

THE USE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CANTONESE  
AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIANS IN KUALA LUMPUR

LEW VOON KHONG

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITI MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR

2024

THE USE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CANTONESE  
AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIANS IN KUALA LUMPUR

LEW VOON KHONG

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (LINGUISTICS)

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITI MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR

2024

# UNIVERSITI MALAYA

## ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: LEW VOON KHONG

Registration/Matric No: 17014310/1 (new); TOA 170041 (old)

Name of Degree: MASTER OF ARTS (LINGUISTICS)

Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis ("this Work"):

THE USE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CANTONESE AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIANS IN KUALA LUMPUR

Field of Study:

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) I am the sole author/writer of this Work;
- (2) This Work is original;
- (3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract from, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
- (4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
- (5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya ("UM"), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without the written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
- (6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate's Signature Date: 8 February 2024

Subscribed and solemnly declared before,

Witness's Signature

Date: 8.2.2024

Name:

# THE USE OF AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CANTONESE AMONG CHINESE MALAYSIANS IN KUALA LUMPUR

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the use of and attitude towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysians in Kuala Lumpur. Understanding the use of Cantonese and attitude is essential in evaluating and maintaining the vitality of Cantonese and to design strategies to revitalise the language. However, very few studies have investigated Cantonese in Malaysia. The methodology used was questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Findings show that roughly one-third of the participants used Cantonese regularly at home. Overall, the use of Cantonese in the public domain is above average except at government departments and schools. For instrumental orientation, the participants did not see Cantonese as being valuable in education, but recognised its commercial value. A large majority of participants had a high integrative orientation and perceived Cantonese as an integral and important element of the identity of the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur. Main factors which contributed to the use of and attitude toward Cantonese include Chinese subgroup identity, family, birthplace, age, neighbourhood, school policy, gender, self-perceived proficiency of Cantonese, and pop culture. This study provides useful insights into the current situation of Cantonese use in Kuala Lumpur and has implications for maintaining and revitalising the language.

**Keywords:** Cantonese in Kuala Lumpur, Cantonese language use, Cantonese language attitude

# PENGGUNAAN DAN SIKAP TERHADAP BAHASA KANTONIS DALAM KALANGAN ORANG CINA MALAYSIA DI KUALA LUMPUR

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan dan sikap terhadap bahasa Kantonis dalam kalangan masyarakat Cina Malaysia di Kuala Lumpur. Memahami penggunaan dan sikap Kantonis adalah penting dalam menilai dan mengekalkan kesinambungan bahasa Kantonis dan untuk mereka strategi untuk menghidupkan semula bahasa tersebut. Walau bagaimanapun, sangat sedikit kajian telah menyiasat bahasa Kantonis di Malaysia. Metodologi yang digunakan ialah soal selidik dan temu bual separa berstruktur. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa kira-kira satu pertiga daripada peserta menggunakan bahasa Kantonis secara tetap di rumah. Secara keseluruhannya, penggunaan bahasa Kantonis dalam domain awam adalah melebihi purata kecuali di jabatan kerajaan dan sekolah. Untuk orientasi instrumental, para peserta tidak melihat Kantonis sebagai sesuatu yang bernilai tinggi dalam pendidikan, tetapi mengiktiraf nilai komersialnya. Sebilangan besar peserta mempunyai orientasi integratif yang tinggi dan menganggap bahasa Kantonis sebagai elemen penting dan mustahak dalam identiti masyarakat Cina di Kuala Lumpur. Faktor utama yang menyumbang kepada penggunaan dan sikap terhadap bahasa Kantonis termasuk identiti sub-etnik Cina, pengaruh keluarga, tempat lahir, umur, kejrangan, dasar sekolah, jantina, kecekapan yang dirasakan sendiri dalam bahasa Kantonis dan budaya pop. Kajian ini memberikan wawasan yang berguna tentang situasi semasa penggunaan Kantonis di Kuala Lumpur dan memberi implikasi untuk pengekalan dan pemulihan bahasa tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** Kantonis di Kuala Lumpur, penggunaan bahasa Kantonis, sikap bahasa Kantonis

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....             | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Background .....                             | 1         |
| 1.1.1 History of Cantonese.....                  | 1         |
| 1.1.2 Kuala Lumpur .....                         | 3         |
| 1.1.3 Arrival of Cantonese in KL .....           | 3         |
| 1.1.4 Demographic of Chinese in KL .....         | 4         |
| 1.1.5 The Rise of Cantonese Language in KL ..... | 5         |
| 1.1.6 Recent situation of Cantonese in KL .....  | 5         |
| 1.2 Research Problem.....                        | 6         |
| 1.3 Research Objectives .....                    | 8         |
| 1.4 Research Questions .....                     | 8         |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study .....              | 8         |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....        | <b>11</b> |
| 2.1 Language use.....                            | 11        |
| 2.1.1 Domain analysis approach .....             | 11        |
| 2.1.2 Previous studies .....                     | 12        |
| 2.2 Language attitudes .....                     | 14        |
| 2.2.1 Previous studies.....                      | 16        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY</b> .....             | <b>20</b> |
| 3.1 Instrumentation .....                        | 20        |
| 3.1.1 Questionnaire .....                        | 20        |
| 3.1.2 Language Use.....                          | 20        |
| 3.1.3 Language Attitude .....                    | 21        |
| 3.2 Semi-structured Interview .....              | 22        |
| 3.3 Data Collection .....                        | 22        |
| 3.4 Ethical Consideration .....                  | 23        |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....</b>  | <b>24</b> |
| 4.1 Analysis of questionnaire responses .....   | 24        |
| 4.1.1 A summary of data collected via questionnaire.....  | 24        |
| 4.1.2 Biodata of Participants .....   | 25        |
| 4.1.2.1 Self-identified Chinese subgroup identity.....  | 25        |
| 4.1.2.2 Chinese subgroup identity of parents.....   | 26        |
| 4.1.2.3 Education Background .....  | 28        |
| 4.1.2.4 Numbers of generation in Malaysia.....  | 29        |
| 4.1.2.5 KL-ite identity.....  | 30        |
| 4.1.2.6 Proficiency in Cantonese.....   | 31        |
| 4.1.3 Language Use .....  | 31        |
| 4.1.3.1 Family domain .....   | 31        |
| 4.1.3.2 Public domain .....   | 34        |
| 4.1.4 Language attitude .....   | 38        |
| 4.1.4.1 Instrumental orientation .....  | 38        |
| 4.1.4.2 Integrative orientation .....   | 41        |
| 4.1.4.3 Attitudes towards learning/improving Cantonese .....                                      | 44        |
| 4.1.4.4 Promoting Cantonese .....   | 45        |
| 4.1.4.5 Describing Cantonese .....  | 46        |
| 4.1.4.6 Summary .....   | 46        |
| 4.1.5 Detailed analysis of Cantonese language use and attitude .....                              | 46        |
| 4.1.5.1 Examining the connection between biodata and Cantonese<br>language use and attitude ..... | 46        |
| 4.1.5.2 Chinese subgroup identity .....   | 47        |
| 4.1.5.3 Parents' Education Level .....  | 56        |
| 4.1.5.4 Endogamy and Exogamy .....  | 57        |
| 4.1.5.5 Birthplace .....  | 59        |
| 4.1.5.6 KL-ite identity .....   | 62        |
| 4.1.5.7 Gender .....  | 65        |
| 4.1.5.8 Number of generations .....   | 67        |
| 4.1.5.9 Age .....   | 68        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 4.1.5.10 Self-perceived proficiency .....         | 70         |
| 4.2 Interview .....                               | 71         |
| 4.2.1 Informational Reports of Interviewees ..... | 73         |
| 4.2.1.1 Hainanese Interviewee 01 .....            | 73         |
| 4.2.1.2 Hainanese Interviewee 02 .....            | 79         |
| 4.2.1.3 Teochew Interviewee 01 .....              | 88         |
| 4.2.1.4 Teochew Interviewee 02 .....              | 93         |
| 4.2.1.5 Hokkien Interviewee 01 .....              | 99         |
| 4.2.1.6 Hokkien Interviewee 02 .....              | 108        |
| 4.2.1.7 Hakka Interviewee 01 .....                | 115        |
| 4.2.1.8 Hakka Interviewee 01 .....                | 119        |
| 4.2.1.9 Cantonese Interviewee 01 .....            | 124        |
| 4.2.1.10 Cantonese Interviewee 02 .....           | 128        |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....</b> | <b>135</b> |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>REFERENCES .....</b>                           | <b>144</b> |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 1 .....</b>                           | <b>157</b> |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 2 .....</b>                           | <b>167</b> |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>APPENDIX 3 .....</b>                           | <b>171</b> |



## LIST OF TABLES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 1. Frequency of speaking Cantonese with different interlocutors in the family domain .....  | 31 |
| Table 2. Frequency of speaking Cantonese with different interlocutors in the public domain .....  | 37 |
| Table 3. Language attitude – instrumental orientation towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysians in KL .....  | 40 |
| Table 4. Language attitude – integrative orientation towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysians in KL .....   | 43 |
| Table 5. Attitudes towards learning/improving Cantonese .....   | 44 |
| Table 6. Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on Chinese subgroup of paternal lineage (mean) .....                      | 48 |
| Table 7. Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on Chinese subgroup of maternal lineage (mean) .....                      | 49 |
| Table 8. Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on self-perceived Chinese subgroup (mean) .....                           | 50 |
| Table 9. Cantonese language use and attitude as heritage language of participants, categorised by the education level of father of Cantonese origin (mean) .....  | 57 |
| Table 10. Cantonese language use and attitude as heritage language of participants, categorised by the education level of father of Cantonese origin (mean) ..... | 57 |
| Table 11. Cantonese language use within family by self-perceived Cantonese participants – Chinese subgroup of parents .....                                       | 58 |
| Table 12. Cantonese language use and attitude categorised based on the state of birth (mean) .....  | 60 |
| Table 13. Cantonese language use and attitude categorised by perception of KL-ite identity (mean) .....   | 64 |
| Table 14. Cantonese language use and attitude by gender (mean) .....  | 67 |
| Table 15. Cantonese language use and attitude categorised by number of generations (mean) .....   | 68 |
| Table 16. Cantonese language use and attitudes categorised by the decades in which the participants were born (percentage) .....                                  | 69 |
| Table 17. The link between Cantonese language proficiency and the participants' language use and attitude (mean) .....  | 71 |

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The introduction starts with an account of the background of the research which introduces Chinese Malaysian and Cantonese language in Kuala Lumpur (hereinafter KL). Subsequently, research problems, research objectives and questions, and the significance of this study are stated.

### 1.1 Background

#### 1.1.1 History of Cantonese

The early history of Cantonese can be traced back to a group of people known as *Hundred Yue* or *Baiyue* (百越) (Guangdong Academy of Education, 2017). Brindley (2015) reported that the word *Yue* was a term used by *Eastern Zhou* (東周, 771–256 BC) to indicate a kingdom in the south-eastern part of *Central Plains* (中原), more specifically the southern region around the estuary of Yangzi River. The term *Yue* gradually expanded to denote the south-eastern part of today's China and Indochina from the Warring States period (c. 475–221 BC) to Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD) (Wu, 2012).

The area of China south of the *Nanling Mountains* (南嶺山脈), known as the *Lingnan* (南嶺, roughly modern Guangxi and Guangdong), was originally home to groups of people known as *Luo* (駱), who were also categorised by the *Chinese* from the Central Plains as the *Baiyue* (百越) (Brindley, 2015). The Qin dynasty (秦朝, 221 to 206 BC), after uniting the Central Plains, initiated southward expansion into the land of Baiyue, including today's Guangdong province (Li, 2012; Siu, 2022; Zhou & You, 2019).

After the successful conquest by the Qin army, 500,000 men were placed in the Lingnan region to safeguard the new territory of the empire. The interaction between language used by these 500,000 men from northern China and the Yue groups became the foundation of the formation of Cantonese language (Li, 2012; Zhou & You, 2019). Today, the abbreviated form of Guangdong province in Chinese is 粵, which is also pronounced as *yuè* in modern Mandarin (Baxter & Sagart, 2014).

