from the perceived "bone fracture;" sales associates at luxury designer brands speak fluent Putonghua to cater to Mainland visitors with strong purchasing power.

How has the language use shifted? In what scenarios are Putonghua more readily accepted now? I took an autoethnographic approach to observe and reflect on the use of

Putonghua in ordinary Hong Kong settings. For one week, I meandered around the neighborhood of Sai Wan. I visited different essential shops frequented by locals using Cantonese, English, and Putonghua, including supermarkets, fruit stands, bakeries, drugstores, grocery shops, dry-cleaning shops, coffee shops, and stationery shops. As I uncovered the multi-layered language dynamic in Hong Kong, I realized that Putonghua is becoming increasingly more acceptable and preferred to English in these ordinary settings. Cantonese continues to be the default language of interaction and transactions.

Background of Sai Wan and myself as a researcher

The Sai Wan area is on the western section of the Hong Kong Island that includes Sai Ying Pun, Shek Tong Tsui (or HKU), and Kennedy Town, which belongs to the Central and Western District of Hong Kong. The overall socioeconomic status of an area's population demographic connotes some degree of characteristics of that region. I examine Sai Wan's social and economic characteristics below to account for its diversity in class, migrant groups, and age that this study finds valuable to address.

Figure 1 taken from the HKSAR's 2016 Population Census displays an understanding of class and language use of the Central and Western District population. The population consists of 79.9% of ethnically Chinese people, as opposed to 92% ethnically Chinese population of the whole of Hong Kong. As Cantonese and Putonghua are majorly associated with ethnically Chinese individuals, English is of critical use for the non-Chinese groups in Sai Wan, which is higher than the whole territory's standard. These non-Chinese individuals come from countries worldwide, and English serves as their primary language. Representative of class and socioeconomic status, the median monthly income of Sai Wan—HKD20,800 as opposed to HKD15,500 in the whole of Hong Kong—to some degree reflects the earning and spending power of the population. The labor force participation rate of the district is 65.5%, as opposed to 60.8% in the rest of Hong Kong. The median rent to income

ratio is 30.6% instead of 13.6% of Hong Kong. This data lays the background of the Sai Wan neighborhood that is imperative for comprehending the scenarios I encountered during my research data collection.



2016年中西區人口的選定社會及經濟特徵

Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Population in Central and Western District, 2016

	中西區 Central and Western District	全香港 Whole Territory
1. 人口 Population	243 266	7 336 585
2. 華人比例 (百分比) Proportion of population of Chinese ethnicity (%)	79.7	92.0
3. 15歲及以上從未結婚人口比例 (百分比) Proportion of never married population aged 15 and over (%)	33.7	30.1
4. 年齡中位數 Median age	43.8	43.4
5. 15歲及以上具專上教育程度人口比例 (百分比) Proportion of population aged 15 and over having attained post-secondary education (%)	49.5	32.7
6. 於同區居住及就讀 ⁽¹⁾ 香港院校全日制課程人口比例 (百分比) Proportion of persons attending full-time courses in educational institutions in Hong Kong with place of study in same district of residence ⁽¹⁾ (%)	51.9	54.6
7. 勞動人口參與率 (百分比) Labour force participation rate (%)	65.5	60.8
8. 不包括無酬家庭從業員及外籍家庭傭工的工作人口每月主要職業收入中位數 (港元) Median monthly income from main employment of working population excluding unpaid family workers and foreign domestic helpers (HK\$)	20,800	15,500
9. 於同一居住地點所屬地區工作 ⁽²⁾ 的工作人口比例 (百分比) Proportion of working population with place of work in same district of residence ⁽²⁾ (%)	34.9	17.4
10. 家庭住戶 Domestic households	87 057	2 509 734
11. 家庭住戶平均人數 Average domestic household size	2.7	2.8
12. 從事經濟活動的家庭住戶 ⁽³⁾ 的家庭住戶每月收入中位數 (港元) Median monthly domestic household income of economically active households ⁽³⁾ (HK\$)	47,000	30,450
13. 居於自置單位 ⁽⁴⁾ 的家庭住戶在家庭住戶總數中所佔的比例 (百分比) Proportion of domestic households owning the quarters they occupy (%)	54.9	48.5
14. 按揭供款及借貸還款與收入比率中位數 (百分比) Median mortgage payment and loan repayment to income ratio (%)	18.8	18.4
15. 租金與收入比率中位數 (百分比) Median rent to income ratio (%)	30.6	13.6
16. 5歲及以上人口曾作內部遷移 ⁽⁴⁾ 比例 (百分比) Proportion of population aged 5 and over having internally migrated ⁽⁴⁾ (%)	9.2	10.6

Figure 1. Social and Economic Characteristics of Population in Central and Western District (“District Profiles | 2016 Population By-Census” 2017)

My encounters' reactions may also be unique and subjective to my personal traits and identity. I offer some personal backgrounds to give a more holistic view when justifying and analyzing my encounters.

Born in China's Zhejiang province, my family moved to Hong Kong when I was eleven. Putonghua was my first language (L-1). I gained exposure to English through some English curricula at my government-funded elementary school. As I entered an international school with English as the language of instruction, my English linguistic capital grew. I

learned Cantonese very quickly when immersed in a predominantly Cantonese environment in society. I am grateful for these language opportunities. I am now fluent in all three languages and can speak all three with a native-sounding accent. Though the idea of accent is still complicated to me, my peers can confirm that I use these languages “authentically.” My English sounds American; my Putonghua does not come with a heavy Hong Kong accent; my Cantonese is accent-free with some code-mixing in English. I am an ethnically Chinese female in my early 20s. As clothing or fashion style may also suggest identity or belonging to a certain group, I wore similar outfits on all days of data collection: a navy zip-up hoodie, blue jeans, and a simple top underneath.

Interactions at supermarkets: all three languages

I went to seven different supermarket stores across four supermarket chains. I engaged with different shop assistants for each situation when asking where to find two items: Barefoot Moscato wine and salt. Wine and salt are ubiquitous in Hong Kong supermarkets, so I can ensure all possible uncontrollable factors are minimized. I complicated the wine item by specifying a name—Barefoot Moscato—to complicate my process of question-asking and item-searching.

Table 1 shows a summary of related outcomes. I asked for Barefoot and salt at four supermarkets in English, two of which the shop assistant which I spoke in English with did not understand my question. I could only walk away in those situations and try finding the item myself. I spoke Putonghua at two supermarkets, and the shop assistants answered my questions as they provided me with directions to help me locate both items. The interactions with shop assistants in Putonghua felt easier than in English. Undoubtedly, I approached a shop assistant in Cantonese at supermarket #5. The interaction was smooth and simple.

	#1 – ENG	#2 – ENG	#3 – PTH	#4 – ENG	#5 – CAN	#6 – PTH	#7 – ENG
I was helped with Barefoot	No English	Asked me to write down on paper	Directed by shop assistant	Understood “wine”; directed me to wine aisle	Directed by shop assistant	N/A	N/A
I was helped with salt	Directed by shop assistant	Directed by shop assistant	N/A	N/A	Easily directed by shop assistant	Easily directed by shop assistant	No English

Table 2. Outcomes of using English, Cantonese, and Putonghua at Hong Kong local supermarkets

In all English interactions, there required other tools to aid our interactions. At supermarket #1, I approached two different shop assistants as one was closer to the wine aisle, and the other was readily available to help. Below is a script reproduced from the conversation of myself (A) with shop assistant #1 (SA#1).

A: [ENG] Excuse me?
A: [ENG] Do you have a Barefoot Moscato wine?
SA#1: [ENG] Aii, I no English.
A: [ENG] Do you have this wine [*pointed at a bottle of Barefoot Sauvignon Blanc*] but for Moscato?
SA#1 [ENG] No, no lah.
SA#1 [CAN] 呢啲得返一支喇 [*looked behind the bottle of Barefoot Sauvignon Blanc on shelf*].
*This is the only bottle left [*looked behind the bottle of Barefoot Sauvignon Blanc on shelf*].*
SA#1 [CAN] 冇喇 [*palms opened, and wrists moved in and outward*].
*No more [*palms opened, and wrists moved in and outward*].*

I didn't think she understood my English questions correctly because her answers in Cantonese were more appropriate if the question had been “Is there more bottles of Barefoot Sauvignon Blanc?” Though I initially felt weird for speaking English in this setting (as I have

always used Cantonese at these supermarkets), her assistance through her brief English responses made me feel respected and less awkward. At least my English inquiries received some degree of attention and assistance. I would also admit that the discomfort from speaking English in this setting partially stemmed from my natural assumption of SA#1's lack of proficiency in English. I instinctively associated her lack of English linguistic capital with what I observed of her 50+ age and her employment at this local supermarket with earnings surrounding minimum wage.

Observing physical attributes to assume and justify one's linguistic capital or identities is critical. As I have made such assumptions about the people I engaged with, the same will be made about me, based on my physical appearance visible at a surface level. Assumptions and observations of individuals in an interaction will continue to be imperative in the discussion of this chapter.

Another shop assistant showed me the direction to the salt shelf by confirming the item I was asking. He said, "salt *ah*, S-A-L-T?" and drew out the word letter by letter on his palm. As he confirmed that he heard me correctly, he pointed me to the right shelf.

Across all my English interactions at the supermarket, asking for salt was easier than asking for a specific type of wine. I speculate that "salt," in English, is more relevant or frequently heard than "Barefoot Moscato wine." In addition to the interactions above, a Southeast Asian shop assistant at supermarket #2 asked me to write down my item of inquiry—so I wrote down "Barefoot, Moscato, wine"—which demonstrates the need for additional tools to aid the comprehension of English, and that was not necessary for my Putonghua interactions.

The shop assistants understood my Putonghua inquiry in Putonghua scenarios. Even though some had thicker Hong Kong-Putonghua accents in our exchanges, they still took me to the right place. Cantonese felt much easier; we communicated in the same language

channel. More examples will follow to illustrate Cantonese as the default language in these settings. It is worth noting the inevitable English word “Moscato” as its Chinese translation 莫斯卡托 felt unnatural to use and difficult to comprehend. This English term is almost a loanword as its Chinese translation is so infrequently used. This can reflect the Western influence that is not limited to Hong Kong, illuminating the requirement of some level of English linguistic capital, or cultural capital, in daily occurrences.