According to Liu (2006), Cantonese has the highest number of words that have been influenced by Tai-Kadai languages among Han-Chinese languages. People who use Tai-Kadai languages are believed to be the descendants of the Baiyue tribes (Wang, 2014). However, Li (2012) argued that the most significant event that set the tone of the Cantonese language today was the massive migration happened around the turn of Northern Song to Southern Song period (circa 1127 AD), when people from *ZhuJiXiang* (珠璣巷, a town located in the northern region of modern Guangdong province) moved to the Pearl River Delta. This can be proven by genealogy records of the families with the main surnames in today's Pearl River Delta (Siu, 2022). The similarity of Cantonese phonology to those that are reflected in a Chinese rime dictionary that was compiled during the Northern Song Dynasty called *Guangyun* (廣韻) also provides another evidence of this event. After settling down, their language further evolved into Cantonese as we know today, and these settlers prospered with the rich natural resources and good climate of the Pearl River Delta, and spread their language together with their economic influence around the region.

According to Tang (2015), there is no contradictory in categorising Cantonese either as a dialect or a language. Cantonese can be viewed as a dialect of Han-Chinese languages because they derived from the same origin, especially “obscure sociopolitical and normative factors” are considered. However, Cantonese has its own set of phonological,

morphological, and syntactical rules, and is largely mutually unintelligible with other Han-Chinese languages. Thus, it can be seen as a language of its own. For this study, Cantonese is viewed as a language. However, in the contexts of Chinese-medium schools, since Mandarin is treated as an official language, Cantonese is included when ‘dialects’ is mentioned.

### **1.1.2 Kuala Lumpur**

Kuala Lumpur, officially the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, is a federal territory and the capital city of Malaysia. It is the largest city in Malaysia, covering an area of 243 km<sup>2</sup> with an estimated population of 1.73 million as of 2016. Greater KL, also known as the Klang Valley, is an urban agglomeration of 7.564 million people as of 2018.

For the purpose of this study, the main location is KL. However, due to suburbanisation, many people have moved their residence to adjacent districts which are located in the neighbouring state of Selangor, while still working and carrying out their main activities in KL. Therefore, the Federal Territory of KL and its four adjacent districts in the state of Selangor, i.e., Petaling, Gombak, Hulu Langat, and Sepang, are also included in this study.

### **1.1.3 Arrival of Cantonese in KL**

Gullick (2000) and Song (2021) record that the British colonial government, with the intention of bringing more investment and ending the dominance of Hakka people, offered farming revenue contracts to the Cantonese and Hokkien people in 1884. The arrival of a significant number of Cantonese in KL can also be proven by several occasions. In the year of 1886, the Selangor & Federal Territory Kwong Siew Association was founded at today’s Jalan Tun H.S. Lee by Cantonese people originated from Guangzhou and Zhaoqing city (Chen, 1996; Selangor & Federal Territory Kwong Siew Association, 2019).

This can also be proven by the founding of the Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management of KL in 1895 (The Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management KL, 2020). Though the cemetery management was founded later, the oldest graveyard found in the cemetery dates back to 1884 (Foo, 2014). The need for such a large-scale cemetery showed a significant population of Cantonese immigrants, or immigrants from Guangdong province (which also includes Hakka and Teochew subgroups who originated from Guangdong) to KL.

#### **1.1.4 Demographic of Chinese in KL**

Frank Swettenham described KL of 1872 as a "purely Chinese village" (Gullick, 1990). A census in 1891 of uncertain accuracy gave a figure of 43,796 inhabitants, of whom were 14% Malay, 6% Indian, and 79% Chinese. Among the Chinese population, 71% were Hakka (Prem Kumar Rajaram, 2014) and 11% were Cantonese (Chen, 1996; Jackson, 1964).

According to data gathered by Voon (2018), the number of population of Cantonese and its percentage to total population of British Malaya from 1901 to 1947 was as follow: 1901: 160,000 (31%); 1911: 230,000 (26.9%); 1921: 332,000 (28.3%); 1931: 418,000 (24.5%); 1947: 642,000 (24.6%). Records in 1921 indicated that Federated Malay States contained 53.6% of the Cantonese population in British Malaya, where 43.3% of them lived in Perak and Selangor.

After the formation of Malaysia, there has been no official census based on Chinese subgroups. However, based on Voon (2018), the population of Chinese in KL in 2000 was 560,153 (40.6% of total population of KL). Chinese was once the largest ethnic group in KL up until the 2000 census (Yeoh, 2014) and now comprises 43.2% of the population according to the 2010 census. Cantonese, however, had a population of 184,000 (18.5% of the total population of Chinese in KL), ranked the third after Hokkien and Hakka

subgroups. Although Cantonese was not the most populous Chinese subgroup, Cantonese has served as the, or one of the two (together with Mandarin), lingua franca of the Chinese population in KL, especially in commercial dealings (Voon, 2018).

The demonym for KL is KL-ite or KLian. For this study, the term KL-ite is used.

### **1.1.5 The Rise of Cantonese Language in KL**

Since the abolition of the Chinese Captain system in 1902, which had been dominated by Hakka-Chinese, Cantonese rose to become the lingua franca among different Chinese subgroups in KL due to the economic superiority of those who spoke Cantonese (Chen, 1996; Chong, 2009; Wang, 2010; Wen & Wong, 2021; Wong, 2008).

This development was in line with the leadership of the Chinese community after the death of the third Chinese Kapitan of KL, Yap Ah Loy, in 1885. Though Yap Ah Loy's successor, Yap Kwan Seng, was a Hakka, Cantonese leaders were already coming into the picture, starting from Chiew Yoke (1843 - 1892) as one of the legislative members of Selangor, and later Loke Yew (1845–1917) and Chan Sow Lin (1845 – 1927) (Chen, 1996; Chong, 2017; Wen & Wong, 2021). Moreover, since the kapitanship of Yap Kwan Seng, the centre of dispute resolution for the Chinese community in KL had shifted from the Hakka's institution, i.e., FuiChiu Association, and Sin Sze Si Ya Temple, to the Cantonese institution Kwong Siew Association (Chong, 2017; Siou, 2017).

### **1.1.6 Recent situation of Cantonese in KL**

According to Wang (2010), since Independence of Malaya, Cantonese has been losing its status as High language to one of the Low languages in the Chinese community of KL though it still has high degree of vitality in relatively informal domains. Low language is a language variety that is used in the home or informal domains, whilst High language is used in formal domains or wider society (Tsou, 1980; Tsou et al., 2007; Wang, 2010). It

was predicted that Cantonese and other Chinese dialects, including Cantonese, would decline and disappear, and a stable *diglossic* situation where Malay as High language and Mandarin as Low language would be formed.

In order to further study the development of Cantonese, the situation of the use of Cantonese in different domains and the attitudes towards this language have to be understood. Nonetheless, though there are a few studies (see Literature Review) that discussed the use of and attitudes towards Cantonese, the participants were limited to students, and little attention has been devoted to a detailed investigation of instrumental and integrative attitudes towards Cantonese. It is therefore the purpose of this study to address this research gap.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

It was stated by Fishman (1977/1989) that to study the development of a language, one should start with whether a language is used in an area, without which the exploration of why the language is used is impossible (Wang, 2012). There are only a few studies in recent years that discussed Cantonese language use in KL, which are Wang (2010, 2012, 2021), and Wang and Chong (2011). Moreover, these surveys were done from 2002 to 2008, thus an updated study which reflect the current situation is needed.

Despite the large number of participants involved in these studies, the participants were limited to Chinese students from secondary schools, which do not represent the overall societal structure of Cantonese speaking community in KL. These students were often prohibited or discouraged from speaking Cantonese at school, and this might have affected their use of and attitude towards Cantonese. It is possible to see a change of the use of and attitude towards Cantonese once they have stepped out from such contained and controlled environment after finishing their secondary school, and joined the larger society where Cantonese use is more prevalent. It may be inaccurate to predict that

Cantonese would decline and disappear merely by relying on responses collected from teenage students. Participants from different backgrounds, especially working adults, have not been thoroughly considered: this group of participants needs to be accounted for to have a more holistic grasp of the situation of language use of Cantonese.

No study has been done on attitudes towards Cantonese though in Wang (2021), the attitudes towards Mandarin and ‘Chinese dialects’ were compared. This is rather an investigation of dialects as a whole but not Cantonese *per se* though Cantonese was one of the dialects investigated for language use in earlier part of this study. To gain an accurate outlook of the attitudes towards Cantonese, it is necessary to conduct a survey solely on Cantonese. Survey that includes questions categorised into instrumental and integrative attitudes helps to understand the thoughts of participants in a systematic manner, and provides more accurate data for specific areas to improve on in the effort of maintenance and revitalisation of Cantonese.

These studies based its analysis solely on quantitative data. Quoting Lai (2009), though quantitative approach helped to draw up generalizable patterns of attitudes, it does not allow respondents to express their feeling and beliefs behind their responses. To gain a better knowledge of the social dynamics under study (St. Hilaire, 2007), a qualitative interview is also needed to supplement the gap of understanding to the situation of Cantonese in KL.

Moreover, though there are some studies on the use of and attitude towards other Chinese languages/dialects which have been done in different regions in Malaysia (see Literature Review), it is argued these Chinese languages/dialects do not have the unique status like



Cantonese, and the locations investigated are not comparable to Kuala Lumpur since it is the capital of Malaysia.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the frequency of the use of Cantonese by Chinese Malaysians in KL with different interlocutors in different domains.
2. To examine the factors which have contributed to the frequency of use of Cantonese.
3. To study the attitude of Chinese Malaysians in KL towards Cantonese and the relevant reasons.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How frequently do Chinese Malaysians in KL communicate with different interlocutors in different domains in Cantonese?
2. What are the factors which have contributed to the frequency of use of Cantonese?
3. How is the attitude of Chinese Malaysians in KL towards Cantonese, and why?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

As mentioned earlier, Cantonese rose to become a prestige language among the Chinese community in KL from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The status of Cantonese is unique in KL. It is not the same as other Chinese dialects such as Hokkien and Hakka, where its use is mainly constricted to family and members within the same Chinese subgroup – Cantonese serves as an inter-subgroup language among Chinese in KL. On the other hand, it does not have a relatively higher status like Mandarin, where Mandarin has been recognised and officially used as the medium instruction in schools. Nonetheless, Cantonese is still used widely in important areas in private sectors such as entertainment and business among Chinese in KL today. However, a few studies cited earlier predicted

that Cantonese would decline and even disappear – if this happens, one will see a significant shift in cultural scene in entertainment and business. Since KL is the most important commercial and cultural centre in Malaysia, it would exert momentous impact to Chinese communities in other areas of the country as well.

Political changes in Hong Kong motivated studies to be done on the attitude towards Cantonese, especially due to the fear of assimilation from Mainland China (e.g., Sautman & Xie, 2021). Cantonese use affected by demographic shift in Guangzhou was discussed in Sautman & Xie (2021) as the city was experiencing an influx of migrants from non-Cantonese regions. A study was done in Toronto (Nagy, 2018) do examine the attitudes of Cantonese speakers towards Cantonese when they had contact with the mainstream language, English. The attitude of Chinese Malaysian in KL towards Cantonese may be affected similarly, when one look at the influx of Chinese population from other parts of Malaysia. Cantonese speakers in KL are also having close contact with dominant languages such as Mandarin, English, and Malay. The influence of Mainland China in terms of culture and economy has been felt especially when entertainment media from Mainland China is getting more popular and common. An updated study has to be done to investigate how these social phenomena affect the use of and attitudes towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysian in KL.

The current study will have implications to help understanding the language situation of Cantonese, which will be useful to maintain and revitalise Cantonese in the daily-life communication of KL. Exploring the use of Cantonese in different domains helps to identify the current situation of its use in daily life, whilst the aspect of attitude is important because it could significantly determine whether a language is spreading or decaying in the future (McKenzie, 2010). It will assist relevant parties such as educators

and Chinese associations to understand the domains of use and attitudes towards the language to effectively design policies, strategies or plans to encourage people to learn and communicate with Cantonese.

Sustaining the vitality of Cantonese brings benefits to our country in terms of attracting tourists and investment from Cantonese-speaking communities around the world, mainly from Hong Kong, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces of China, UK, USA and Canada. Studies in the economics of language such as Grin (2003), Grin et al. (2009, 2010) indicated that 9% of the GDP of Switzerland benefited from multilingualism, and Wang (2021) estimated that if multilingualism of Malaysia is utilised in optimum level, the economic value generated could be more than 10% of the GDP.

Universiti Malaysia

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews previous studies on language use and attitudes.