Interactions with individually run dry-cleaning shops

I visited three family-owned dry-cleaning shops in Sai Wan and asked for a price quotation for dry-cleaning a puffer jacket in English, Putonghua, and Cantonese, respectively. In the occurrence where I spoke English, the shopkeeper (SK#1) had difficulty understanding my item of inquiry:

- A: [ENG] How much would a puffer jacket for dry-cleaning cost?
SK#1: [CAN] Jacket ? 要睇啲。Big, small? [*hands gestured big and small*]
Jacket? Need to have a look. Big, small? [*hands gestured big and small*]
A: [ENG] Winter jacket?
SK#1 [CAN] Don't know. 擺嚟睇啊。 [*walked away from the counter*]
Don't know, bring it to show me. [*walked away from the counter*]

I cannot deduce here that English is not common in these settings. The neighborhood has a relatively high working-class population, and its socioeconomic standing suggests the need to clean formal and high-priced clothing professionally. Unlike dry-cleaning shop menus typically placed on visible spots at the counter, I noticed two paper signs indicating “恤衫 shirt” and “西褲 trousers” respectively. These two paper signs may aid the price inquiry for common items like work shirts and trousers, and the inclusion of both Chinese and English also suggests that the clientele is not limited to Chinese-speaking individuals. Understandable that the thickness and complexity of clothing pieces vary, the lack of detailed pricing would inconvenience customers as the shop determines a final price verbally. Shopkeeper #1 could not understand my inquiry without visualizing the dry-cleaning item.

She caught on the word “jacket” instead of the specification of a puffer jacket, which may suggest a different pricing. Her code-switching between simple English phrases and Cantonese, alongside her actions, smoothed some of the understanding in this conversation. Her low English meant that she was unable to give me a successful price quotation, but it was sufficient to end the conversation at a relatively comprehensive state. Moreover, the nature of these family or individually owned shops allows variations in price quotes, which is also to say that some could bring their clothing pieces to a chained, universally priced laundry service if language presents a comprehension barrier. At the very least, English presented a communication barrier in this locally operated shop setting. Comparably, below shows the outcome of a Putonghua interaction with a shopkeeper (SK#2) at a different dry-cleaning shop.

- A: [PTH] 你好,我想問一下羽絨服要多少錢? 乾洗。
Hi, how much would a puffer jacket cost? Dry-cleaning.
- SK#2: [CAN] 羽絨係咪啊?
Puffer jacket, right?
- A: [PTH] 是的。
Yes.
- SK#2: [CAN] 羽絨我地係分短中長。短 [*pointed at her waist*] 係 80 蚊。中 [*pointed at her hip*] 係 100 蚊。長 [*pointed at her thigh*] 係 120 蚊。80, 100, 120。
*We differentiate puffer jackets in terms of short, medium, and long. Short [*pointed at her waist*] is 80 dollars. Medium [*pointed at her hip*] is 100 dollars. Long [*pointed at her thigh*] is 120 dollars. 80, 100, 120.*
- A: [PTH] 長的是 120 是嗎?
Long one is 120, right?
- SK#2: [CAN] 係啊, 120。
Yes. 120.
- A: [PTH] 那洗要多久呢?
So how long would the washing take?
- SK#2: [CAN&PTH] 你預返三到四天。(*ní yù fǎn sān dào sì tiān*)
You should expect 3 to 4 days.
- A: [PTH] 好, 那我再看一看。謝謝。
Ok. I'll have a look. Thanks.

This shopkeeper understood my inquiry in Putonghua, as opposed to English, and provided me with a price quotation in Cantonese. In this way, I felt that Putonghua is more accessible in daily communications.

I went to the third dry-cleaning shop speaking Cantonese as a final comparison. The shopkeeper spoke Cantonese back as well. As we are on the same linguistic channel, communication was not difficult. She even explained why the dry-cleaning process for puffer jackets would take so long: they would bring these items to a centralized factory in suburban Hong Kong for cleaning, so the transportation, complexity of puffer jacket cleaning, and general processing would total a seven-day duration. This was not an explanation I demanded but she casually shared it out of kindness—something I did not find in the two dry-cleaning instances where I spoke English and Putonghua. Cantonese is established as the default and the primary communicative language in the populace of the Chinese majority. I turn to compare Putonghua and English to understand their practicality in these settings.

It is worth noting that the dry-cleaning shopkeeper #2 responded in Cantonese with some code-switching in Putonghua towards the end. Her demonstration gesturing the length of the puffer jacket and the spoken similarities between Putonghua and Cantonese form a Putonghua-Cantonese bilingual situation. Linguistic and nonlinguistic elements are intertwined in this communicative interaction to negotiate meaning without a common code, though the two languages are mutually unintelligible (Saville-Troike 1987). Though the English interaction above involved some level of code-switching between English and Cantonese, it is more difficult to extract a shopkeepers' Cantonese phrases with English proficiency than that with Putonghua. Putonghua is more closely related to Cantonese than English, which makes it easier to derive and guess meanings. The factors and the differentiation between Putonghua and English that contribute to a successful interpretation and negotiation of meaning in bilingual discourse require further evaluation.

An example at a local grocery store with fresh meat and produce accounts for an English-Cantonese bilingual discourse. I picked out an onion to bring to the cashier (C) for checkout.

- C: [CAN] 今日買四送一啲，買唔買多啲啊。
Today is buy four get one free, would you like to buy more?
- A: [ENG] Sorry?
- C: [CAN] 八達通定現金？
Octopus¹ or cash?
- A: [Took out my Octopus card] Octopus.
- C: [CAN] 八達通？OK。[activated card-tapping machine]
Octopus? OK. [activated card-tapping machine]
- C: [CAN][Held up the onion and gestured to bring onion to my bag] 我幫你擺入個袋啊。
[Held up the onion and gestured to bring onion to my bag] I help you to put in your bag.
- A: [ENG] Thank you thank you.

Technically this was an English-Cantonese bilingual conversation, but it wasn't our speeches (either mine in English or the cashier's in Cantonese) that led to mutual comprehension. Rather, I did not understand the cashier's buy-four-get-one free deal. She did not make further efforts to translate or indicate such a deal through other means. My lack of Cantonese comprehension made me completely unaware of that potential financial benefits. I also felt that she only understood my choice of payment as I took out and tapped with the Octopus card. Comparably, her Cantonese phrase indicating her kindness to help put the onion into my shopping bag would not have been comprehensible if she had not actively brought the onion closer to my bag. Here, the use of nonlinguistic elements dominates and facilitates such a communicative exchange as we fail to speak the same language.

The nature of shopping transactions in these local commercial settings does not require a high level of linguistic capital in any language. Sometimes, nonlinguistic elements are adequate to acquire goods. However, this is not to conclude that all transactions could be silent and language-free. The use of Putonghua and English at fruit stands shows circumstances with and without linguistic, verbal communication.

¹ Octopus refers to the Octopus card, which is a contactless smart card used in an electronic payment system in Hong Kong.

Fruit stands: English and Putonghua

Fruit stands display an array of fresh fruits imported from China and other Southeast Asian countries. They can be quite busy due to their location in the crowded hub of the neighborhood and their proximity to other grocery outlets like wet markets and supermarkets. Fruits are arranged by case and boxes, sectioning off different kinds of fruits with clear price labeling. At the fruit stand I visited, the shopkeeper wrote ‘蛇果 \$25/4 個’ on a makeshift styrofoam label to show that the price of a Red Delicious Apple is HKD\$25 for four. The shopkeeper typically set these quantities by pieces or pounds.

The visual aid of pricing labels would give enough detail to orient oneself when purchasing fruits. Though the label most typically indicated the Chinese name of the fruit only, seeing the actual fruit displayed in front of the label would allow one to recognize the fruit item. As I observed the fruit stand and its language use on display, I noticed that the shopkeepers were mostly in their 50s and ethnic Chinese. These fruit stands were likely to be family businesses. Customers would approach the fruit stands to take a closer look, and the shopkeepers would come near them to help bag and weigh their chosen fruits.

The customer demographic included helpers (i.e., Southeast Asian domestic worker migrants), elderly people, young couples, and mothers with kids. Cantonese would be the default language as the clientele were mostly Chinese-looking, and many of the helpers were trained in Cantonese. I saw a blonde, Caucasian girl in her early 20s who got the attention of a shopkeeper and then pointed at the avocado section, and the plums after. The shopkeeper bagged four avocados, which corresponded to the label – New Zealand Avocado HKD\$60 for 4 in Chinese – then proceeded to do the same with plums. The shopkeeper passed the two bags to the blonde girl holding a one-hundred-dollar note. He then turned around to a bucket of notes to find change for the blonde girl.

This was a completely non-verbal exchange that required no use of language. I would assume the reason for this silent transaction is that the blonde girl had no Cantonese linguistic capital, and the shopkeeper did not know English. They demonstrated a smooth transaction, and each achieved their buying and selling goals without linguistic communication. To erase some of my assumptions, or at least to test out if the shop had some English linguistic capital, I went up to ask a different shopkeeper (SK#1) about the closing time of the fruit stand.

- A: [ENG] Excuse me, what time do you close today?
SK#1: [CAN] 哈?
What?
- A: [ENG] What time do you close?
SK#1: [PTH] 什麼?
What?
- A: [ENG] Umm...
SK#1: [CAN] 唔知你講乜。 [*turned away to help other customers*]
*Don't know what you're talking about. [*turned away to help other customers*]*

At least this shopkeeper I communicated with did not possess English linguistic capital. Perhaps the blonde, English-speaking individual also formed the same assumption that the fruit stand workers did not speak English. Assumptions about others' linguistic capital are natural; I would admit that as I walked into these scenarios, I felt inappropriate to speak English as I assumed their inability to comprehend. Interestingly, the shopkeeper (SK#1) first responded to my question in Cantonese intonation, strengthening her confusion. It is natural that she first responded in Cantonese, as that is the default language in these settings, or that she would use it due to a lack of English linguistic capital to respond. However, I asked again, and this time she replied in Putonghua. I was quite shocked. As she walked away, I tried to make sense of her second response in Putonghua.

There can be two reasons. First, because her brief Putonghua phrase did not come with a Hong Kong accent, she may have past Putonghua-associated experiences like living in the Mainland. As Chinese fruits are of great import source to Hong Kong's fruit stands, this shop may have close ties to Mainland resources, or even some of its workers may have

migrated from the Mainland to Hong Kong in the past decades. The second reason may be that she assumed my Putonghua linguistic capital due to my ethnic Chinese identity, which reinforces the relationship between language and cultural identity. The following interview chapter will unpack further the expectation to speak the Chinese language (either Cantonese or Putonghua) by simply having a physically Chinese appearance. Overall, the use of English did not feel quite accepted in this setting, as the shopkeeper could not reply in the same language.

I went to a different fruit stand across the street, and this time I used Putonghua with the shopkeeper (SK#2) who approached me as I was choosing boxes of blueberries. The fruit label reads “\$50=4, \$40=3, \$30=2, \$18=1.”