### 2.1 Language use

#### 2.1.1 Domain analysis approach

The domain analysis approach originated from Fishman (1972) is taken to analyse the domains in which the participants use Cantonese. According to domain analysis approach, 'domain' is a 'cluster of social situations typically constrained by a common set of behavioural rules' (Fishman, 1971, p. 599), such as family, friendship, religion, education, and employment. Family is seen as the key domain because it is always the ultimate fortress to keep a language alive. The number of domains can vary depending on the group studied (Haberland, 2005). However, Haberland (2005) pointed out that 'domains' are not properties of languages, and a bilingual does not usually ask which 'domain' he is in at the moment of speaking, and sometimes may even have difficulties labelling the situation he is in to reflect upon the language to be chosen. Moreover, it may be difficult to apply to situations where there is extensive code-switching between interlocutors. It is said that 'languages sometimes have to be chosen for each utterance and sometimes even within utterances' (Haberland, 2005, p. 234). What Haberland (2005) mentioned reflects the language use situation of Chinese-Malaysians, for instance, as one may speak one language at home with one's siblings, but another in the public. The language that one uses to discuss topics of academic nature with one's sibling may be in Mandarin or English, but then in the next moment when they talk about gossip, they may switch to their own dialect. Nonetheless, the domain analysis approach is able to provide an overview of generalised patterns of language use.

### 2.1.2 Previous studies

As for the use of Cantonese in KL, there are only a few studies that have discussed it, all of which used a domain analysis approach. Wang (2010), and Wang and Chong (2011) studied language choice of Form 4 Chinese students from national schools in KL, where family and public domains were included. The participants of Cantonese origin possessed the highest proficiency of their dialect compared to other Chinese subgroups. Cantonese used for intergenerational interaction within family members was the highest among Cantonese subgroups. The use of Cantonese in the public domain was also much higher. It was concluded that though Cantonese has been downgraded to Low language, it maintained a high degree of vitality in informal domains. Wang and Chong (2011) discussed factors which contributed to the maintenance of Cantonese in hierarchical order – size of population, status, institutional support, distribution of population, and location.

Wang (2012) compared the use of Chinese dialects by students from Confucian Private Secondary School (CPSS, a Chinese-medium school) and SMJK Confucian (SMJKC, a national Malay-medium school) in KL. Students from CPSS claimed to have higher proficiency in speaking the dialects. As for language use in the family domain, Cantonese was quite stable though there was a sharp decrease in the use of Cantonese with younger siblings. Mandarin was reported to be spreading into public and private domains due to the use of Mandarin in educational settings. However, Cantonese was widely used in KL, and more popular than Mandarin in some public domains, including mass media.

Wang (2021) reported a survey on language use done to private Chinese-medium schools in KL, Klang, Penang, Perak, and Johor, from 2002 to 2004. 33.7% of the students had learned Cantonese as their first language, which ranked second after Mandarin (35.8%). Most students used Cantonese to speak with their grandparents, but the use of Cantonese was slightly lower than Mandarin when communicating with parents and siblings.

Moreover, language attitudes towards Chinese dialects and Mandarin were compared. It was found that though the participants had a highly positive attitude towards their own dialect, those who agreed that they would speak their dialects to their next generation was only around 20%.

Nonetheless, one could argue that studies on the use of other Chinese languages/dialects in other locations should be referred as well. Ting (2011) reports the languages used for family communication in Foochow, Hakka and Hokkien communities in Kuching, Sarawak. Participants from younger generation are shifting away from their own heritage languages towards Mandarin. In transactional domains, it is found that Mandarin is generally the preferred language in Kuching among dealers unless they are familiar with each other and would speak in Hakka or Hokkien. This shows that Chinese dialects in Kuching, an urban area, are losing their foothold in family and public domains. Nonetheless, speaking dialects with familiar people indicates the possible value of dialects to enhance intimacy and bonds.

Ding and Koh (2015) investigates the use of Hakka in two Chinese new villages in Melaka - Machap Baru and Parit Keliling. It is found that the new generation generally do not speak Hakka anymore. Daily conversation, especially within family, shifted to Mandarin, despite the fact that the population possesses highly positive attitude towards their heritage language. It turns out that even rural areas are experiencing language shift.

Ong and Ben Said (2021) conducts a study on the use of Penang Hokkien and other Chinese dialects by the Chinese community in Penang. From the 46 participants selected, it is found that Penang Hokkien and other Chinese dialects are still highly used in family domain. In work domain, close to 50% of the participants claim that they have the opportunity to use Chinese dialects. In the education realm, the presence of Chinese dialects is relatively strong as in teachers have to communicate in Chinese dialects with

parents in certain areas. Some schools work together with clan associations to conduct dialect classes. In brief, it seems that the use of Chinese dialects in Penang is still relatively high.

Nevertheless, though all these studies could be referred to predict the use of Cantonese in Kuala Lumpur, they are not study on Cantonese use *per se*. One important difference between Cantonese and other Chinese dialects is that Cantonese has much wider coverage through media and literature. Even Chinese communities from other states which cannot generally speak Cantonese could somehow understand Cantonese. Moreover, the location and status of Kuala Lumpur are different from the locations where these studies took place. Kuala Lumpur is the capital of Malaysia, and the cultural and economic centre of the nation. Stronger influence in terms of culture and economy may affect the use of languages in other regions of the country. For example, one could see why the presence of Cantonese programmes is very strong in almost every channel of Chinese media in Malaysia. If the sphere of influence of Cantonese is so widespread throughout the nation, it is perhaps only logical to wonder whether Cantonese will further entrench its stronghold at the place where its influence originated from – Kuala Lumpur. The dynamic in Kuala Lumpur is also much more different compared to Penang (an island, a former Strait colony, where Hokkien is the majority), Kuching (located in Borneo which has different social and historical background), and villages in Melaka. Taking into consideration the unique status, demographic composition, and history, a study focusing on the use of Cantonese in Kuala Lumpur should be conducted.

## **2.2 Language attitudes**

The understanding of what constitutes “attitudes” has been getting more detailed and thorough in the academic world throughout the years. Thurstone (1931) defines attitudes as ‘affect for or against a psychological object’, and Sarnoff (1970) terms it as ‘a

disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects', emphasising quite simply and succinctly on the positive and negative emotional response one has towards something. Allport (1954) describes attitudes as 'a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way', which indicates that attitudes are not merely affect, but also involve thoughts and behaviours. Oppenheim (1982) views attitudes as 'a construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended', further elaborating that they are elements in our mind that are expressed via more overt means as, inter alia, stereotypes, beliefs, statements, reactions, ideas, opinions, emotions or various forms of behaviour. Garrett (2013) illustrates attitudes as 'an evaluative orientation to a social object or some sort', and mentioned 'language' as one of the examples of social object. According to Garrett (2013), attitudes comprise three components, which are cognition, affect, and behaviour. Cognition includes beliefs about the surrounding world, affect involves feelings, and behaviour is the predisposition to act in certain manners. Applying attitudes to language, Ryan and Giles (1982) define language attitudes as 'any reflective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions towards different language varieties or their speakers'.

Distinction has also been made between attitudes with habits, values, beliefs, and opinions. Though habits share similarities with attitudes, they tend to be regarded as 'behavioural routines' (Garrett, 2013), and people are generally more aware of their own attitudes compared to habits and are able to discuss their attitudes more (Perloff, 1993).

Values are the most vital and central components in a person's system of attitudes and beliefs (Oskamp, 1977), and are said to be generated from terminal values which are more global and general (Rokeach, 1973). As for beliefs, they are usually regarded as the cognitive part of attitudes which may provoke or be provoked by emotive reactions (Garrett, 2013). Comparing attitudes to opinions, one could say that opinions are usually



discursive, whilst attitudes may be more difficult to verbalised or formulated in words as non-verbal processes may be involved (Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2013).

### **2.2.1 Previous studies**

Previous studies have discussed two orientations of attitudes, which are instrumental and integrative. Instrumental attitude is defined as “the desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through the knowledge of it.” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Sautman and Xie, 2021), and often reflects the status dimension of a language that constitutes overt prestige (Kulyk, 2017). An integrative attitude is a desire to understand and become closer with speakers of a language (Lambert, 1967), which is always related to intrinsic attitude, which leads to “learning and using of a language for its own sake” (Li & Luk, 2012), and reflects the solidarity dimension which constitutes covert prestige (Kulyk, 2017).

Studies that involved Cantonese in their research on language attitude have been done in Guangzhou (Kalmar et al., 1987; Sautman & Xie, 2021), Macao (Lai, 2002; Leong, 2009; Mann & Wong, 1999; Wang, 2007; Xi & Moody, 2010; Young, 2006), and Toronto (Nagy, 2018). Studies from Hong Kong that used direct approach are particularly relevant, such as Axler et al. (1998), Hyland (1997), Lai (2001, 2005, 2009, 2012), Li & Luk (2012), Pennington & Yue (1994), Shing (2013), Lai (2002), which modified the direct attitudes questionnaire from Pierson et al. (1980). These questionnaires included questions that probed the instrumental and integrative oriented attitudes towards Cantonese.

Three studies from Hong Kong are highly relevant. Lai (2005) is a quantitative investigation of the language attitudes of 1048 secondary students from the first postcolonial generation in Hong Kong. The author utilises a questionnaire survey on a larger scale, and for triangulation purpose, a match guise test and focus group interview, to explore the students' attitudes in terms of their integrative and instrumental orientation toward Cantonese, English and Putonghua (Mandarin). The questions in the questionnaire

are specific, and the students have to answer using a 4-point Likert scale. In brief, the results of this study shows that the participants have largely positive integrative orientation towards Cantonese and English, and Putonghua is mere near the central point. Participants do have positive instrumental perspective towards Cantonese too. This article is relevant in this research in that the questionnaire and methodology could be adopted and adapted for the current study. A comparison of language attitude towards Cantonese could also be made between Hong Kongers and the people in Kuala Lumpur.

Lai (2009) aims to find out Secondary 4 students' attitudes towards the three spoken languages of Hong Kong: Cantonese, English, Putonghua. They are the first cohort of students under the mandatory mother tongue education policy (in Cantonese), which was implemented one year after the sovereignty was returned to China from Britain. Methods used are questionnaire survey, a Matched-guise test, and group interviews. Interviews sought to answer two research questions: 1) in what way are the respondents intergratively inclined towards the three targeted languages 2) how do the respondents perceive the instrumental values of the three languages? It is found that integrative attitude towards Cantonese is the highest due to Hong Kong identity and practical reasons, followed by English because it has a longer history in school curriculum. Integrative attitude towards Putonghua is the lowest because the participants perceived it as only a dialect made national language. On the other hand, instrumental attitude towards English is the highest as it is perceived as a language for social mobility and power. Some think that Cantonese has higher instrumental value because more people use it in Hong Kong, while some think that Putonghua is more useful as it could access to more people in China or globally. From this study, one could see that factors which contribute to attitudes towards languages are a sense of ownership, institutional support, social status, achievement in the language, and practical use.

Sautman and Xie (2021) explored language attitudes of Cantonese by examining integrative and instrumental orientation. The methodology used is to present the statistics of mother tongue among Guangzhou and Hong Kong residents, and using previous studies on language attitudes in Guangzhou and Hong Kong for discussion. It is found that in Guangzhou, attitudes towards Cantonese show highly positive integrative orientation, and the people view Cantonese as marker of Guangzhou identity. However, Guangzhou people valued Putonghua for its instrumental value. In Hong Kong, there is a high value of integrative orientation is shown towards Cantonese. After the handover in 1997, Cantonese was growing stronger as the mark of Hong Kong identity. Putonghua in Hong Kong has the least integrative orientation. It is associated with lower social class. It is also limited in utility value compared to Cantonese and English. Three factors are mentioned which contribute to these attitudes: educational and cultural-social motivation; number of immigrants; political factors – as Cantonese is politicised as the marker of Hong Kong identity. The study discusses the resilience of Cantonese as the only Chinese language which can match Putonghua in terms of geographical and social strength because not only that it has a written form widely used among friends and seen in ads and newspapers, it is also allowed as a language in Guangdong's media. From this study, one can be inspired in terms of the various aspects of Cantonese which could be analysed in investigating the attitude towards Cantonese in a particular location.

As for language attitude research of Cantonese language in Malaysia, there is no specific studies that have been done although in Wang (2021), the attitudes towards Chinese dialects and Mandarin in KL were compared. The method of investigation was done by a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, in which questions were regarding participants' attitude towards the elegance of Mandarin and dialects, preference in terms of language choice between Mandarin and dialects, the sense of responsibility of speaking and

maintaining one's own dialect. The participants were students from Chinese Independent Schools.

Universiti Malaya

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This section introduces the instrumentation for the investigation of the use of Cantonese and attitude towards it, followed by data collection procedures, and ethical consideration.

### 3.1 Instrumentation

#### 3.1.1 Questionnaire

The investigation of language attitudes can be done with approaches that are categorised as direct, indirect, and societal treatment (Dragojevic et al., 2021; Garrett, 2013; Ryan, Giles & Hewstone, 1988). The direct approach involves inquiring the opinions of participants directly by questionnaires and interviews (Bernaisch, 2012; Bilaniuk, 2002; Crezee, 2012; Garrett et al., 2005; Hyland, 1997; Lai, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2012; Margić & Širola, 2014; Nagy, 2018; Salli, 2019; Sánchez, 2018; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe, 2009).

#### 3.1.2 Language Use

To explore the current situation of the use of Cantonese in KL, a questionnaire based on the domain analysis approach was used (see Appendix 1). As mentioned above, Pierson et al (1980) mentions that a questionnaire, a form of direct approach, was chosen to do the survey because it provides a more noticeable information on attitudes and feelings compared to more abstract indirect approaches. This is supported by Pennington and Yue (1994) that Pierson's questionnaire is appropriate for studying language attitudes as it is a more direct and more easily generalizable interpretation than an indirect measure based on stereotypes. Similarly, the direct approach that utilises questionnaires and interviews is adopted to uncover the attitudes of participants of this study.

Family domain was included because family is crucial in terms of language use and language maintenance (Fishman, 1972; Wang, 2012). Extended family members were also investigated.

Public domain included many groups of interlocutors to have a more extensive view of the use of Cantonese. The frequency of the use of Cantonese during childhood with some interlocutors was asked to see whether there are any changes and implications that are worth exploring further. The questions were adopted and improvised from previous studies such as Coluzzi (2010, 2013), David et al. (2011), Dealwis & David (2011), Ding and Goh (2019), Ding and Koh (2015), Dumanig and David (2011), Essizewa (2009), Giacalone (2016), Medvedeva M. (2012), Mukherjee (2011), Ting, S. (2011), and Wang (2012).

As Chinese Malaysians live in a multilingual environment, the participants may speak different languages in a domain or with the same interlocutor, depending on the situation or topic. Therefore, the participants of this survey were asked how frequent they use Cantonese with a particular group of interlocutors (Ding & Goh, 2019; Lawson & Sachdev, 2004). A five-point Likert scale was used (see Appendix 1).

### **3.1.3 Language Attitude**

Regarding attitudes towards Cantonese language, a questionnaire containing a list of questions asking whether the participants preferred communicating in Cantonese with different interlocutors (modified from Lawson & Sachdev, 2004), and a list of questions which aimed to inquire instrumental and integrative attitudes were modified from Barnes (2017), Ding & Koh (2015), Lai (2012), Shing (2013). A 4-point Likert scale was used to avoid central tendency (4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree) (Pennington & Yue, 1993; Hyland, 1997; Lai 2001, 2005). As inspired by Margić and Širola (2014) and

Kircher (2012), participants were asked to give three adjectives to describe Cantonese, so as to provide another way of observing their attitude on Cantonese.

### **3.2 Semi-structured interview**

Another issue has been raised regarding the stability and durability of attitudes as socially structured phenomena (Sherif, 1967). Potter and Wetherell (1987) discover that the participants of their study constantly changed their attitudinal positions and such ‘substantial variability and volatility’ cannot be apprehended by traditional methods such as questionnaires. On the other hand, Garrett (2013) opines that despite this well-presented observation, he takes a balanced view that researchers of attitudes should not limit themselves to only qualitative analysis of individuals’ speech, but should also consider the benefits of methods that aim at finding generalisations about phenomena at community level. These group-focused empirical methods have been utilised by most previous studies regarding language attitudes. This is hence why questionnaire and semi-structured interviews are deployed in this study to capture both generalised patterns and specified individual form of language attitudes towards Cantonese.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The questionnaire was distributed via Google form. Both English and Chinese versions were prepared. The aim was to get 100 participants to give a valid response. Targeted participants were 21 years old and above, as most people at this age may have completed their tertiary education or have a few years of working or social experience as a majority, and most probably have a more matured view on social issues. This is also to complement current Cantonese sociolinguistic studies in Malaysia by providing data on adults.

Semi-structured interviews were done with 10 participants chosen from the participants who had done the questionnaire. Questions were prepared beforehand according to the

response given to the questionnaire, and interviews were done in a semi-structured manner so that questions could be modified during the interview depending on the situation to further explore issues related to the research questions. The language that the interviewees felt most comfortable with was used. The interviews were directed to a more detailed understanding of language use and attitudes of the participants. Interviews were recorded and the data collected from the interview were analysed.

### **3.4 Ethical Consideration**

Participation information sheet (see Appendix 2) was sent to the potential participants to provide information of this research. Participants were required to sign the consent form (Appendix 3) if they agreed to participate. Care was taken to ensure that the investigation was done without any harm to the participants. The information collected will be kept confidential.



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, the analysis of questionnaire responses is presented by summarising the data collected, and then detailed analysis is reported by examining the connection between the data and the use of and attitude towards Cantonese. Thereafter, the interviews with 10 participants and a summary of the interviews are presented.

### 4.1 Analysis of questionnaire responses

#### 4.1.1 A summary of data collected via questionnaire

In this section, the biodata, such as Chinese subgroup identity, education background of parents, number of generations having migrated to Malaysia, KL-ite identity, proficiency in Cantonese, and data collected for language use and language attitude are summarised and analysis is presented when necessary.

A total of 104 responses were collected from August to December 2022. All responses were collected via Google Form. Some participants are acquaintances, friends and relatives of the researcher; some participated because they had seen the paid advertisement which promoted the questionnaire on Facebook; some were people who were recommended by participants who had done the questionnaire. However, two participants have to be excluded from the analysis because although they have recently been active in KL in the past one year, their places of residence and work were centred in the Klang area. Klang has a different linguistic environment where the Chinese community in Klang usually use Hokkien (Chiam et al., 2016; Liew, 2014) rather than Cantonese as the regional prestige Chinese dialect (Wang, 2012). Due to the difference in linguistic environment (in terms of the prestige Chinese dialect), the data for language use is not comparable to those participants who live in KL or adjacent districts in Selangor. This is also proven from the information that was given by these two participants, where the use of Cantonese in their family and community is rather low, and also the fact that

they identified their subgroup identity as Hokkien and did not see themselves as KL-ite. Another one participant is also excluded because though she has been living in Seri Kembangan for twenty over years, she holds nationality of the People's Republic of China. Similarly, as those from Klang, her response on the section of language use is not comparable to those living in KL.

Therefore, the responses of 101 participants in total were analysed. 49 are women and 52 are men. There are only 2 participants who were born in the 1950s (1.98%), 11 born in the 1960s (10.89%), 16 born in the 1970s (15.8%), 54 born in the 1980s (53.47%) and 18 born in the 1990s (17.82%).

#### **4.1.2 Biodata of Participants**

##### **4.1.2.1 Self-identified Chinese subgroup identity**

The information regarding Chinese subgroup identity of the participants is collected because it would probably play a vital role in determining Cantonese language use and attitude of the participants themselves. It is presumed that those who identify themselves as Cantonese would use more Cantonese and have a more positive attitude towards Cantonese.

Among the 101 participants, 28 of them (27.7%) perceive themselves as Hokkien, 26 of them (25.7%) as Cantonese, 23 of them as Hakka (22.8%), 8 of them (7.9%) as Teochew, 6 of them (5.9%) as Hainanese, 5 of them (5%) as Foochow, 2 of them (2%) as Kwongsai. Despite the fact that Kwongsai people in Malaysia originally speak a variety of Yue/Cantonese which is categorised as Yong-Xun, they usually identify themselves separately as Kwongsai people because they are from a different province.

A few participants identify themselves quite differently. One participant, born in 1993, affiliates himself as a SunNing person (新宁, the old name for Toishan 台山). Although

SunNing or Toishan dialect is a variety of Yue/Cantonese dialects, it is understandable why this participant identify himself distinctively from the Cantonese as SunNing/Toishan dialect sounds quite different (Szeto, 2001) from the common Cantonese spoken in Malaysia. Two participants, born in 1987 and 1985, have a combined Chinese subgroup identity, as they see themselves as a Teochew-Hakka, whose father is a Teochew and mother is a Hakka; and Cantonese-Hokkien, whose father is a Cantonese and mother is a Hokkien. However, following their paternal lineage, they should be a Teochew and Cantonese respectively. Another participant, born in 1978, whose father is a Hainanese and mother is a Teochew, expresses that she does not have a strong sense of belonging to any subgroup identity. Another similar participant, born in 1956, has 'no perception' on his subgroup identity though his father is a Hakka and his mother, a Hokkien.

This roughly reflects the demographic of the Chinese community living in KL, which comprises the three major subgroups, which are Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka, together with minor subgroups such as Teochew, Hainanese, Foochow and Kwongsai. Voon (2018) recorded an unpublished statistic from Department of Statistics Malaysia which shows the percentage of Chinese subgroup to overall Chinese population in 2000 as such: Hokkien (34.7%), Hakka (33.7%), Cantonese (18.5%), Teochew (4.1%), Hainanese (2.8%), Foochow (0.9%), and Kwongsai (0.4%).

#### **4.1.2.2 Chinese subgroup identity of parents**

The Chinese subgroup identity of parents is collected to see whether they have any influences towards Cantonese language use and attitude of the participants. Comparison could also be made to see whether father or mother exert more influence on the language use of participants.

Regarding the Chinese subgroup identity of the father, 27 participants (26.7%) claim that their father is Hokkien, while the number of participants whose father is Cantonese is 25 (24.8%). Those who say that their father is Hakka comprise 23.8% (24 participants). Other than that, 9 claim that their father is Teochew, 7 for Hainanese, 5 for Foochow, and 2 for Kwongsai.

There are two interesting cases where one participant's father is SunNing/Toishan (elaborated in the previous paragraph), and another claim that his father is Sunwui (新会). Sunwui is one of the four former counties of Jiangmen prefecture in Guangdong province, and an adjacent county to SunNing/Toishan. Together with SunNing/Toishan dialect, Sunwui dialect is categorised as a dialect within the Seiyap (四邑) dialect group, a variety of Yue/Cantonese dialects. Interestingly, while the SunNing/Toishan participant insisted that his family only recognised their subgroup identity as SunNing/Toishan, this participant of Sunwui origin identified herself as a Cantonese though she named her father's subgroup identity as Sunwui. This has nothing to do with her mother's subgroup identity as her mother is a Hakka. Probing further, she affiliates herself as a Cantonese because she only knows one or two sentences of Sunwui dialect and she has been constantly surrounded by the more common Cantonese language and culture.

As for the subgroup identity of the maternal lineage, there are 34 participants who identify their mother as Hokkien, 27 Hakka, 16 Cantonese, 13 Teochew, 2 Hainanese, 4 Foochow, 3 Kwongsai, 1 HengHua/Putian, 1 SunNing/Toishan.

More than 90% of the participants identify their subgroup identity as the same one as their father, other than a few exceptional cases. As stated above, two male participants adopt dual subgroup identities from both parents, and one feels that she is a Cantonese rather than a person of Sunwui. Another two participants, a male and a female, follow their mother's subgroup identity. For the male participant, he said that this was because all his

family members spoke Hakka, even his father who was supposed to be Cantonese. It was not because he followed his mother's subgroup identity, but it was just because Hakka was the main language in their family. The female participant, however, mentioned that she chose to follow her mother's subgroup identity because she was from a single mother family, and her maternal grandmother was the one who took care of her and she grew up surrounded by Hakka environment. Coincidentally, two participants whose father is Hakka claim that they are Cantonese, and this has nothing to do with their mother's subgroup identity as their mother are both Teochew and Hokkien. One of the participants explained that other than his family had never spoken Hakka before, the fact that his father had identified himself as Hakka might be a mistake because he lived in Sungai Chua where the majority was Hakka but when they traced their ancestor root, they found out that they could be Cantonese as their ancestor originated from Long Gang Xu, ShenZhen, Guangdong Province (廣東深圳龍崗墟). However, it is to be cautioned that though ShenZhen is usually known as a predominantly Cantonese-speaking city, this only happened since 1980, after ShenZhen was made a special economic zone. Before that, there was also a large number of Hakka people who had settled there since the Ming dynasty.