- SK#2: [CAN] 藍莓好靚啲啊妹，買多啲平啲俾你吓。
The blueberries are really nice, buy more and I'll give it to you cheaper.
- A: [PTH] 藍莓怎麼賣？
How much are the blueberries?
- SK#2: [CAN] [Pointed at the label] 50 蚊 4 盒，[PTH]40 塊 3 盒。[Takes out a plastic bag for blueberries]
[Pointed at the label] 50 dollars for four boxes, 40 dollars for 3 boxes. [Took out a plastic bag for blueberries]
- SK#2: [PTH] 50 塊 5 盒便宜點給你啦。
50 dollars for 5, cheaper for you.
- A: [PTH] [Pointed at a different section] 那邊的藍莓是一樣的嗎，都可以選是嗎？
[Pointed at a different section] Is the blueberries over there the same, so I can choose as well?
- SK#2: [CAN] 一樣架一樣架，擺埋俾你啦，[PTH]一樣的(daah)。[Moves the other case closer to me]
Same, same. I'll bring it to you as well. Same. [Moves the other box closer to me]
- A: [Passed 100-dollar note to her as I finished picking out boxes of blueberries]
- SK#2: [CAN] 找返 50 蚊俾你，啊妹。
Give you 50 dollars in change, little sister.

I felt more natural speaking Putonghua with the shopkeeper as she responded in a mix of Cantonese and Putonghua. Though her Putonghua may have been slightly accented, it did not impede general comprehension, demonstrating her willingness to continue verbal communication in Putonghua as a secondary language. This constant switch between

Putonghua and Cantonese is suitable to this informal setting, where she also kindly offered a special deal for five boxes of blueberries. Had it not been a comprehensive, effective communication, the shopkeeper would be less inclined to offer a cheaper deal. Especially in the nonlinguistic exchange between an English speaker and the Cantonese-speaking shopkeeper earlier, the English buyer already announced her desired fruit items and quantities through the action of showing and gesturing. That interaction remained language-free with minimized opportunities to engage in a dialogue to further the buyer-shopkeeper relationship. This raises the idea of language for affinity that the language used (or not used) brings the interlocutors closer together through the alignment of language ideologies. The feelings of affinity in my encounters at the fruit stands were stronger with shopkeeper #2 as I used Putonghua, whereas I was turned away by shopkeeper #1 when I used English. To justify the feeling of affinity in this Putonghua-Cantonese conversation, there may be an underlying idea of identity to my perception (and the perception of others, like the shopkeeper) of a Chinese identity associated with Putonghua or Cantonese, making sense of the rise of Putonghua in the predominantly ethnically Chinese population.

Putonghua's overall use surpasses the use of English in these settings is another way to justify the feeling of affinity or that Putonghua gave a smoother interaction. My interaction with the butcher at a local butcher shop uncovers a sense of acceptance.

Local Chinese butcher shop

Chinese meat shops are found in traditional wet markets or open-air market streets. Customers can buy live poultry or freshly slaughtered meat products direct from local farmers and daily imports from the Mainland. I approached a Chinese butcher (B) working at a butcher shop on the street market.

- A: [PTH] 你好，前腿肉好吃，還是後腿肉好吃？
Hi. Pork shoulder or pork legs, which is better?
- B: [PTH] 當然是 (xi) 前腿肉好吃 (qi) 啦。

- Pork shoulder of course.*
- A: [PTH] 喔，那我要前腿肉吧。
Ok. I'll have some picnic shoulder.
- B: [PTH] 要多少 (xiǎo) ?
How much would you like?
- A: [PTH] 要一斤。一斤多少錢？
I'd like a catty². How much is one catty?
- B: [PTH] 一斤 88。
88 a catty.
- A: [PTH] 不是要收工了嗎？這裡寫著特價。[pointed at “special offer \$58” in Chinese]
Isn't it close to wrapping-up ? It says a special offer here. [pointed at “special offer \$58” in Chinese]
- B: [PTH] 收工才 88 啊。不然要 98。前腿肉靚啊嘛。
It's knocking-off time so 88. Normally it's 98. Picnic shoulder is nice.
- A: [PTH] 好吧。那我要一斤。絞碎謝謝。
Alright. I'll have a catty. Ground please.

The Chinese signs of sale slogans and the nature of a Chinese butcher shop defaulted the use of Chinese in transactions. Cantonese would be the most appropriate language, but the Putonghua conversation with the butcher was also relatively normal and smooth. I was not surprised by the butcher's slightly accented Putonghua. I noticed Cantonese-style pronunciation of words like the verb to be, or 是 (*shì*), where he pronounced it as “*xì*” by the influence of his Cantonese linguistic capital. It illustrated the mutual influence of Cantonese and Putonghua and how Cantonese influenced his Putonghua skills, contributing to his overall Putonghua linguistic capital. However, I appreciated his continued use of Putonghua despite such a minor accent that may give feelings of awkwardness or embarrassment for some. Neglecting his flawed Putonghua to pursue a conversation with me reflects respect and genuineness in such a materialistic transaction. Accent reflects a greater language attitude that some take as a source of cultural pride, but it may be a source of shame and embarrassment for others. Cantonese-accented Putonghua has been normalized in Hong Kong due to the majority Cantonese-speaking population. Both the Hongkongers and the

² A catty, reads as *jīn* in Chinese, is a traditional Chinese unit of mass equivalent to 500 grams.

Mainland Chinese have recognized the term “Hong Kong Putonghua,” or 港普. This distinct form of Putonghua evolves as a marker of Hong Kong identity when speaking Putonghua, and such an accent differentiates a Putonghua-speaking Hongkonger from a Putonghua-speaking Mainland Chinese.

My feelings of Putonghua acceptance emanate from the butcher’s continuous effort of conversing in Putonghua, as he could have responded in Cantonese like other scenarios I encountered. His efforts indicated a sense of respect to me as an individual and the language I was using. Speaking the same language allows smoother conversation, but his choice to use Putonghua demonstrates recognition and inclusion where speaking Putonghua was not typically the norm. Previous literature suggested Putonghua's inferior position in Hong Kong is intertwined with historical and social circumstances; the use of Putonghua by individuals like the butcher refreshes the perceived language attitude towards Putonghua, reflecting a rise from inferiority to a more significant position.

I recognized the limitations of this autoethnography approach as I played the role of a customer in these local commercial settings. The buyer-seller relationship reinforces a power dynamic necessary to provide customer service and serve the customer in their best needs. It may be possible that the butcher’s use of Putonghua in response to my purchase inquiries is separate from his language attitudes and ideologies, stemming purely from his role as a seller to make successful transactions for profits. However, his insistence to converse in Putonghua still reflects the need for Putonghua in his role and the greater society, mirroring the reality to serve a growing number of Putonghua-speaking groups. Contrasting the internet joke I premised at the beginning of this chapter, I received a friendly treatment and a good deal as we interacted in Putonghua. Though Putonghua has been one of Hong Kong’s official languages since the Handover, the results from my autoethnography challenged the previous negativities and the perception of communication difficulties caused by Putonghua. I argue

that Putonghua holds a preferable position in these settings, as English interactions have illustrated a greater barrier in communication and comprehension, forming a shift from the previous use of English in the British colony to the rise of Putonghua in daily local settings.

Interactions at stationery shops: English and Putonghua

My English and Putonghua interactions at two different stationery shops challenge the established Putonghua acceptance and demonstrate the feasibility of English use. These stationery shops were also individually owned, selling all kinds of stationery and crafty goods. I picked out a pen to bring to the cashier (C#1 for Chinese) for payment on both occasions.

A: *[Chose a pen to bring to the cashier]*

C#1: [CAN] 12 蚊。
12 dollars.

A: [PTH] 可以微信支付嗎？
Can I use WeChat Pay?

C#1: [CAN] 冇微信，現金或者八達通。
No WeChat, cash or Octopus.

A: [PTH] 那多少錢？
So how much is it?

C#1: [CAN] 12 蚊，12[PTH]塊。
12 dollars. 12 kuai³.

The Cantonese responses of cashier #1 to my Putonghua demonstrates a smooth dilingual conversation. We showcased some degree of Cantonese and Putonghua linguistic capital through comprehending each other's responses. However, I felt less accepted speaking Putonghua as she continued using Cantonese. Her change to using the dollar unit 塊 in Putonghua gave an ambiguous reflection of her language attitudes, as that language change did not add much value to my overall comprehension. Two reasons can explain her persistence in using Cantonese; first, she would rather use Cantonese instead of her accented-Putonghua. She may have assumed my Cantonese linguistic capital, at least in the listening

³ “*Kuai*” is a colloquial or informal use of the Renminbi currency unit “*yuan*”

domain. Second, she felt a closer affinity to the Cantonese language. As Cantonese is the primary language in her stationery shop setting, she persisted in speaking Cantonese without feeling the need to switch to a different language. My act of speaking Putonghua shifts the linguistic environment to a different language, revealing my lack of Cantonese proficiency. Her persistence strengthens a sense of Putonghua inferiority that is different from the butcher's friendly use of Putonghua.

I picked out the same pen at a different stationery shop and brought it to the cashier to ask for the price in English. The cashier (#2) responded “thirteen” and specified “one-three” in English to ensure understanding. It would be harder to understand the Cantonese equivalent 十三蚊 (*suup saam mun*) here, as Cantonese-English bilingual discourse has less convertibility (or shared linguistic capital) to aid comprehension. I cannot quickly deduce whether English use here is common or practical, as other instances have suggested otherwise. Comparing the two stationary shop interactions, it is consistent with my previous findings that a Cantonese-Putonghua bilingual discourse is easier to comprehend due to the natural convertibility between the two languages. Through accumulative experience living in Hong Kong, it is easier for a Putonghua speaker to infer a Cantonese phrase than it is for an English speaker. Cashier #1's persistence demonstrates her strong affinity to the Cantonese language, as she only switched to Putonghua at the end of her response. Her unwillingness to switch to Putonghua sooner may signify a political gesture to use Cantonese in front of a Putonghua-speaking customer, which expresses her resentment towards China's dominating rule and adheres to the norm of speaking Cantonese in Hong Kong. Her eventual willingness to switch to Putonghua confirms the need to serve all customers and demonstrates that Putonghua should be used as a language inclusive of Hong Kong's norms. Though unintentional as the sole Putonghua speaker in the shop setting, my language use may be dominating to some, mirroring the political domination of the Chinese state. I could

somewhat sympathize with her political gesture. Still, it would be unfair to experience unacceptance or bigotry as she projected her resentment towards the Chinese state onto a Putonghua speaker. Putonghua is not in a place where it deserves to be, according to its status as one of the official languages of Hong Kong.