#### **4.1.2.3 Education Background**

As shown in Yoshioka (2010), the education level of parents could affect the language use of the next generation. Generally, if the language in question is not an official or a mainstream language, the possibility of passing it to the next generation is lower when the parents received higher education, especially if they attained tertiary education and above.

29.8% (31 out of 101) of the participants claim that they completed their postgraduate studies, 60.4% (61 out of 101) completed their undergraduate studies, 4 participants (4%)

did their diploma, and 5 of them completed their secondary education. In other words, 90.2% of the participants completed tertiary education. One could say that the participants who happened to answer the questionnaire represent the educated class of KL Chinese society.

For their father, 36 (35.64%) attended primary school, 46 (45.5%) secondary school; 13 (12.9%) did their undergraduate studies, and 4 completed postgraduate level; 1 participant is not sure about the educational level of her father.

As for the participants' mothers, 43 (42.6%) attended primary school, and 44 (43.6%) went to secondary school. 10 (9.9%) did their undergraduate studies and 2 did postgraduate. One participant specifically mentions that the mother merely studied up to primary year 3, and another two participants' mother did not receive any formal education.

#### **4.1.2.4 Numbers of generation in Malaysia**

As discussed in Nagy (2018) and Pauwels (2016), the number of generations of one's family settling down in a particular country may be an important factor affecting language maintenance.

43.6% (44 out of 101) of the participants' fathers are the third-generation Chinese in Malaysia, followed by 24.8% who are the second-generation, and 16.8% who are the third generation. There are five participants whose fathers are the fifth-generation, one whose father is the sixth-generation and one whose father is the eighth-generation. There is also another whose father is the first-generation Chinese in Malaysia. There is only one participant, who was born in 1963, whose father did not migrate to Malaysia, which means that he himself is the first-generation Chinese in Malaysia. Three participants are not sure about their paternal family's history of migration, and another three participants made an error when answering the question, mistakenly putting down their father's age.

On the maternal side, the majority of the participants' mothers are the third-generation Chinese in Malaysia too, which is 40.6% (41 out of 101). 25.7% are the second-generation, 15.8% are the fourth-generation. Five mothers are fifth-generation Chinese, two are the sixth-generation. One mother is a first-generation Chinese, and the mother of that one same participant who is the first-generation Chinese did not migrate to China. Six participants are not certain about their maternal family's history of settlement in Malaysia, and the same three participants gave the wrong answer to this question.

#### **4.1.2.5 KL-ite identity**

It is to be explored whether the fact that participants identifying themselves as KL-ite would have connection with their Cantonese use and attitude towards the language.

51 participants were born in KL, while the other 50 were not. Of those who were not born in KL, 17 were born in Perak (where 11 of them specify that they originated from Ipoh, another Cantonese-speaking city), 12 were born in Penang, 8 were born in Selangor (where 7 were born in adjacent region to KL such as Seri Kembangan, Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya and Selangor part of Ampang; 1 was born in Klang; one participant was born in Subang Jaya but she considered herself born in KL), 6 were born in Sarawak. We have one participant each who was born in these states: Sabah, Kedah, Negeri Sembilan, Perlis, Johor. Lastly, we have one participant who was born in Singapore.

When asked whether they grew up in KL since they were born until 18 years old, 44 (43.6%) answered that they grew up somewhere else, whilst 57 (56.4%) said that they did grow up in KL.

Regarding the number of years, they have lived in KL, 40 participants have lived in KL for 30 – 39 years. 22 of them have lived between 10 – 19 years, 19 of them have lived for 20 – 29 years. 9 participants have lived less than 10 years, 6 have lived for 40 – 49 years, 2 have lived for 50 – 59 years, and 3 participants have lived in KL for 60 over years.

29 participants do not consider themselves as KL-ites, while the majority of the participants, i.e., 72 of them (71.3%) think that they are KL-ites.

#### 4.1.2.6 Proficiency in Cantonese

The participants were also asked regarding their proficiency of Cantonese in terms of speaking, reading, and writing. 61.7% thought that their spoken Cantonese is above average (*good* and *very good*). As for reading, 18.8% felt that they have moderate ability, 41.6% above average, and 39.6% below average. For writing, however, 65.4% of the participants felt that their ability is below average (*poor* and *very poor*). The low confidence in writing is not surprising, as Chinese Malaysians rarely write and type in Cantonese. Even if they want to do so, they may find it difficult because they have no access to Cantonese typing system and programme (Li (2017) recommended the promotion of a ‘standardised, keyboard-friendly Romanisation system like *JyutPing*’) and do not really know how to write certain characters and phrases that are peculiar to Cantonese.

#### 4.1.3 Language Use

##### 4.1.3.1 Family domain

When asked how frequent Cantonese is used within the family in general, 11.9% and 25.7% of the participants claimed that it is *often* and *all the time*, which translates to 37.6% above average usage of Cantonese. 13.9% *sometimes* used Cantonese, 15.8% *seldom* communicate in Cantonese, and 32.7% have *never* used Cantonese with family members.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of speaking Cantonese with different interlocutors in the family domain*

| Interlocutor      | Frequency of speaking Cantonese |        |           |       |              |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|--------------|
|                   | never                           | seldom | sometimes | often | All the time |
| grandparents      | 56.3%                           | 2.1%   | 5.2%      | 7.3%  | 29.2%        |
| grandaunts/uncles | 48.5%                           | 8.2%   | 8.2%      | 5.2%  | 29.9%        |



|                                   |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| parents                           | 42.9% | 13.3% | 7.1%  | 10.2% | 26.5% |
| father                            | 45.9% | 13.3% | 8.2%  | 5.1%  | 27.6% |
| mother                            | 43.4% | 15.2% | 10.1% | 2.0%  | 29.3% |
| uncles/aunts (paternal)           | 44.9% | 10.2% | 11.2% | 6.1%  | 27.6% |
| uncles/aunts (maternal)           | 44.3% | 12.4% | 12.4% | 6.2%  | 24.7% |
| siblings                          | 35.4% | 21.2% | 11.1% | 8.1%  | 24.2% |
| older siblings                    | 41.5% | 20.2% | 8.5%  | 7.4%  | 22.3% |
| younger siblings                  | 43.0% | 15.1% | 8.6%  | 9.7%  | 23.7% |
| cousins                           | 39.6% | 10.9% | 17.8% | 13.9% | 17.8% |
| wife/girlfriend/husband/boyfriend | 36.0% | 13.5% | 21.3% | 6.7%  | 22.5% |
| in-laws                           | 54.2% | 8.4%  | 12.0% | 4.8%  | 20.5% |
| children                          | 75.4% | 5.8%  | 11.6% | 2.9%  | 4.3%  |
| grandchildren                     | 87.7% | 1.5%  | 6.2%  | 0.0%  | 4.6%  |
| nephew and nieces                 | 52.2% | 12.0% | 18.5% | 8.7%  | 8.7%  |

As shown in Table 1, 29.2% and 29.9% of the participants communicate with their grandparents, and granduncles and grandaunts *all the time*. 27.6% and 29.3% speak Cantonese regularly to their father and mother respectively. This may be due to the fact that these participants' Chinese subgroup background is mostly Cantonese, as 25.7% of the participants identified themselves as Cantonese. The two participants who are of Kwongsai origin also add up to the number. Interestingly, 6 out of 12 participants, whose paternal lineage is Hakka, speak Cantonese with their grandparents, granduncles/aunts, and parents *all the time*. As stated above, some even identified themselves as Cantonese, though they are Hakka following the paternal lineage, because they speak Cantonese with their family members. Another two non-Cantonese participants who speak Cantonese regularly with their older generations are Teochew, one is Hainanese, and another one is Hokkien. Of these participants, the fact that their mothers are Cantonese may be the cause of the high usage of Cantonese at home. Unlike in Wang (2021) mentioned in the Literature Review section above, where it was stated that the respondents (who were all students) spoke Cantonese less to their parents than to their grandparents, the participants in this study do not exhibit such a pattern. There are also a very high number of participants, that is 56.3% and 42.9%, who do not speak Cantonese with their

grandparents and parents, which most probably due to the fact that they are not from the Cantonese subgroup.

24.2% of the participants speak Cantonese with their siblings *all the time*. The differences between older and younger siblings are not very different, unlike the situation that is mentioned in some references (Pauwels, 2016; Wang 2012), where participants in these studies usually speak the mainstream language more to their younger siblings. In Wang (2012), it was found that there was a sharp decrease in the use of Cantonese with younger siblings. The use of Cantonese with another group of family members who are the same generation, cousins, are not that high. Only 13.9% speak Cantonese *often*, and 17.8% speak Cantonese *all the time* with their cousins.

The use of Cantonese with the participants' next generations is particularly low. 75.4%, 87.7% and 52.2% of the participants have *never* spoken Cantonese with their children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces. As one can see from Table 1, only 4.3% and 4.6% of the participants speak Cantonese with their children and grandchildren *all the time*.

With spouse and life partner (wife/girlfriend/husband/boyfriend), 13.5% *seldom* speak and 36.0% have *never* spoken (total 49.5%) Cantonese. 21.3% of the participants *sometimes* speak Cantonese with their significant other. 6.7% *often* speak, and 22.5% speak Cantonese *all the time* with their other half. The questionnaire does not ask the Chinese subgroup background of the participants' life partner, therefore the reason why these participants speak Cantonese with their life partner with such high frequency is uncertain. Several factors may come into play, such as the Chinese-subgroup background of the participant or the life partner, the age of the couple, educational background, etc. Further investigation can be done by picking a few participants for a personal interview.

Overall, for each type of interlocutor in the family domain, participants who speak Cantonese regularly (*often* to *all the time*) are roughly one-third of the total. With relatives

from older generations, the percentage is 30% and above; with family members of the same generation, it is 29.7% - 33.4%. The percentage is particularly low when communicating with the next generation.

#### **4.1.3.2 Public domain**

25.7% of the participants speak Cantonese to their friends *often*, and 12.9% among them do speak Cantonese with their friends *all the time*. This means that 38.6% of all participants speak Cantonese with friends regularly. 31.7% speak Cantonese with their friends *sometimes*. 11.9% and 17.85% have *never* spoken and seldom speak Cantonese to their friends. With their closest friends, though those who speak Cantonese regularly are a bit lower (35.6%), a significantly higher percentage of 27.7% have not spoken Cantonese with their closest friends. This may be due to the fact that closest friends are only limited to a smaller group of individuals who may not be Cantonese-speaking. It could also be a situation where the closest friends may be Cantonese-speaking, but it is not the habit for the participants to speak Cantonese with them as they might have started off with speaking other languages such as Mandarin or English.

With classmates, only 11.9% and 10.9% of the participants speak Cantonese *often* or *all the time*. However, when answering the question ‘with classmates when you were a child’, a significantly higher percentage – 45.5% of the participants – expressed that they had *never* spoken Cantonese, as compared to 26.7% when mere ‘with classmates’ was asked. One reason is that some of the participants may still be studying at the time of answering the questionnaire for this study, and they found that they are actually speaking Cantonese more frequently with their adult classmates compared to when they were kids. One important factor that contributes to this difference is that, as most Chinese Malaysians study in Chinese-medium schools (90% of Chinese children are enrolled in Chinese primary schools, Wang 2012, 2014, 2021), albeit private or public, the medium of instruction is Mandarin. This is especially true for Chinese vernacular public primary

schools (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina), where all announcements and teaching are done in Mandarin, except during English or Malay lessons. Even in Chinese vernacular public secondary school (Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina), where weekly assembly and most subjects are instructed in Malay, the only Chinese language that is used for announcement and other activities is Mandarin. Sometimes, other Chinese varieties are seen as ‘dialects’, where the speaking of these dialects is discouraged, especially in the 1980s (Wang, 2021). When the participants graduated from school and entered the working world, they were exposed to more Cantonese. This is the reason why studies in Wang (2010, 2021), where all the participants are students, have to be supplemented by participants who are adults. Other contributing factors could be found in personal interviews with selected participants.

Similar pattern is seen in the answers for ‘with friends when you were a child’, where 35.6% mentioned that they had *never* spoken Cantonese, much higher than 11.9% at current time when participants are adults. This is also comparable to ‘with neighbours when you were a child’, ‘shopping locally when you were a child’, and ‘with doctors when you were a child’, where the percentage of not using Cantonese is much higher compared to when the participants are adults.

When engaging in shopping activities, 58.4% of the participants communicate in Cantonese regularly (*often* and *all the time*) in the market, and 45.6% speak Cantonese regularly when shopping locally. A lower percentage of participants, i.e., 29.7%, speak Cantonese regularly at shopping centres though almost half, 43.6% of the participants, indicate that they sometimes speak Cantonese. The lower frequency of Cantonese usage in shopping malls may be due to the more diverse language environment where people of different ethnicity and background gather there to do transactions. Nonetheless, the usage of Cantonese in shopping activities is very high as compared to other public domains. In restaurants, 40.6% do speak Cantonese at least *sometimes*, 27.7% speak *often*, and 11.9%

speaking *all the time*. One of the reasons is because there are so many Chinese restaurants in KL and the Klang Valley region.

At work, more participants speak Cantonese regularly with their work mates (37.0%), compared to speaking with their supervisors (21.8%) or subordinates (19.2%). However, most do speak Cantonese to their work mates (34.0%), supervisors (25.7%) and subordinates (33.3%) *sometimes*. Further investigation may have to be made to find out the reasons why participants speak more Cantonese to their peers at work. Perhaps when communicating with supervisors and subordinates, using more mainstream languages such as English, Malay or Mandarin appears to be more proper and formal.

When dealing with customers, only 16.0% and 17.0% of the participants reflected that they have *never* and *seldom* used Cantonese respectively. 39.0% of the participants use Cantonese *sometimes*, 19.0% *often* communicate with customers in Cantonese, and 9.0% speak Cantonese with customers *all the time*.

Though not great in numbers, there are quite a percentage of participants who speak Cantonese with their doctors. 19.8% of the participants *sometimes* speak Cantonese with the doctors, 5.0% *often* do so, and 5.9% speak Cantonese with their doctors *all the time*. This suggests that there are quite a number of doctors who can communicate in Cantonese in the KL region. Overall, the difference between Cantonese use with doctors in the current adult state and childhood time is not that significant.

At public offices and government departments, it is not surprising that more than 90% of the participants have not spoken Cantonese with any government officers before. On the contrary, one would wonder under what kind of circumstances where those less than 10% participants did speak Cantonese with government officers. The low usage of Cantonese with public officers matches with the low number of Chinese Malaysians joining the civil service. According to statistics from 2014 to 2018, only 1.72% Chinese Malaysian joined

the civil service (Jaafar, 2019). Abdul Latiff bin Ahmad, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for Special Functions from 2021 to 2022, stated that around 90% of the 1.2 million civil servants were Bumiputera, and only 73,190 (6.1%) were ethnically Chinese (FMT Reporters, 2022).

At religious venues, 23.0% of participants speak Cantonese *sometimes*, 14.0% speak *often*, and 9.0% speak *all the time*. 23.0% *seldom* speak Cantonese, whilst 31.0% have *never* spoken Cantonese at places of worship before. Other than Buddhist and Taoist temples, quite a number Christian churches in KL offer services in Cantonese, such as Gospel Hall Church, Pantai Baptist Church, KL Baptist Church, First Assembly of God Church KL, etc.

With strangers in KL, 29.7% of the participants speak Cantonese *sometimes*. 17.8% speak *often* and 8.9% speak *all the time*. 26.75 *seldom* speak and 16.8% have *never* spoken Cantonese to strangers in Cantonese. The decision of the participants choosing their language when initiating conversation probably based on their appearance and ethnicity. As KL is a multiracial city, a Chinese Malaysian may have to speak English or Malay if the other party does not appear to be Chinese. Even with a Chinese, some may use English or Malay, as KL is now hosting people from many other states, including Chinese from regions such as northern and southern Malaya where Cantonese is not a popular language spoken in daily life.

**Table 2**

*Frequency of speaking Cantonese with different interlocutors in the public domain*

| Interlocutor             | Frequency of speaking Cantonese |        |           |       |              |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|-----------|-------|--------------|
|                          | never                           | seldom | sometimes | often | All the time |
| friends                  | 11.9%                           | 17.85  | 31.7%     | 25.7% | 12.9%        |
| friends (childhood time) | 35.6%                           | 20.8%  | 16.8%     | 12.9% | 13.9%        |
| closest friends          | 27.7%                           | 19.8%  | 16.8%     | 19.8% | 15.8%        |
| neighbours               | 27.7%                           | 16.8%  | 23.8%     | 13.9% | 17.8%        |

|   |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| neighbours<br>(childhood time)                                  | 39.6% | 14.9% | 12.9% | 14.9% | 17.8% |
| shopping locally  | 4.0%  | 24.8% | 25.7% | 30.7% | 14.9% |
| shopping locally<br>(childhood time)                            | 29.7% | 17.8% | 16.8% | 16.8% | 18.8% |
| doctors   | 37.6% | 31.7% | 19.8% | 5.0%  | 5.9%  |
| doctors (childhood<br>time)                                     | 49.5% | 21.8% | 12.9% | 7.9%  | 7.9%  |
| public<br>offices/government<br>departments                     | 92.1% | 6.9%  | 0.0%  | 1.0%  | 0.0%  |
| public<br>offices/government<br>departments<br>(childhood time) | 95.0% | 2.0%  | 1.0%  | 0.0%  | 2.0%  |
| police  | 93.0% | 5.0%  | 1.0%  | 1.0%  | 0.0%  |
| police (childhood<br>time)                                      | 95.9% | 2.0%  | 1.0%  | 1.0%  | 0.0%  |
| classmates  | 26.7% | 28.7% | 21.8% | 11.9% | 10.9% |
| classmates<br>(childhood time)                                  | 45.5% | 17.8% | 15.8% | 9.9%  | 10.9% |
| chatting in school  | 41.6% | 18.8% | 15.8% | 13.9% | 9.9%  |
| work mates  | 12.0% | 17.0% | 34.0% | 22.0% | 15.0% |
| supervisors at work   | 35.6% | 16.8% | 25.7% | 13.9% | 7.9%  |
| subordinates at work  | 31.3% | 16.2% | 33.3% | 12.1% | 7.1%  |
| customers   | 16.0% | 17.0% | 39.0% | 19.0% | 9.0%  |
| restaurants   | 5.0%  | 14.9% | 40.6% | 27.7% | 11.9% |
| shopping centres  | 7.9%  | 18.8% | 43.6% | 19.8% | 9.9%  |
| markets   | 3.0%  | 16.8% | 21.8% | 36.6% | 21.8% |
| speaking in the<br>telephone                                    | 12.9% | 25.7% | 39.6% | 16.8% | 5.0%  |
| religious venues  | 31.0% | 23.0% | 23.0% | 14.0% | 9.0%  |
| strangers in KL   | 16.8% | 26.7% | 29.7% | 17.8% | 8.9%  |

#### 4.1.4 Language attitude

##### 4.1.4.1 Instrumental orientation

Responding to the statements of whether using Cantonese will raise someone's status, 76.2% participants disagreed (*strongly disagree* and *disagree*). 73.2% of the participants disagree that Cantonese is a mark of an educated person. These two statements received the highest percentage of disagreement, and also the highest response of *strongly disagree*. This is probably because English is always seen as the language of knowledge, especially

at the tertiary level. In the Chinese world, except for Hong Kong and Macao, Mandarin is the medium of instruction in school. This has been the case in Malaysia since the 1920s (Wang, 2012). Therefore, Mandarin speakers are often perceived to have higher status and receive better education in KL. Of course, a person who speaks English fluently is always regarded as having even higher status and more educated (Wang, 2014).

As to whether Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, 68.3% of the participants disagreed. However, the disagreement is slightly lower, 64.4%, for the statement 'Cantonese should be used in school'. A few factors could have contributed to this response. Firstly, as not all Chinese are from the Cantonese subgroup, parents may feel that there is no reason why Cantonese should be made one of the mediums of instruction. Secondly, the status of Cantonese in education is not very high, thus there is no reason why effort has to be made to master this language at a high level. Thirdly, as most Chinese kids have to learn Mandarin, English and Malay at school, most parents would think that there is no extra time for their kids to learn another less important language. This could be a potential factor why to revive Chinese dialects at school could be a big challenge in Malaysia as Malaysian kids are already learning at least three languages at school, of which most parents would be worried whether their children could handle so many languages. Perhaps schools could just make Chinese dialect lessons or activities as part of their co-curricular programmes, where no formal assessment will be conducted.

69.3% of the participants did not see that Cantonese should be used in meetings in KL. 63.4% disagreed that Cantonese should be used in Chinese political events. 56.5% of them also think that knowledge of Cantonese is not one of the most crucial factors which contributes to the success of KL.

As to whether using Cantonese attracts praise and approval from family members, only around 30% agree. Perhaps this depends on the Chinese-subgroup background of the



participants. If the participant is from a Cantonese-speaking family, he will be approved by his family for preserving the heritage. As mentioned above, there are 25.7% of participants who identified themselves as Cantonese.

Nonetheless, a little more than half (50.5%) of the participants agreed that Cantonese does help in getting better opportunities in business and career. There is no doubt that these participants knew the proverb ‘to learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world’.

Despite the fact that most participants did not have a very positive instrumental outlook on Cantonese, it is a great surprise that 61.3% of the participants agreed (*agree* and *strongly agree*) that Cantonese should be one of the official languages in Malaysia. This statement received the highest percentage of agreement from the participants. 58.4% of the participants also agreed that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL, and this statement has the highest percentage of *strongly agree* – 22.8%.

From this, one could see that most Chinese Malaysians have accepted the reality that Cantonese do not have high value in education. Half of them recognised the fact that Cantonese do have some commercial value in terms of business and career in KL. Despite this, the majority of Chinese in KL are still quite proud of the use of Cantonese, and surprisingly hold an idealistic view that Cantonese should be an official language of Malaysia.

**Table 3**

*Language attitude – instrumental orientation towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysians in KL*

| Instrumental Orientation                   | strongly disagree | disagree | agree | strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Cantonese as one of the official languages | 14.9%             | 23.8%    | 45.5% | 15.8%          |
| Cantonese is a mark of an educated person  | 35.6%             | 37.6%    | 16.8% | 9.9%           |

|   |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| If I use Cantonese, I will be praised and approved by my family                             | 28.7% | 32.7% | 25.7% | 12.9% |
| If I use Cantonese, I will be praised and approved by my relatives                          | 31.7% | 34.7% | 20.8% | 12.9% |
| If I use Cantonese, I will be praised and approved by my friends                            | 25.7% | 37.6% | 22.8% | 13.9% |
| Cantonese help in getting better opportunities in business and career                       | 13.9% | 35.6% | 30.7% | 19.8% |
| If I use Cantonese, my status is raised   | 29.7% | 46.5% | 15.8% | 7.9%  |
| Knowledge of Cantonese is one of the most crucial factors contributing to the success of KL | 13.9% | 42.6% | 27.7% | 15.8% |
| Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL.             | 21.8% | 46.5% | 18.8% | 12.9% |
| Cantonese should be used in school.   | 21.8% | 42.6% | 18.8% | 16.8% |
| Cantonese should be used in meetings in KL.   | 20.8% | 48.5% | 24.8% | 5.9%  |
| Cantonese should be used in Chinese political events in KL.                                 | 22.8% | 40.6% | 25.7% | 10.9% |
| Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL.                                | 6.9%  | 34.7% | 35.6% | 22.8% |

#### 4.1.4.2 Integrative orientation

As one can see from Table 4, approximately more than 70% of the participants have a high degree of affinity and liking towards Cantonese language *per se*. 52.5%, the highest among all statements in the integrative orientation section, *strongly agreed* that they ‘like Cantonese’, and there are still another 34.7% participants who *agreed* with this statement. 71.3% *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they ‘love’ conversing in Cantonese, and 72.2% and 78.2% *agreed* and *strongly agreed* that they feel comfortable speaking and hearing someone speak Cantonese. 77.3% think that ‘Cantonese sounds very nice’.

The majority of the participants also felt that Cantonese is important. 69.3% of the participants thought that Cantonese is important for them as an individual. A high number of participants, 85.1%, expressed that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community

in KL, and 65.4% thought that it is important for the Chinese community in KL to speak Cantonese. 72.3% believed that the command of Cantonese is important in KL.

Most of the participants thought that Cantonese is an integral part of the Chinese community in KL. 69.3% agreed that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. Those who thought that the command of Cantonese is very helpful in understanding Chinese in KL and their ways of life are 79.2%. 66.3% felt that they are more like Chinese in KL, and 67.3% felt that they are more integrated to their Chinese peers in KL when they speak Cantonese. Moreover, 68.3% concurred that as a Chinese in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese.