The bigotry against Mainland Chinese who make up most of the Putonghua-speaking population in Hong Kong has been common, which traces down to the Mainland-Hong Kong social tensions since the Handover in 1997. This discriminatory phenomenon is aggravated by a series of pro-Hong Kong democracy protests and social movements. These movements span from 2014 to 2019 in response to a series of policies made by the HKSAR and the Chinese state to fight for Hong Kong's democracy. Though the policy or the cause of the movement had no direct cause and effect to the Mainland Chinese individuals in Hong Kong—migrants and temporary visitors—these Putonghua-speaking individuals are often discriminated against due to their spoken Putonghua, being assumed of their affinity to the Mainland. As a result, Putonghua, widely spoken by the Mainland Chinese population, carries a negative connotation in Hong Kong. The Cantonese-speaking population generally does not come across this language in the absence of Mainland Chinese individuals. For its long linguistic history and development in Hong Kong, Cantonese reinforces a nativist, Hongkonger identity and ostracizes the Mainland Chinese as the “others.” Not speaking Putonghua, one of the official languages of Hong Kong, enhances a sense of “otherness” towards the Mainland Chinese population as they are forced to acculturate to host society.

To grasp the sense of language concerning affinity, even political affinity, I went to three different coffee shops to seek further reactions.

Coffee shops: English and Putonghua

Café-hopping culture in Hong Kong has brought increasingly more coffee shops across the city. Coffee shops serve as a place to work, study, socialize and promise a certain

lifestyle for the coffee-drinking connoisseur. The overcharged price, the limited food and beverage selection, and the promoting lifestyle aim at a particular age and client segment. Yet, these characteristics may not fully reflect the cultural identity and language use of the clientele. I break down the kinds of coffee shops into three groups: 1) expat-run coffee shops that resemble coffee shops in the U.S., 2) coffee shops run by locals that strive to focus on Western-centric elements, and 3) coffee shops run by locals who uncover political identities through their displays of pro-democracy elements; The third group belongs to the yellow economic circle (YEC) 黃店生意 that was created by Hong Kong protestors to support and sustain the livelihoods of pro-democracy business owners, reinforcing a sense of political orientation and affinity away from the Chinese state.

I first entered a coffee shop run by expats, with food and beverage menus written on the chalkboards in English. The exclusive use of English here represents the owners' linguistic capital and requires all customers to have the same English linguistic capital upon their entry to this coffee shop. English communication with the cashier in such an English-defaulted environment feels quite comfortable, as we both are in the same linguistic channel. I noticed my American accent as I heard the cashier's British English repeating my "flat white with oat milk" order, which made me realize the collision of the two accents. However, the same cannot be said if this was a Hong Kong Cantonese accent versus Mainland Cantonese accent situation, that the latter would suggest a sense of inferiority implicated in political and social tensions. Though British English dominates Hong Kong more than American English, I have come to accept that these Western English accents are not inferior to one another due to the city's diverse English-speaking population. The interaction felt smooth and natural as English laid the premise of communication and its related habitus, and the cashier said to me, "have a good one," as I exited the shop. This example demonstrates the acceptance of English in a particular coffee shop setting which I did not find in previous

interactions. The use of English here elucidates the issue of class and that English is more practical in higher-spending areas as the shop employers recognize the importance of English when hiring employees. Language use and preference are setting-specific in Hong Kong, which remarks that the findings from my autoethnography only pertain to the popular local settings I have explored.

As I confirmed the acceptance of the English language in a café setting, I decided to explore two more using Putonghua. I entered a coffee shop run by ethnic Chinese locals for my second coffee shop visit. The shop offered a bilingual menu and western cake items like mille crepe cakes with a twist of popular local flavors like taro and matcha. From the rich cultural capital of the shop and the language use of other customers in the background, I would assume that this coffee shop is English-friendly. I spoke Putonghua to see if it is an acceptable language in this setting. I ordered a cup of Iced Orange Espresso Tonic which I read off its Chinese name 橙香通寧冰咖啡, and I even asked for less ice which the server repeated back to me in Putonghua. The drink-ordering interaction was relatively smooth, but not to the extent where I felt Putonghua was accepted because the main languages from other customers were English and Cantonese. The servers communicated in Cantonese among themselves. There was a Cantonese-speaking table where two Chinese-looking ladies in their 40s chatted, and an English-speaking table where a Chinese-looking lady in her 20s had a video call meeting. I overheard the servers' small chats discussing my order of Orange Espresso Tonic, and they were repeating after one another the Putonghua version of the drink. Though it is subjective of how I felt, I guessed that they were laughing about the strange translation of the drink in. Like the supermarket interactions where "Moscato" felt more natural to express in English, "Orange Espresso Tonic" has a heavy Western undertone that is unusually used in Chinese. These terms are of Western origins, which feels rather difficult to use or practice without any English linguistic capital, assuming some level of bilingualism. If

I were to order this coffee drink in Cantonese, I would still read the drink in English because English loanwords are so natural in Cantonese. The dominance of English linguistic capital is significant, and the lack of lexical equivalent in Cantonese justifies the heavy code-switching of Cantonese and English, or Hong Kong English. A different server brought me the credit card machine as I asked for the bill, aware that I am Putonghua-speaking as she initiated the conversation in Putonghua.

The two coffee shop instances confirm the acceptance of all Putonghua and English in these settings. However, my last coffee shop example adds a nuance: this café is run by Hong Kong locals who have a stronger sense of political identity, where I visibly recognized decorations and slogans indicating a strong, pro-democracy political orientation. Like other pro-Hong Kong food and beverage service outlets, this café belongs to Hong Kong's local yellow economic circle calling for united support and establishing political orientation. How would their political affiliation complicate language use?

Upon entering, the pro-democracy elements were so visible and critical that I immediately felt a sense of inferiority as I chose to speak Putonghua. The self-consciousness stemmed from my perception of how Putonghua users were treated in the city's wave of protests. This politicized space reinforced a gap between Hongkongers and Mainlanders (as Putonghua users), and I fell into the latter group as I spoke Putonghua. Interestingly, I was seated by the server who spoke in Putonghua back as I set up a Putonghua environment. He presented an entirely English menu, and after two glimpses, I asked for a Chinese menu. He said the only menu available was in English, and as I took a closer look, there was no Chinese on the menu. I ordered the most basic iced latte with oat milk in Chinese, 冰燕麥拿鐵, and the server walked to the barista counter to inform a Chinese-looking barista of my order in English. He said, "iced oat milk latte," and continued his sentence in Cantonese to the barista colleague. The use of English in an environment where I established Putonghua reflects some

levels of unacceptance towards Putonghua. Still, it reinforces the significance of English linguistic capital associated with the cultural legacy of British rule. What can be reasonably established, in connection to the political identity of the shop, is that the shop owners and workers identify closer to English and Cantonese. Yet, they provided me with a decent service required by their customer-facing roles. However, I could not deduce whether their use of Putonghua was the desired action as they presented themselves with political affiliations against the Chinese state. The server's cordial treatment in Putonghua proves these Hongkongers' Putonghua linguistic capital can be separate from their political identity. Putonghua may be a pro-Beijing political statement, but their Putonghua engagement is a matter of survival and the inclusion or acceptance of Putonghua speakers in Hong Kong.

Chapter conclusion

Overall, my thread of explorations and interactions offered a segue to reflect the acceptance and practicality of speaking Putonghua in the local settings of Hong Kong. As language ideologies and language attitudes remain subjective to individuals, it is only fair to deduce and recognize the practicality of Putonghua use in the local social settings. The buyer-seller relationship throughout my interactions may have blurred their individual language preferences and attitudes. Yet, most interlocutors I interacted with possessed Putonghua linguistic capital. Compared to the city's lack of Putonghua linguistic capital in the pre-Handover period, Putonghua's use has risen above English as the second preferred language in these settings.

It is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of applying such a finding to all social and local settings in Hong Kong, as language is specific to settings shaped by class, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic statuses. Illustrated by the example of coffee shops, the use of English was rather welcoming in that particular setting. The settings I explored are everyday to a particular population group that I belonged, so the conclusion that Putonghua is

supplanting English would be limited to these scenarios. The following chapter will uncover interview results to show how Chinese education migrants facilitate and encourage Putonghua use in Hong Kong through their day-to-day navigations off-campus.

Language Use By Chinese Education Migrants: Interview Results

This chapter introduces the story of six Mainland Chinese education migrants who were preoccupied with the shifting concepts of ethnic and national membership, bringing questions of belonging across the university and societal settings. I conducted interviews to uncover their experiences, encounters, and efforts to study at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) while maintaining transnational ties and navigating language use.

Universities in Hong Kong have attracted vast Mainland Chinese applicants with competitive entry requirements. Only those who qualified for top Chinese universities meet the baseline for undergraduate programs in Hong Kong. HKU is one of Hong Kong's top universities, meaning that the Mainland students who have secured a spot at the institution bear high social, economic, cultural, and linguistic capital. Below I introduce my six interviewees to premise their thoughts, behaviors, actions, and interests.

Cherry

Cherry is a third-year Architecture student who moved to Hong Kong in August 2018. She is from Guizhou province, where she attended an ordinary high school (OHS) 普通高級中學 as a part of the Chinese state's nine-year compulsory education. Upon completing secondary education, she obtained an HKU offer through *Gaokao* 高考 which is the Chinese National College Entrance Examination held annually for college admissions. With family and friends still based in Guizhou, she intended to experience a different education system, and HKU happened to be the best offer she received. In terms of language background, Putonghua is her L-1, and she began learning English as early as the age of three. She had no Cantonese language background before moving to Hong Kong.

Olivia

Olivia is a second-year Business student who moved to Hong Kong in August 2020. She is from Zhejiang Province and attended high school at a group-owned Chinese education school in Shanghai⁴.

⁴ Chinese parents desired academic alternatives to the state education system internationally recognized curriculum, as a result, Chinese independent education groups emerged to provide a pathway for students to

She followed the British A-levels curriculum, where her examination results enabled her to seek higher education internationally. She received offers from institutions in Hong Kong, the U.K., and Canada. Due to Covid-19, she and her family decided to commit to HKU's business program to remain in proximity. Putonghua is her L-1, and she has been learning English for as long as she could remember. She had no Cantonese linguistic capital prior to her arrival in Hong Kong.

Matt

Matt is a second-year Mathematics major who moved to Hong Kong in September 2020. Born and raised in Shanghai, he attended high school in the city's most prestigious state high school (OHS). His *Gaokao* results enabled offers from HKU and other top Chinese universities. He and his family agreed to pursue HKU, an institution they viewed "as prestigious as Tsinghua and Peking universities" and could open up further education opportunities as he intends to apply for a master's overseas to further his Mathematical studies. Matt's L-1 is Putonghua while growing up in a Shanghainese dialect-speaking family. He has been learning English since elementary school and throughout the nine-year compulsory education. He did not acquire Cantonese formally before Hong Kong, but he picked up a few phrases through watching Hong Kong dramas and listening to Cantonese pop music at the end of high school. He shared curiosity towards Hong Kong's political climate (at the time of his college decision-making in 2020), so he reasoned his migration to Hong Kong as a way to experience a different political environment.

Joey

Joey is from the Suzhou province and is a first-year Economics and Finance student. She attended Chinese state high school (OHS) and received an HKU offer through the Diversified Excellence Admission Scheme⁵ 多元卓越入學計畫 for Mainland Chinese applicants. During high school, she took humanities-heavy coursework that may discount her opportunity to apply for business or the sciences. As she is aware of such an unfair opportunity that may jeopardize her college admission

follow a Western international school curriculum like the International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and British A-Levels to enter universities overseas. These private bilingual schools may brand themselves as "international schools," but they are different from expat-family based international schools for non-Chinese passport holders.

⁵ This scheme provides early-screening and arranges interviews to issue conditional admission notices or gives bonus points to *Gaokao* mechanisms in order to lock outstanding talents in advance.

outcome in Chinese universities, she entered the HKU scheme early to land a good offer. She treated the HKU offer as her ideal outcome as her language scores (IELTS) used to apply to overseas universities would place her in a foundational year of English language learning, prolonging her university years. Putonghua is her L-1, and she began learning English as a part of school curriculum in grade three. She had no Cantonese linguistic capital prior to her arrival in Hong Kong.

Leah

Leah is a first-year HKU student pursuing an associate degree in Communications. She is from Fujian province, where her parents currently reside. She has two sisters who have studied and are living in Hong Kong. After completing secondary school, she enrolled in a two-year associate degree, and she intends to apply for a bachelor's degree later to finish her undergraduate studies in Hong Kong.

Putonghua is her L-1, and she learned English through school in China. She and her family speak the Fujian dialect (*Hokkien*) and Putonghua at home. She accumulated some Cantonese linguistic capital while living with her sisters, who are proficient in Cantonese after their time living in Hong Kong.

She intends on staying in Hong Kong with her family after her studies. She notes that Hong Kong master's degrees are typically one-year in duration, whereas Mainland Chinese are typically two-year, incentivizing her stay in Hong Kong.

Annie

Annie is a third-year pursuing Wealth Management and Marketing. She is from Shunde, Guangdong, where she attended a private bilingual high school following the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. Her L-1 is the Shunde dialect, which slightly differs in accent, expressions, and tones in the Cantonese dialect series. She learned Putonghua during kindergarten, and her exposure to English came later in elementary school. Even before choosing her university destination, she grasped Hong Kong Cantonese through watching Hong Kong TV dramas, where she was able to switch accents and word choices consciously. She chose to study at HKU as it was the best option amongst her offers, allowing her to remain in proximity to her family in Shunde.

A brief introduction of the six interviewees showcases their similarities and differences in possession of linguistic, social, cultural, and economic capital. They found their way to Hong Kong through different means and reasonings, suggesting the accessibility of different pathways one could take to seek educational migration to Hong Kong. As they settled in Hong Kong for university education, these varying levels of capital continued to grow in different forms.

Apart from Annie from Guangdong province with prior Cantonese linguistic capital, all other interviewees' mother tongue is Putonghua and have some exposure to their regional dialects. They later acquired English as they began elementary school. Though these individuals reasoned their move to Hong Kong differently and uniquely, a common theme to draw is their view of Hong Kong universities as a way to increase social mobility. These rationales allude to futuristic planning, demonstrating one's decision to move is extensively considered as it implies changes to the person and their family in the long run.

Home vs. Hong Kong

When comparing their places of origin to Hong Kong as their place of settlement, each interviewee opined varying conditions of their home societies as they are from different cities and provinces that carry differences in resources and capital. Their perceptions of Hong Kong, in expectation and the reality after their arrival, were similar. They see Hong Kong as a place of internationalization, diverse people, better academic resources, and high-paying job opportunities after university. They also recognized Hong Kong's crowdedness, the fast pace of living, and the living pressure behind this island of hope. The positives and the negatives of Hong Kong also gave diverging views on their migration plans, facilitated by their varying levels of capital and the conditions at the home societies. Some yearn for Hong Kong's permanent residency, which is eligible after seven years of living in Hong Kong, and their four-year university would already help them reach halfway. Some recognize the need to

improve social mobility and gain further (economic) capital to consider a return migration later back to their home societies where they find the most sense of belonging.

The idea of belonging is subjective. Yet, all migrant individuals look for degrees of belongingness that justify their desire to assimilate with host societies. They use their experiences in home societies to make sense of their new experiences in Hong Kong. Gradually, they accumulate habitus and further their social, cultural, and linguistic capital through assimilation. For Annie, the linguistic conditions at home brought a smoother linguistic transition as she arrived in Hong Kong. Even if the migrant-sending and the migrant-receiving societies are similar in some ways, Matt from Shanghai, as another major metropolitan city of the East, still felt an oppressed sensation from Hong Kong's overcrowdedness. He says, "I experienced what I have seen on Hong Kong TV dramas, and it's so different to what it's like in Shanghai." These education migrants continue to find ways for adaptation and acculturation to feel integrated into a place where they spend four years of university. Both Hong Kong locals and these Chinese education migrants are ethnically Chinese; these education migrants can be conveniently seen as "locals" based on similarities in physical appearance and facial features. However, their difference in linguistic capital sets their identities apart, reinforcing a sense of "us" versus "them" as Hong Kong locals draw affinity to the Cantonese language. Therefore, language becomes a critical part of negotiating their navigations, particularly in the university, where three languages are used differently in different linguistic environments.

English, Cantonese, and Putonghua at HKU

English is the medium of instruction in most Hong Kong higher education institutions. As an internationalized and universalized language, English facilitates the learning in diverse groups of foreign students and foreign teaching faculty. Hong Kong's biliteracy and trilingualism have also prepared its local students to be English-speaking.

Mainland students who apply to Hong Kong universities are well-aware of such a language shift from Putonghua as the teaching language to English. Like Olivia's case, many of them have been preparing for such an institutional requirement. Though all interviewees expressed their English acquisition from an early age, it is still important to address their varying degrees of English linguistic capital as they experience the English language differently. Some may have English classes more frequently, some lack English language immersion at home, and some may have just met the language requirement as a part of entrance admissions. Despite the students' unique situations and experiences, the university defaulted English as the language of teaching. Hence all students have to find means to accumulate English linguistic capital.

Though English is the common classroom language, Cantonese is still the mother tongue and the default language of the students, majority of whom are Hong Kong locals, outside the classroom. Joey observes that the local students communicate amongst themselves in Cantonese, in course assignments, group projects, dining hall socializations, and campus dormitories. She shares, "sometimes (Hong Kong) professors would also speak in some Cantonese then switch to English for some words, which I had to familiarize myself with." Code-switching and code-mixing are common at a greater societal level, and Joey's comment also validates the continued practice of concurrent use of English and Cantonese in informal university settings. This mix of English and Cantonese, sometimes out of convenience and instinct or sometimes for the greater need for academic context, confirms the high linguistic capital of Hong Kong university individuals and reflects its essence for academic success or social mobility.

If Cantonese is so relevant to studying at HKU, what about the non-local Putonghua-speaking students at the university? The HKU School of Chinese offers the Chinese Language Enhancement Program to deliver courses to raise their competence in the Chinese

language. Specifically, two courses, Practical Chinese and Hong Kong Society and Cantonese for non-Cantonese Speaking Students, are designed for the students from the Mainland. The course description writes:

Through a comparative analysis of Putonghua and Cantonese, this course enables students to learn the characteristics of Hong Kong Chinese, to discover the differences in vocabulary and expression between the Cantonese dialect and Mandarin, to strengthen their communication skills in everyday life, and to have a proper understanding of the culture, traditions and people in Hong Kong (“Chinese Language Enhancement Programme | School of Chinese, HKU” n.d.).

The course, mandatory for all Mainland Chinese undergraduate students, seems to assign Cantonese linguistic capital to enhance the Chinese education migrants’ cultural and social capital. Students are assessed based on written exams and mini speech presentations to ensure all domains — speaking, listening, writing, and reading — are addressed. The interviewees took different views on whether they found the course useful; some only put up with the course as it counted for graduation credits, and their formal Cantonese acquisition paused at the conclusion of the course. Olivia found the course quite difficult, citing intrinsic differences in tones, pronunciations, and expressions between the two languages. But such a systemic way of Cantonese language acquisition can be received or felt differently by individuals with different language attitudes and aspirations. Cherry felt the course paved the foundation for daily phrases and expressions that can be useful when she interacts with locals at restaurants and supermarkets. Although their command of the Cantonese language may have improved slightly, this one-semester course is insufficient to allow them to communicate with locals smoothly. Hence, they would rather use Putonghua as it is technically one of the official languages of Hong Kong. However, it is critical to recognize that the course may have brought new opportunities to their use of Cantonese, transforming their prior perceptions and attitudes of this language.

Putonghua remains associated with Mainland Chinese in campus settings or societal levels. To clarify, Putonghua has been a part of the secondary teaching curriculum for Hong Kong locals. This generation of university-goers has high degrees of Putonghua linguistic capital from school and the similarities between Putonghua and Cantonese. These Hong Kong locals rarely speak Putonghua amongst themselves, as Cantonese and English dominate their language preferences. Additionally, they are less immersed in a Putonghua-speaking environment. The people around them—other Hong Kong locals—do not necessarily have high levels of Putonghua linguistic capital, so their Putonghua remains accented and styled from the influence of Cantonese. Therefore, a “good,” accent-free Putonghua speaker must be associated with the Mainland, revealing one as Mainland Chinese. As previous autoethnography demonstrated the rise and acceptance of Putonghua linguistic capital in Hong Kong’s everyday settings, Putonghua use at a university setting challenges the current state of affairs.

Putonghua in group projects

As English dominates the language of instruction, Putonghua and Cantonese are secondary languages at HKU. It is imperative that in a conversation where all parties are Hong Kong locals, Putonghua is rarely the language of preference as they communicate smoothly and comfortably in Cantonese. Mainland Chinese undergraduate students make up half of the non-local undergraduate population (“Student Profiles - 學生人數總覽 | QuickStats | The University of Hong Kong” 2022), legitimating Putonghua as the most spoken language after English and Cantonese. Below are some of my interviewees’ insights on Putonghua use in group assignments.