Most Chinese Malaysians learned their Cantonese through mass media. 85.1% of the participants enjoy watching Cantonese TV programmes and movies (of which 48.5% *strongly agree*), and 79.2% (of which 47.5% *strongly agree*) enjoy listening to radio programmes in Cantonese. This is probably the reason why the most popular radio stations, 988, MyFM, One FM, Melody FM, broadcast lots of Cantonese programmes. There even exist private TV channels that provide mostly Cantonese programmes, such as Astro Wah Lai Toi, Astro on Demand, and TVB Jade.

Interestingly, quite a number of participants (56.5%) agreed that reading Cantonese is a kind of enjoyment. 55.5% would like to see more literature written in Cantonese, whilst 62.4% hoped that more Cantonese dictionaries could be published.

As for cultural events in KL, 68.3% thought that Cantonese should be used. This is to be contrasted with political events stated above, where 63.4% disagreed that Cantonese should be used in political occasions.

When it comes down to passing down Cantonese to the next generation, 60.4% worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese. 59.4% thought that it is important for their children to speak Cantonese. This is a much hopeful situation for

Cantonese, as compared to Wang (2021), where only around 20% of the students agreed that they would speak their dialects (note that it was not *just* Cantonese) to their next generation. However, when one compares the language use section above, 75.4% of the participants have *never* spoken Cantonese to their children, and only 7.2% of them speak Cantonese to their children regularly. Even those who claimed that they *sometimes* speak Cantonese with their children are mere 11.6%. One could see a wide gap between the reality and what is wished for.

**Table 4**

*Language attitude – integrative orientation towards Cantonese among Chinese Malaysians in KL*

| Integrative Orientation  | strongly disagree | disagree | agree | strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| To read in Cantonese is a kind of enjoyment.   | 16.8%             | 26.7%    | 33.7% | 22.8%          |
| To watch TV programmes and movies in Cantonese is a kind of enjoyment.                                 | 4.0%              | 10.9%    | 36.6% | 48.5%          |
| To listen to radio programmes in Cantonese is a kind of enjoyment                                      | 6.9%              | 13.9%    | 31.7% | 47.5%          |
| I like Cantonese.  | 1.0%              | 11.9%    | 34.7% | 52.5%          |
| Cantonese is important for me.   | 5.9%              | 24.8%    | 32.7% | 36.6%          |
| I love conversing in Cantonese.  | 9.9%              | 18.8%    | 41.6% | 29.7%          |
| Speaking Cantonese is important.   | 6.9%              | 24.8%    | 34.7% | 33.7%          |
| Cantonese sounds very nice.  | 4.0%              | 18.8%    | 34.7% | 42.6%          |
| I feel comfortable speaking Cantonese.   | 6.9%              | 20.8%    | 36.6% | 35.6%          |
| I feel comfortable hearing someone speak Cantonese.  | 2.0%              | 19.8%    | 40.6% | 37.6%          |
| Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL   | 0.0%              | 14.9%    | 49.5% | 35.6%          |
| Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL.                           | 4.0%              | 26.7%    | 35.6% | 33.7%          |
| The command of Cantonese is very helpful in understanding Chinese people in KL and their ways of life. | 1.0%              | 19.8%    | 47.5% | 31.7%          |
| The command of Cantonese is important in KL.   | 2.0%              | 25.7%    | 38.6% | 33.7%          |

|   |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| When using Cantonese, I feel more like a Chinese in KL.                   | 5.0%  | 28.7% | 39.6% | 26.7% |
| When I speak Cantonese, I feel more integrated to my Chinese peers in KL. | 5.0%  | 27.7% | 39.6% | 27.7% |
| As a Chinese in KL, I should be able to speak Cantonese                   | 8.9%  | 22.8% | 37.6% | 30.7% |
| I worry about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese         | 7.9%  | 31.7% | 32.7% | 27.7% |
| It is important for my children to speak Cantonese                        | 10.9% | 29.7% | 30.7% | 28.7% |
| It is important for the Chinese community in KL to speak Cantonese.       | 7.9%  | 26.7% | 43.6% | 21.8% |
| Cantonese should be used in Chinese cultural events in KL.                | 5.0%  | 26.7% | 40.6% | 27.7% |
| I would like there to be more literature written in Cantonese.            | 11.9% | 32.7% | 33.7% | 21.8% |
| I would like there to be more dictionaries published in Cantonese.        | 7.9%  | 29.7% | 38.6% | 23.8% |

#### 4.1.4.3 Attitudes towards learning/improving Cantonese

Most of the participants have the desire to improve their Cantonese, especially in speaking. 49.5% *agreed* and 23.8% *strongly agreed* that they want to speak Cantonese better. 50.5%, slightly more than half of the participants wanted to improve their reading in Cantonese, and 42.6% intended to improve their Cantonese writing as well.

Around one-third of the participants wanted to improve their Cantonese by attending class. A slightly higher number of participants (49.5%) preferred attending interactive physical class than interactive online class with a teacher (43.6%). Nevertheless, 80.2% would rather improve or learn Cantonese by their own through watching or listening more mass media programmes, or talking with friends, or using apps.

**Table 5**

*Attitudes towards learning/improving Cantonese*

|  |                   |          |       |                |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Attitudes towards learning/improving Cantonese | strongly disagree | disagree | agree | strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|

|  |       |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I want to improve my speaking in Cantonese.  | 2.0%  | 24.8% | 49.5% | 23.8% |
| I want to improve my speaking in Cantonese by attending class.   | 12.9% | 50.5% | 24.8% | 11.9% |
| I want to improve/learn reading in Cantonese.  | 10.9% | 38.6% | 33.7% | 16.8% |
| I want to improve/learn reading in Cantonese by attending class.   | 12.9% | 51.5% | 21.8% | 13.9% |
| I want to improve/learn writing in Cantonese.  | 14.9% | 42.6% | 27.7% | 14.9% |
| I want to improve/learn writing in Cantonese by attending class.   | 16.8% | 48.5% | 21.8% | 12.9% |
| I prefer improving/learning Cantonese by my own through watching or listening more mass media programmes, or talking with my friends, or using apps. | 3.0%  | 16.8% | 45.5% | 34.7% |
| I prefer improving/learning Cantonese via interactive online class with a teacher.   | 10.9% | 45.5% | 32.7% | 10.9% |
| I prefer improving/learning Cantonese via interactive physical class.  | 10.9% | 39.6% | 30.7% | 18.8% |

#### 4.1.4.4 Promoting Cantonese

The participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of ten proposed ways to promote Cantonese, from 1 to 10 (1 is least effective, 10 is the most effective). Most participants thought that drama series are the most effective method (60.4%), followed by films (51.5%), TV programmes such as documentaries and talk shows (39.6%), Cantonese language immersion programmes in Hongkong or Guangdong province (39.6%), anime or cartoon (31.7%), Cantonese cuisine workshop (25.7%), Cantonese opera (20.8%), public speaking competition in Cantonese (17.8%), local Cantonese language course in KL (16.8%), and writing competition in Cantonese (10.9%). It seems that mass media is still the best way to promote Cantonese.

#### **4.1.4.5 Describing Cantonese**

The participants were also asked to give three adjectives to describe Cantonese language as another test to their attitudes towards Cantonese. Most participants gave their description in Chinese. There are many Chinese phrases which the participants used that describes Cantonese as humorous, fun, or funny (幽默、有趣、盞鬼)。Other phrases that appear quite often means ‘a sense of familiarity, intimacy’ (亲切), and ‘sounds nice’ (好听、动听). It appears that most participants have think positively about Cantonese. Only a very few commented that Cantonese is loud, rough, and unrefined.

#### **4.1.4.6 Summary**

It is found that around one-third of the participants speak Cantonese with family members regularly. In public domains, the frequency of use varies according to the interlocutors and places. The data shows that participants use Cantonese the most when doing shopping. In terms of language attitude, the participants did not see Cantonese as being valuable in education, but recognise its commercial value and show a sense of pride using Cantonese. A large majority of participants perceived Cantonese as an integral and important element of the Chinese community of KL.

### **4.1.5 Detailed analysis of Cantonese language use and attitude**

#### **4.1.5.1 Examining the connection between biodata and Cantonese language use and attitude**

The biodata of the participants, such as their subgroup background, parents’ education level, birthplace, age, self-perceived fluency of the language could be examined to see whether there is any connection in the sense that it could affect the Cantonese language use and attitude of the participants. Some implications and insights could be discovered through this exercise.

In the questionnaire, there are two questions that asked the participants' use of language with family members in general (i.e., 'within the family'), and when they are outside with friends, colleagues, strangers and members of the society in general (i.e., 'outside home [in general]'). The response of the participants towards these two questions will be used to examine the connection of language use and attitude with the biodata and background aspects as it is adequate to reflect the participants' perspective of the general use of Cantonese language in both home and public domains. As the numbering of the Likert scale for all the answers in the questionnaire increases proportionately with the frequency of use of language, to get an overall view of the response of a particular group of participants, the *mean*, i.e., the average number, of the response of the participants of a particular group will be taken for analysis. For example, the frequency of use of language of Teochew subgroup, which contains 10 members, at the home domain is to be taken for analysis. To take the mean, the Likert scale score of the 10 members will be added in total, and then divided by 10. This method is also used by Wang (2012, 2021).

#### **4.1.5.2 Chinese subgroup identity**

It is natural to assume that Chinese subgroup identity plays an important role in the language use and language attitude of the participants.

Firstly, the Chinese subgroup of the father of participants will be examined. As stated, there are 9 Chinese subgroups reported by the participants, i.e., Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Teochew, Foochow, Kwongsai, Sunwui, and SunNing. However, other than Cantonese, Hakka, and Hokkien, the other subgroups are not really comparable as they only composed of less than 10 participants. Therefore, only participants with Cantonese, Hakka, and Hokkien father will be compared. As expected, participants with Cantonese father used Cantonese most frequently at home (average 3.81/5), as compared to Hakka (2.67/5) and Hokkien (2.00/5). Outside home, participants with Hakka father used more Cantonese (3.67/5) than those who have Cantonese (3.35/5) and Hokkien father (3.19/5).



In terms of language attitude towards Cantonese, participants with Cantonese father possessed the highest average number for instrumental (2.70/4) and integrative orientation (3.33/4), compared to those with Hakka (instrumental: 2.25/4; integrative: 3.08/4) and Hokkien (instrumental: 2.10/4; integrative: 2.77/4) father.

**Table 6**

*Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on Chinese subgroup of paternal lineage (mean).*

| Chinese subgroup of paternal lineage | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|                                      | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| Hokkien (N = 27)                     | 2.00                              | 3.19                      | 2.10                                   | 2.77                    |
| Cantonese (N = 26)                   | 3.81                              | 3.35                      | 2.70                                   | 3.33                    |
| Hakka (N = 24)                       | 2.67                              | 3.67                      | 2.25                                   | 3.08                    |
| Teochew (N = 9)                      | 3.22                              | 3.56                      | 2.04                                   | 2.67                    |
| Hainanese (N = 7)                    | 3.00                              | 3.29                      | 2.18                                   | 2.76                    |
| Foochow (N = 5)                      | 1.40                              | 3.60                      | 2.37                                   | 2.97                    |
| Kwangxi (N = 2)                      | 3.50                              | 4.50                      | 2.35                                   | 3.14                    |
| Sunwui (N = 1)                       | 5.00                              | 4.00                      | 3.15                                   | 3.62                    |
| SunNing (N = 1)                      | 1.00                              | 1.00                      | 1.62                                   | 2.67                    |

Secondly, the connection between mother's Chinese subgroup identity and the participants' Cantonese language use and attitude is examined. It is found that participants with Cantonese mother have slightly higher usage of Cantonese at home (3.88/5) than those who have Cantonese father. Those who have Hakka mothers have lower frequency in terms of Cantonese usage at home (2.93/5). Outside home, as in the case of father above, participants with Hakka mothers (3.37/5) used more Cantonese than those with Cantonese mothers (3.28/5). Those with Hokkien mothers have very low usage of Cantonese both at home and outside home (both 1.26/5). In terms of language attitude towards Cantonese, participants with Cantonese mother have the highest average number for instrumental (2.53/4) and integrative orientation (3.17/4), compared to those with Hakka (instrumental: 2.21/4; integrative: 3.04/4) and Hokkien (instrumental: 1.26/4;

integrative: 1.26/4) mother. Participants whose mother is Hokkien have the lowest average in Cantonese use and attitude.