Olivia: “I was in a group project of seven people. All were Hong Kong local students except me. It’s kind of awkward because unless I stand out and say I don’t understand Cantonese, the

conversation would carry on and I'll stay miserable. We then switched to English to carry on with the project. They assumed I would understand Cantonese because we looked the same. If it's a foreign-looking student, English would be used regardless."

Cherry: "[Language use] depends on the proportion of local and Mainland students.

Sometimes when the local population dominates they would keep speaking Cantonese and share the outcome of the discussion with the Mainland student. It's burdensome to ask them to change to English because they are so comfortable with group discussion in Cantonese. That's why I would rather find Mainland group mates if options were given."

Joey: "English is like a bridge between our use of Putonghua and locals' use of Cantonese.

We would communicate online using English in emails, WhatsApp, and WeChat. It's common in an offline conversation that Cantonese would be used, and even if I try to understand I cannot speak it well. I would ask that we switch to English. I would sure prefer the conversation to be in Putonghua because that's where I can articulate my thoughts best. But it's too much to ask for the conversation to be in Putonghua just for me."

Annie: "I prefer to use Cantonese because it's easier to communicate with locals. But when there are Mainland students who don't speak Cantonese, I'm fine using Putonghua but I don't think the locals find that easy."

Leah: "I expected the locals' English to be really good. But some locals' English I would give 6/10. So it's quite a hard ask to change the discussion language from Cantonese to English because they are so comfortable with Cantonese already, like how comfortable I am using Putonghua to share my thoughts."

Both Cherry and Olivia touched on the proportion of the status quo. In a scenario where local students dominate in size, awkwardness arises in asking to change the default Cantonese language. Interestingly, the language they would ask to switch to is English for its formal role in an academic setting. Leah's comment shows that locals' limited English linguistic capital justify their comfort in Cantonese communication. Locals may have better English receptive skills—listening and reading—imperative for their classroom learning, but

their lack of productive skills leads to Cantonese language preference. Joey's distinction of online and offline communication in English and Cantonese also demonstrates English as the formal language across email or text exchanges. When the group meets in person, Cantonese is the communicative language for its convenience and comfort. As Cantonese is her L-1, Annie showed her Cantonese preference in alignment with the default communicative language. Her Putonghua linguistic capital is relatively higher than Hong Kong locals', justifying her acceptance of speaking Putonghua when needed. Most interviewees have shared some locals' kind switch to Putonghua, where they could feel more comfortable in articulation. This confirms locals' Putonghua linguistic capital, and when it's at a satisfactory level, they will offer the switch to convenience the Mainland students. However, some have also opined their difficulty understanding the locals' accented Putonghua, which ultimately makes English the best option to manage both parties' lack of Putonghua or Cantonese linguistic capital. Through some locals' willingness to engage in group discussions in Putonghua, we can discern the growing Putonghua acceptance in campus environments. Due to language attitudes and lower Putonghua linguistic capital, some locals' preference to discuss in English challenges the established Putonghua acceptance. Groupness or belongingness emerges from this complex language dynamic in university settings, unfolding some of the interviewee's preferences to work on group projects with other Putonghua-speaking Mainland Chinese students. As Olivia puts it, "business is business with Hong Kong locals (和香港人就是公事公办)." Her social circles at school are mostly other Mainland Chinese students.

Cantonese and Putonghua to divide extracurricular groups

Like all universities globally, clubs and societies at HKU are critical aspects of an undergraduate experience. Matt partakes in the university's basketball team, and Olivia participates in the dance club. These activities may represent their interests beyond academic

pursuits and reflect a divide between Putonghua and Cantonese-speaking individuals. Cherry ventured into clubs run by Hong Kong locals in her first year, where the participants were mostly Hong Kong locals. After attending a couple of group meetings, all conducted in Cantonese, Cherry turned to clubs run by Mainland students. These clubs belong to the Chinese Students and Scholars Association Undergraduate Department (CSSAUD), a self-governing umbrella organization that hosts activities and events in the interests of Mainland students. Matt plays for CSSAUD Men's Basketball, completely independent of HKU's varsity basketball team. They do not compete with each other; instead, they play in different inter-university leagues. Matt recalled that once the varsity team selected his friend during try-outs, the training was Cantonese. The coaches and players are all local so speaking in Cantonese was the most comfortable language. As Matt's friend awkwardly proposed to switch to English as the medium of communication, the rest of the team was rather hesitant. English confers another set of norms and formalities that did not give the same level of satisfaction and comfort as Cantonese during training. The language barrier led to feelings of estrangement, which Matt's friend quit the varsity team to join CSSAUD Men's Basketball. As the team consists of L-1 Putonghua users, the team sets a friendly environment to use Putonghua comfortably without burdening others to switch their preferred language.

In addition to Matt's basketball club, Olivia's K-pop dance club, HKU M.Danso, is also strictly Mainland Chinese. There is also a K-pop group for local students called HKU Danso, forming segregation between the two groups of students. Olivia shared that the dance groups have the same characteristics, organization breakdown, and recruitment methods. The sole difference is one for Mainland students, hence Putonghua-speaking, and the other is Cantonese-speaking. I asked Olivia why she chose M.Danso and if this hinders her socialization with Hong Kong locals. Olivia responds, "knowing that the content and attributes are the same, I would want to choose the one I'm more comfortable in. We (other

Mainland students) share the same jokes, similar styles, or even similar tastes in music.” In addition to the difference in language, the two groups were brought up by different historical, political, social, and cultural climates, shaping their varying preferences and habits.

Olivia, alongside other interviewees, is well-aware of the group split between Hong Kong locals and Mainland students. These interviewees appreciate the services and benefits offered by CSSAUD. As a well-developed system for Mainland Chinese, they have their ways to bring petitions or file complaints to the school administration. New student orientation camps (O-camps) for Mainland and local students are also different. Mainland students do sightseeing of Hong Kong's key attractions and engage in more relevant activities to their liking. The O-camps tailored for Mainland students set a comfortable space for Putonghua use, so these new students can quickly find a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar place. Using Putonghua forms empathy and fosters solidarity among this group of education migrants. Annie, whose family is in the process of obtaining Hong Kong permanent residency, was placed in the local student O-camp due to her migrant status in Hong Kong. Her recollection of O-camp experience with locals was a crazy night at a beach house, where they stayed up all night playing cards and drinking games in Cantonese. She noted the Hong Kong locals' use of slang and code-mixing of English, which was uncommon in her Cantonese linguistic capital, but she soon picked that up and continued to befriend locals throughout her time at HKU. Both groups had their unique ways of orientation to help integrate and feel “at home” at a place they will call “home” for the next four years, and either Putonghua or Cantonese play an essential role in facilitating communication and belongingness.

Putonghua at HKU

The examples cited by my interviewees have demonstrated some degree of locals' unwillingness to speak Putonghua for their subjective reasons. Yet, this did not hinder their

Putonghua use within their student groups as they formed a coalition. Though Putonghua's presence at HKU cannot be undermined, Matt's story of his arrival at HKU reflects his initial hesitation to speak Putonghua.

I was frightened in front of the student union building with my suitcase, because my dormitory was inside the building. At that time, there were still statues of the June 4th movement, various anti-communist slogans and remnants of the social movement. Very sensitive, so I walked past them quickly. When I saw that kind of democracy wall, I also went around it, not wanting to make a big deal out of it, as I've been aware and alarmed by these things. Carrying my suitcase and looking at these slogans, I instinctively avoided these things, and instinctively did not dare to use Putonghua at first. At first, I was very moved to hear Mandarin when I met Mainland students. Now that I have "thicker skin," I am still a little embarrassed to speak Putonghua, but it doesn't matter. After all, there are many Mainland students in the school. (我當時拉著行李箱去到學生會大樓嚇死，因為宿舍在大樓裡面。那會兒還有六四雕像，各種反共的標語和社會運動的殘留。就非常敏感，我也就快步走過去。看到那種民主牆也繞過去，不想節外生枝，畢竟大家都危言聳聽過。提著行李箱看著這些標語，出於本能的性要迴避這些事情，也出於本能的一開始不敢用普通話。一開始碰到內地生聽到普通話很感動。現在臉皮厚了，雖然說普通話還是有點尷尬，但無所謂了。畢竟學校內地生也多。)

Matt's recollection of his initial arrival outside the student dormitory clashed with a time in Hong Kong where Putonghua was a sensitive political symbol. The anti-communist slogans and pro-democracy elements made him feel intrusive of his Mainland Chinese identity. As the groups in tension possess visibly ethnic Chinese identity, language becomes a sensitive element differentiating political stances. Matt's previous experience under China's political homogeneity made him feel extra sensitive towards this topic. Though he was aware of the social movements and tensions in Hong Kong, his actual sentiments outside of the student dormitory building were unexpected to him. In an unfamiliar environment where he

readily felt inferior, Putonghua's use with Mainland peers brings about a sense of belongingness, familiarity, kindness, and affinity rare to find elsewhere. The social and political tensions in the past rationalized Mainland students' desires to seek groupness amongst each other, further demonstrating the perception of unfriendliness towards Putonghua speakers.

The dynamic of unfriendliness and unacceptance of Putonghua is changing. Matt observes his growing use of Putonghua on campus, even to Hong Kong locals. He has made local Hong Kong friends, and they speak Putonghua in dorms and dining halls. He remarked these local friends have decent Putonghua linguistic capital, though sometimes he helps correct their accents. Matt describes himself as "thick-skinned" or shameless when justifying his Putonghua use on campus. He had become brazen about his Putonghua use, partially because of his acceptance of his Mainland Chinese identity. The sense of inferiority only comes down to a temporary label as a Mainland Chinese as he spends four years here, and that the inferiority fades as he leaves Hong Kong. Putonghua in Mainland China would not be an inferior language as the state enforces such a standardized language. As Matt hopes to further his education in the West, Putonghua would merely be a heritage language, like other languages of migrant groups. It can be fair to say that Putonghua stands at a complicated position in Hong Kong due to some Hongkongers' failure to recognize Putonghua and the Chinese state. The users of Putonghua in Hong Kong bear the consequence of such social tension as some Hongkongers resist the Chinese state. This comes down to recognizing the Mainland Chinese identity was only assigned to him as he migrated to Hong Kong, as he would have viewed himself as Chinese in his place of origin. Noteworthy is that his Shanghainese origin also allows some levels of social and symbolic capital as Shanghai is associated with prestige. Shanghai is growing vastly in many aspects to become on par or even better than Hong Kong's position as "international finance hub." His shamelessness

when using Putonghua also points to his gradual familiarity and comfortability with HKU and Hong Kong society, perpetuated by Putonghua acceptance and popularization in Hong Kong today. Most interviewees remarked on their expectations of Cantonese acquisition, as they perceived Hong Kong as predominantly Cantonese-spoken. Their perception of Cantonese universality is not wrong. Still, it is only after their arrival and the experience of living and interacting with Hong Kong people, they realized the popularization of Putonghua, further disincentivizing Cantonese acquisition desires. Joey discusses, “it is still possible to speak Putonghua only in Hong Kong. Since the communication is sufficient, I also think it is unnecessary to spend time on Cantonese [acquisition]. After all, it's only four years of university, and Cantonese can only be used in Hong Kong and certain areas globally. After Hong Kong, I wouldn't need Cantonese anymore!” Cantonese popularity beyond Hong Kong is rather minimal. It can be found in some parts of Chinese-living neighborhoods in Western countries and some Cantonese communities in Asian countries. Instead of increasing Cantonese linguistic capital, these education migrants would rather learn another skill or a language of higher utility. For Hong Kong, the minimal utility of Cantonese is not sufficient to communicate with non-Cantonese speakers in a globalized world, justifying the use of English in the city. However, Putonghua is beginning to serve a similar purpose to English which contributes to the need to communicate with a globalized world and the economic powerhouse of China. As my empirical evidence from autoethnography shows, Putonghua is very much accepted, even more accepted than English in Hong Kong local settings. As Chinese education migrants, my interviewees will share their experiences interacting with locals at a societal level.

Language use in society

With limited Cantonese linguistic capital, many interviewees use Putonghua as the communicative language when interacting with locals at shops, supermarkets, restaurants,

and wet markets. Olivia expressed her challenges where she gets assumed of her Cantonese ability by the shopkeeper due to her Chinese-looking physical appearances. Similarly, she uses Putonghua under the assumption that the Chinese-looking shopkeeper has Putonghua linguistic capital, and in most cases, this is feasible, and they carry a Putonghua conversation. When she encounters southeast Asian or other foreign-looking individuals, she will use English first. The assumption made to associate one's language ability with identity is relatively strong. Cherry also confirms her use of Putonghua at supermarkets. As these interactions are rather superficial and brief, she can try making sense of the locals' accented Putonghua. In situations where Putonghua-Cantonese conversations pose barriers to comprehension, she happily switches to English. English often works as an alternative language that an interlocutor could only reciprocate with specific conditions of age, physical appearance, and setting. These conditions and traits hypothesize and assume a certain expectation of class, culture, and socioeconomic status correlated to one's English-speaking identity.

Annie laughed about her Cantonese-speaking experience at McDonald's. Though Cantonese is her first language on the Mainland, she has accumulated Hong Kong Cantonese linguistic capital through TV shows, social media, and peer communications. Her switch to Hong Kong Cantonese is relatively smooth and comfortable as she feels assimilated into university and society. As she maintains transnational ties and communicates with family back in Shunde, Guangdong, she notices her Cantonese switching back to the slang or pronunciation back at home. She shared her experience of asking for a straw at a Hong Kong McDonald's shop, where she said to the server “要一條喉,” which confusingly translates to “I want a hose.” The server looked at her in shock and confusion, and she quickly clarified that she wanted a straw which is 飲筒 in Hong Kong Cantonese. She explained in the interview that “hose” is the Shunde slang for straws, so it slipped out of her mouth so

naturally. Remarkably, Annie knew both terms accurately to express straw. Since childhood, her accumulated Hong Kong Cantonese linguistic capital allows her to use Cantonese freely and make sense of the local culture as her cultural and linguistic capital increases. Such an identity allows Annie to get involved in both the Hongkonger group and the Mainland Chinese group. She constructed an identity as a Cantonese speaker whose values are similar to Hongkongers. This hybrid identity guarantees her a smoother transition and effective communication as she balances her cultural identities at the host society and home in Shunde. This sweet spot is difficult to achieve as she shared that some family members back home would call out her word choice and pronunciation as 'too Hong Kong.' Annie expressively recognized the use of Putonghua would place her in a marginalized position in society, so she is thankful for her L-1 to allow a better socialization experience and a convenient switch back to Mainland identity when interacting with Mainland peers. She acknowledged her mastery of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English gives her better social mobility as she hopes to land a good postgraduate offer in Hong Kong.

Overall, these interviewees are quite respectful of the city's default language. As Leah picked up some simple phrases in Cantonese for a brief interaction, she attempted to speak Cantonese first. In some situations, the Cantonese spoken by the local exceeds her limited Cantonese linguistic capital; she would switch to Putonghua smoothly as she assumes the local's receptive skills. As demonstrated by my autoethnography, this may turn into a dilingual situation in both parties' Putonghua and Cantonese linguistic capital would allow the interaction to continue.

Joey and Matt expressed their comfort in speaking Putonghua in Tsim Sha Tsui, Central, and Causeway Bay—Hong Kong's central business districts (CBDs) with office buildings and shopping malls. They have been aware of individuals' Putonghua linguistic capital in these settings through their prior visits to Hong Kong. These CBDs are key tourist

shopping attractions, and as the volume of Mainland visitors dominates, the shop assistants are trained in Putonghua linguistic capital to serve the needs of a large customer base.

Though Putonghua's acceptance is rising, it is still important to acknowledge how language is setting-specific thanks to Hong Kong's diverse offerings. Leah's first time in Hong Kong's Brandy Melville store, she spoke Putonghua at checkout, and the young shopkeeper spoke English. Leah quickly switches to English and remembers it for future store visits. Legacy of the British colony and the influence of Western elements cannot be undermined. Meanwhile, the acceptance of Putonghua shows another history of the rise of such a language in Hong Kong. At an individual level, a local's acceptance may be voluntary or out of necessity to communicate with an impactful migrant and visitor population. For society at large, Putonghua acceptance brings a new history to the city's language use, which continues to battle critical positions and preferences with Cantonese and English.

This chapter demonstrated the neutral role of English in university settings. Through unfolding the stories of education migrants, Putonghua's linguistic capital in the city is rising while Cantonese remains the most preferred language in Hong Kong. As we have remarked on the critical role of these education migrants in facilitating Putonghua's acceptance, the concluding chapter unpacks reasons and speculations behind Hong Kong's Putonghua use.

Conclusion

In this period of globalization, English facilitates communication between individuals, groups, and countries. Beyond ethnic Chinese Hongkongers, the Hong Kong population comprises “people from elsewhere,” making English a universal language and a legacy of the city’s colonial history. Cantonese is still the default language of the predominantly ethnic Chinese population. Chinese migrants popularly use Putonghua in Hong Kong, but it was accorded unfashionable political connotations. An autoethnographic reflection shows a preference for Putonghua over English in the city’s everyday settings, and the interview results unravels Chinese education migrants’ use of Putonghua at educational institutions. The Chinese state and the HKSAR government promulgated immigration policies; thereby, native Putonghua speakers form migrant communities to fuel the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong. Putonghua’s now rising position in the city reflects China’s dominating rule over Hong Kong and the social reality of Hong Kong’s growing Mainland Chinese migrant population.

Putonghua was formally recognized at the Handover as a key symbol of returned sovereignty to China. As a language so centralized and standardized by the Chinese state, Putonghua bears connections and affiliations to the Chinese government, and so do its language users. Hong Kong operates with semi-autonomy under “One Country, Two Systems,” where the use of Putonghua seems to fall under the former “One Country” and “Two Systems” is reinforced through the city’s use of English and Cantonese, differentiating the language environment in Hong Kong from that in China. During the 2010s social movements, Putonghua was a language frowned upon by Hongkongers as it relates closely to the Chinese state. Hongkongers’ resentment towards the Chinese state reflects in the marginalization of Putonghua, discouraging native Putonghua speakers from using their language in the city. Findings from this thesis illuminate Putonghua’s progression from an inferior position to rising linguistic capital in Hong Kong.

What is happening?

The proximity between Hong Kong and Mainland China rationalizes Mainland Chinese migrants and temporary visitors influx which contributes to Hong Kong's economy, presenting the reality for Hongkongers to come to grips with Putonghua and communicate with such a critical group in Putonghua. As my interviewees showed, some Hong Kong local university students adapted to Putonghua when discussing group projects with Mainland Chinese peers. Some would rather communicate in English as it is the university's formal communicative language. Though language choice is individualistic and specific to one's sets of language attitudes, the influx of Chinese migrants is one of the significant forces driving the Putonghua use in the city. My autoethnography illustrates most shopkeepers' comprehension and understanding of Putonghua are better than in English, illuminating the rise of the Putonghua linguistic capital in Hong Kong out of a need for economic incentives.

This rise of Putonghua challenges the role of English in Hong Kong, reorienting anglocentrism and the privileges associated with English. Putonghua is preferred over English in ordinary settings and by some Hongkongers and Mainland students in informal university discussions, which ceases to confer its power from colonial periods. The superiority and pre-eminence of English are still evident as it slowly loses its currency—it is still a critical language of the white-collar, upper-middle-class, and is associated with prestigious neighborhoods. As we still live in the effects of post-colonialism perpetuated by ideologies like “West is the best,” Putonghua has a long way to go to become on par with English's universality in Hong Kong. However, Putonghua is slowly supplanting English as the second preferred daily conversational language, giving a subjective feeling of assimilation absent in English. In other words, the linguistic environment allowing the use of Putonghua is expanding.

Why is this happening?

Putonghua is accorded with strong political and cultural meanings. As a result, political aversion arising from Putonghua was intense in the 2010s. Such a strong resentment projected at the state onto the language is eroding as Putonghua use reaches different domains required by Putonghua-speaking individuals that make up a significant segment of the Hong Kong population. Putonghua's commercial utility regionally and globally overwhelms the political amenability associated with the language. The increased use of Putonghua does not indicate Hongkongers' changing political allegiance as such an acceptance may not be entirely voluntary. The use of Putonghua, evidenced through my autoethnography at coffee shops with strong pro-democracy elements, suggests that the language may be shedding its political meanings, becoming a language for Mainlanders living in Hong Kong. For Mainland Chinese living in Hong Kong, Putonghua acceptance is comforting as they turn into an "insider" position inclusive in Hong Kong society.

Putonghua linguistic capital is growing and converting into economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital as the required communicative language with the Chinese merchants and businesses as China rises as an economic powerhouse. Putonghua becomes a practical necessity to interact with an increasingly significant Putonghua-speaking customer base with strong economic imperatives that perpetuate its rise in Hong Kong. The reality of the city's growing Putonghua-speaking population motivates a departure from Putonghua being viewed as adjacent to Beijing's ideologies. However, the encroachment of Putonghua upon Hong Kong's linguistic dynamic is apparent in political and social implications.

The Chinese state has its political imperatives to promote Putonghua in the city, as Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous region of China. Natural for the Chinese state to show state domination through the influence of Putonghua from a top-down approach, the rise of Putonghua could be an alarming political phenomenon as the Chinese state considers critical propagandistic efforts over Hong Kong. Direct measures like implementing the National

Security Law and improving electoral systems to ensure pro-Beijing individuals rule Hong Kong demonstrate the Chinese states' efforts, influence, and power over Hong Kong. Like speaking Cantonese is to show pro-Hong Kong political affinity, Putonghua is also a political gesture aiming toward state power consolidation through its promotion and influence. As a result of the "Patriots' rule," three Putonghua-speaking professionals with Mainland backgrounds now sit on Hong Kong's Legislative Council, extending Putonghua further into civil service and governance. What's critical is that this kind of state action to influence the city's language use occurs subconsciously, which is scarily successful as Hongkongers now (voluntarily or otherwise) respond by accepting and using Putonghua more. Following the political climate and Hongkongers' civic identity during the protest discourse, if Putonghua were to be more directly instilled in the people of Hong Kong, the effects would not have been so immediate and impactful. Instead, it would have failed and aggravated aversion.

The recent fifth wave of Covid-19 cases skyrocketed where the city's hospital staff, quarantine facilities, testing resources, and policy planning fell short of responding to the great volume of cases. The Hong Kong government sought help from Beijing in the face of such a public health emergency. The Chinese state sent personnel to respond to the shortage of hospital nurses, quarantine facility-building resources, health expert discussions, and the traditional Chinese medicinal support in treating the Omicron strain. Putonghua was heavily involved in conversations, discussions, and even on the packaging (in simplified Chinese) of Chinese medicine treatments. Communications between the Hong Kong government officials with Chinese state-sent health experts occurred in Putonghua. Interactions between Covid patients and state-sent nurses involved Putonghua. Putonghua use is shifting from the previous marginalized language as it gains more respect and appreciation.

The rise of Putonghua may be a symptom of the Chinese authoritarian government overstepping Hong Kong's semi-autonomous rule; it also brings social benefits. The

increased use of Putonghua is also an opportunity for Hongkongers to know better their Mainland counterparts and erase previous misunderstandings rooted in the Chinese state that may have been geared toward its people. Language is a catalyst for Hong Kong-Mainland's understanding, interaction, and integration. The rise of Putonghua could be an accomplishment because the language has departed from being frowned upon to being inclusively accepted by Hong Kong locals and used by Mainland migrants, suggesting a bottom-up influence from a growing Putonghua-speaking population. Putonghua detaches from an inferior sentiment as Hong Kong's linguistic environment grows more inclusive. Such linguistic accommodation by local people is rare in other migration settings. In most cases, the migrant learns the host country's language while tackling heritage language maintenance. It is almost a role reversal as Hongkongers accumulate Putonghua linguistic capital to cater to this large population of migrants against the backdrop of Putonghua as one of the city's official languages and Hong Kong's position to China. The Chinese migrant population is surely one of the driving forces of Putonghua's growing acceptance, alongside other influences in changing Hong Kong's linguistic landscape.

The social and political realities are inseparable as the Chinese state's aggressive politics threaten Hong Kong's linguistic diversity. Hongkongers' harbored feelings of nativism transformed into tolerant and inclusive of Putonghua speakers in Hong Kong, while Putonghua remains a political sentiment affiliated with China. This study of Chinese education migrants' role as agents to facilitate Putonghua's infiltration into Hong Kong is a single dimension of Chinese state immigration policies consistent with the Chinese political agenda to consolidate power in Greater China.

What does this mean to the future of Hong Kong?

The future of Hong Kong is ambiguous at the hands of the Chinese state. The rise of Putonghua in Hong Kong can have several implications for its future.

Politically, language and thought are inseparable as individuals use language to transfer thoughts from one to another. The current and new linguistic information impacts their world knowledge, inferencing, and habitus. Centralized and standardized by the Chinese state, Putonghua may be a tool in the political agenda to police thoughts and shape one's ideologies. As Hongkongers' respond in Putonghua due to Mainland migrants' continued language influence, they unconsciously expose themselves to language use and potent agents of propaganda with political undertones. As Hong Kong achieves its halfway mark of the 50-year doctrine of the semi-autonomous ruling, Putonghua's rise reflects its peoples' closer association with China, learning to belong to a nation. Putonghua acceptance encourages the formation of national identity and fosters nationalist sentiments toward China. As evidenced during the 2010s protests, Hong Kong's civic identity could be refreshed as Putonghua literacy spreads national allegiance. Once this is reached, it would be easier for the Chinese state to assert power over Hong Kong due to consolidated state efforts.

Culturally, scholars often discuss Mainlandization in Hong Kong to predict Hong Kong's future. Mainlandization, to some degree, reached as Putonghua takes a more significant role in Hong Kong society that is similar to its Mainland counterparts. However, Hong Kong's colonial past and Hongkongers' unique cultural and civic identity difficulties transform Hong Kong into "just another city in China." Mainlandization is a long journey, and Putonghua acceptance is somewhat smoothening and accelerating this progress. A Putonghua linguistic capital allows Hongkongers to understand cultural artifacts and mediums in China better, allowing an exchange of culture between the Mainland and Hong Kong. There may be a growing presence of Mainland-produced media and a generally increased presence of simplified Chinese, leading to China's growing grip on the city in ideological and social dimensions. Hongkongers will face the negotiation of this new cultural identity with their existing ones, balancing an array of identities to find their sweet spot of

existing in hybridity. There should be a serious consideration for the preservation and conservation of Hong Kong culture as generations in the past have long appreciated this unique aspect of Hong Kong.

Economically, instead of definitively calling it “Mainlandization of Hong Kong,” it is fairer and more neutral to describe this Hong Kong-Mainland tension as mutually influencing and mutually benefiting. As Hongkongers increase Putonghua's linguistic capital, there would be a better flow of Mainland human capital into Hong Kong, and Hongkongers can seek employment opportunities on the Mainland. Putonghua linguistic capital allows Hong Kong to capitalize on the opportunities brought by the Greater Bay Area initiative, where regions in southern China leverage the composite advantages of geographical locations and resources. Putonghua would accelerate this two-way opening up where Hong Kong supports the region's economic development, bringing employment and housing opportunities to Hongkongers. The Mainland facilitates the industry development of Hong Kong to capitalize on Hong Kong's strengths to serve the country's needs.

Is Putonghua threatening the positions of Cantonese and English in Hong Kong? Socially, English could diminish as we depart from the legacy of colonialization. As China continues to rise globally, Putonghua may challenge English's universal position. For Hong Kong, the critical question is—will Hong Kong Cantonese share the fate with other Chinese dialects? It may be plausible as commercial functions reasoned Putonghua use. However, Cantonese is an intrinsic part of Hong Kong culture. In the past, generations spoke Cantonese better than Putonghua, meaning a shift to a solely Putonghua-speaking Hong Kong would be slow and only an outcome of Chinese state action. It can be wise to reference how Chinese provinces balanced their dialects with the national promotion of Putonghua, managing state expectations of language standardization while attempting to preserve dialects as unique cultural symbols. Discussions arise regarding the preservation of dialects as it is more

popularly spoken among the older generations. Furthermore, a globalized society appreciates multiple language proficiency to increase social mobility and ease communication efforts. The three languages should grow together on the “biliteracy and trilingualism” path. If Putonghua were to dominate or dictate Hong Kong’s future, it also hinders Hongkongers’ ability to thrive in a globalized world.

Putonghua’s acceptance and wide usage in Hong Kong may encourage the HKSAR’s review of language education policy to potentially replace Cantonese with Putonghua as the mainstream teaching language in public school classrooms. Such a shift in instruction medium implies a different upbringing and nurturing of the new Hong Kong generation. Language education at a young age fosters and teaches nationalism. Will the new generation of Hong Kong return home to sing the Chinese national anthem? This is rather an extreme view of the effects of Putonghua teaching. The reality is that Hong Kong belongs to China and Putonghua acceptance allows individuals to understand their Mainland counterparts better. Full love of a country is difficult, but Putonghua use encourages the achievement of some respect for China and its people. What about the group of Hongkongers that hate China? Like the wave of emigration at the 1997 Handover and recently the U.K.’s plan to extend the BN(O) visa scheme amid exodus under National Security law, emigration from Hong Kong to other parts of the world will continue as a natural phenomenon of global mobility and footprint. These groups of emigrated Hongkongers have formed communities in the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia, and they will continue to form a new Hong Kong diaspora globally. Overall, the fate of Hong Kong is unknown but worth observing and giving attention to as we live through this critical time of history.

Limitations and future research avenues

I acknowledge the limited samples in both my autoethnography and interview data collection. Both approaches are qualitative and subjective to my researcher identity as an

ethnically Chinese individual, which brings conveniences to my methodology execution and hinders some aspects of the study. For example, a Caucasian person may garner different results from the same autoethnography approach because the interlocutors assume a certain language proficiency attached to Western identity. I hope to use my interview results to corroborate the reactions I received in autoethnography. Most Chinese education migrants interviewed use Putonghua in ordinary settings similar to my encounters, validating the conclusions I draw from autoethnography.

Language, migration, and identity in Hong Kong remain complicated and relevant topics requiring further research. This thesis lacks direct Hongkongers' reactions to the reality of Putonghua's rise in Hong Kong. Further efforts could develop a holistic methodology to examine and unpack Hongkongers' (voluntary) choice of speaking Putonghua and whether Putonghua is shedding political sentiments due to normalized behavior. Comparing Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong cultural identity is fitting to understand how Hong Kong would belong to the nation. Though there are similarities, their differences shaped by history, social tensions, and cultural influences set the two groups apart in finding commonalities. As Hong Kong is a place for "people from elsewhere," migration research will continue to illuminate Hong Kong's unique position as a hub of migrants while suggesting the different kinds of migration to Hong Kong. Further research could focus on a comparative study between acculturation stressors for Chinese education migrants in Hong Kong and Western societies. Lastly, an interviewee in this thesis defined the identity of Mainland-born, Hong Kong-raised individuals as "semi-locals." It would be interesting to unpack the idea of "semi-localism" through understanding common themes and struggles experienced by this special group of migrants as they navigate and negotiate transregional ties.

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