**Table 7**

*Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on Chinese subgroup of maternal lineage (mean).*

| Chinese subgroup of maternal lineage | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|                                      | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| Hokkien (N = 34)                     | 1.26                              | 1.26                      | 1.26                                   | 1.26                    |
| Hakka (N = 27)                       | 2.96                              | 3.37                      | 2.21                                   | 3.04                    |
| Cantonese (N = 17)                   | 3.88                              | 3.29                      | 2.53                                   | 3.17                    |
| Teochew (N = 13)                     | 2.69                              | 3.38                      | 2.12                                   | 2.53                    |
| Foochow (N = 5)                      | 1.25                              | 3.25                      | 1.86                                   | 2.61                    |
| Kwongsai (N = 6)                     | 2.33                              | 4.67                      | 1.59                                   | 2.81                    |
| Hainanese (N = 2)                    | 2.50                              | 4.00                      | 2.23                                   | 3.29                    |
| SunNing (N = 1)                      | 1.00                              | 1.00                      | 1.62                                   | 2.67                    |
| Xinghua (N = 1)                      | 3.00                              | 4.00                      | 2.00                                   | 2.15                    |

Thirdly, the connection between self-perceived Chinese subgroup identity and the participants' Cantonese language use and attitude is inspected. Regarding language attitude, Cantonese participants still have the highest average compared to all other subgroups, as shown in Table 8. Those who perceived themselves as Cantonese have the highest usage of Cantonese at home (4.04/5), compared not only to other participants who perceived themselves as other Chinese subgroup, but also those who claimed that their father or mother are Cantonese. The use of Cantonese outside home (3.519/5) is almost the same as those who claimed to be Hakka as their subgroup (3.521/5). Those who claimed to be Hokkien, has an unsurprisingly lower usage of Cantonese at home (1.96/5), but when it comes to outside home, the mean (3.192/5) is almost the same as those who claim their father to be Hokkien (3.185/5).

**Table 8**

*Cantonese language use and language attitude of participants categorised based on self-perceived Chinese subgroup (mean).*

| Self-perceived Chinese subgroup | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|                                 | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| Cantonese (N = 26)              | 4.03                              | 3.52*                     | 2.75                                   | 3.35                    |
| Hokkien (N = 27)                | 1.96                              | 3.19*                     | 2.11                                   | 2.79                    |
| Hakka (N = 24)                  | 2.43                              | 3.52*                     | 2.23                                   | 3.08                    |
| Teochew (N = 9)                 | 3.00                              | 3.38                      | 2.06                                   | 2.63                    |
| Hainanese (N = 7)               | 2.67                              | 3.00                      | 2.29                                   | 2.85                    |
| Foochow (N = 5)                 | 1.40                              | 3.60                      | 2.37                                   | 2.97                    |
| Kwongsai (N = 2)                | 3.50                              | 4.50                      | 2.35                                   | 3.14                    |
| SunNing (N = 1)                 | 1.00                              | 1.00                      | 1.62                                   | 2.63                    |

\*carried to two decimal points

When comparing the three largest Chinese subgroup community, i.e., Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese, Hokkien generally have the lowest use and attitude, especially attitude, of Cantonese among the three groups. It is discovered that Hakka tend to use more Cantonese language outside home than Cantonese participants themselves. The historical reason may be traced back to Guangdong province, and the percentage of the population of Cantonese and Hakka may produce the social phenomenon of relatively higher use and attitude of Hakka towards Cantonese. If Hokkien community generally does not have high usage of and attitude towards Cantonese, and other dialect communities are rather small in population, one can presume that the survival and maintenance of Cantonese in KL may depend greatly, other than the Cantonese community themselves, the recognition and usage of Cantonese by the Hakka community. According to Voon (2018), the population of Hokkien is around 35% of the population of Chinese in KL; while Hakka and Cantonese are both around 20% which make up to around 40% in total. Without the use of Cantonese language by Hakka, Cantonese is just a heritage language for 20% of

the Chinese community in KL. With this discovery of Hakka community being the main users of Cantonese, it is no wonder that the peculiarity of KL-Cantonese, especially in terms of slang, which set it apart from Hong Kong Cantonese and other varieties of Cantonese, have been heavily influenced by Hakka. For example, it is very common for people to say ‘to want’ in KL-Cantonese in colloquial terms as ‘oi3’ (愛), instead of ‘jiu3’ (要); ‘play’ as ‘liu4’ (寮) instead of ‘waan2’ (玩); ‘dollar’ as ‘kau1’ (箍), instead of ‘man1’ (蚊); ‘time (frequency)’ as ‘bai2’ (擺), instead of ‘ci3’ (次); ‘stone’ as ‘sek6 gu2’ (石牯), instead of ‘sek6 tau4’ (石頭).

As to why Hakka use more Cantonese language than Cantonese themselves outside home generally is an interesting phenomenon to be explored. Is this a coincidence that perhaps only the Hakka participants that joined this study exhibit such phenomenon? When we look further into those who claim themselves to be Hakka, only one participant whose mother is a Cantonese. So, the possibility of the influence of mother which causes this phenomenon is excluded in this case.

Though Hakka has been the second largest Chinese subgroup in Malaysia (the first is Hokkien, and the third is Cantonese) (Liu, 2022; Wang, 2021), Hakka language is not as important as Cantonese, and its use is not as prevalent. Wang (2021) mentioned that though Hakka people attaches great importance to the maintenance of dialects (by virtue of their famous proverb ‘rather sell the farmland of your ancestors, than forget their language’), it was found that Mandarin and regional prestige dialects were making inroads into their language domains. It is stated in Voon (2018) that though there are a few Hakka settlements in the suburban areas surrounding KL, Hakka people usually use Cantonese when they are in the city centre. One could see that there is a contradiction between the alleged importance of the Hakka people attached to their dialect and the reality. If their dialect is so important, why Hakka is not used as widely as reflected in the number of

their population? Why the public domain is occupied by Cantonese as the prestige dialect instead of Hakka? Why Hakka participants in this study use more Cantonese averagely than Cantonese? The phenomenon as to why Hakka participants manifested a higher average use of Cantonese than Cantonese participants themselves in KL are worth exploring.

Language shift of a local community or a community which settled at a particular place earlier could happen if another community speaking a different language arrive in much greater number. We could perhaps trace back to the early days of the establishment of KL. The economic and commercial development of KL starting from 1850s was mainly contributed by Hakka people. As shown Carstens (2012), which quoted Jackson (1964), 64% of the Chinese in Selangor, and 71% in KL, in 1891 were comprised of Hakka population. Although Hakka population fell to only 34% in Selangor in 1901, it was still more populous than Cantonese (29%) and Hokkien (28%). However, according to statistics provided for Chinese demographic in the Federated States of Malaya (Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) from 1921 – 1970, Cantonese population was a bit higher than Hakka by a few per cent. Nonetheless, given the importance Hakka people attached to their own dialect, we cannot say for sure whether that few per cent difference was a determining factor to make Cantonese the more prevalent language.

One could perhaps consider the higher status of Cantonese language in Guangdong province, China, where most of the Hakka in KL and surrounding areas originated from (Tan, 2012). Cantonese is used in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong, and in surrounding urbanised areas for hundreds of years. Tan (2012) states that it is impossible for a Hakka person to survive working in Guangzhou if he does not know Cantonese, and this shows that Cantonese language and culture have higher status and exert much greater influence to Hakka people than any other surrounding cultures (such as Teochew, Hunanese). Perhaps it is more natural for Hakka to switch to the more prestige language

in their motherland (during 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century) when they encountered the Cantonese community in KL. On another side of the coin, it is perhaps more unlikely for Cantonese to do the reversed, as Hakka is not the prestige dialect in Guangdong province. Unlike Sabah, where Cantonese only made up 15% or less and Hakka more than 50% of the local Chinese population, Hakka is the prestige dialect (Voon, 2018). Perhaps only when Hakka is way more populous than Cantonese, Hakka prevails as the prestige dialect.

Reference can also be made to Shenzhen region, where interactions between Hakka and Cantonese immigrants were frequent. In 1820, it was recorded that DaDuiCun (大碓村) had been a Hakka village. Due to the frequent interaction with Cantonese people in nearby village, including commercial activities and marriage, and also because the population of Cantonese people surrounding DaDuiCun is much larger, the population of DaDuiCun was eventually '*cantonised*' (Wen et al., 2011). It has to be noted that the role of Cantonese women married into this village played a vital role in shifting the family language from Hakka to Cantonese. This even changed the subgroup identity recognition of the villagers, in which the villagers eventually claim themselves as Cantonese, and not Hakka. One could see how language shift can change the identity of not only an individual (as we can also see in the case from a few participants stated above), but also a whole community. In addition, Hong Kong, especially the New Territory area, has been inhabited by predominantly Hakka population since late 17<sup>th</sup> century but census in 2011 showed that only 0.6% of Hong Kong population use Hakka frequently due to large numbers of immigrants from Cantonese regions (Kuo, 2015). On the contrary, two other Hakka villages in Shenzhen region, GaoLing (高岭) and YangMeiKeng (杨梅坑) did not have any language and identity shift even though intermarriages have been happening with nearby Cantonese villages because of the isolated geographical terrain in which the villages are located. Ragone and Mark (2006) observed similar pattern where the degree of accessibility is an important factor in the maintenance and dissemination of a language.

Does it mean that as long as the geographical terrain of the location is more open, then the process of ‘*cantonisation*’ will happen? Does language shift happen unilaterally from Cantonese to Hakka naturally due to the perceived higher status of Cantonese? In fact, in Shenzhen region, more Cantonese villages have been *Hakka-ised*, such as DaKeng (大坑), BanTianYun(半天云), NanSheWei(南社围), ShaYvChong (沙鱼涌), KuiChong (葵涌), ShangDong (上洞), LuZhuiCun (鹿嘴村), etc., because of the mass influx of Hakka population to these originally Cantonese villages (Wen et al., 2011). If we merely consider the effect of population and language status, perhaps we could presume that due to the higher status of Cantonese language, the process of *cantonisation* (in terms of language use in public domain) will occur more naturally if the population of Hakka and Cantonese are almost similar in a particular location, such as in KL. If Hakka population is much larger than Cantonese population, then *cantonisation* will not happen, such as in Sabah.

As mentioned in Carstens (2012), Jackson (1964), and Wen (1979), although Hakka people were always the first settlers working as tin miners in cities such as KL in Malaya, it was a tendency for the Cantonese to later take over when the tin mining industry became larger in scale, and ‘financial and commercial organisation became more intricate’. Similar situation happened in Ipoh, where Ng & Wong (2023) said Ipoh was ‘founded by Hakka, made vibrant by Cantonese’. On another note, it was also recorded that the British colonial government offered farming revenue contract to the Cantonese people in 1884 with the intention of bringing more investment and capital and to end the dominance of Hakka people (Gullick, 2000; Song 2021). In KL, one can see Cantonese leaders’ rise to power after the leadership of five Hakka Kapitans, led by Chiew Yoke (1843 - 1892), Loke Yew (1845–1917), and Chan Sow Lin (1845 – 1927) (Chen, 1996). It was during this period that Cantonese established its status as the prestige Chinese language in KL (Chen, 1996; Chong, 2009; Wang, 2010; Wong, 2008).

Another more important factor which has caused Cantonese to be used more frequently by Hakka in public domain in KL may be the diverse nature of Hakka dialect itself. There are quite a few sub-dialects in Hakka that they cannot be readily and directly understood by each other, and it is difficult to integrate various Hakka dialects under one language. This is to be contrasted with the relatively much more uniform Cantonese. The Cantonese spoken in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Macao, KL, and San Francisco are all highly mutually intelligible. This is thanks to the long-lasting and infallible status of Guangzhou for over two thousand years as the centre of trade in the Pearl River Delta region and international trade, which created an authoritative and centripetal force towards surrounding regions to calibrate their language according to the Guangzhou version. Moreover, the written form of Cantonese is also much more mature and widely used. Publication of Cantonese reading materials have always been more common and widespread than any other dialects for a long period of time. Not to mention in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the popularity of Cantonese media is unmatched by any other Chinese dialects (other than Mandarin). As there are four main subdialect groups of Hakka in KL (i.e., Fuichiu, 惠州; Moiyen, 梅县; Taibu, 大埔; Chiakkai, 赤溪) (Lee, 2017), it is possible for Hakka people to resort to a more authoritative and mutually intelligible language, which is Cantonese, to communicate.

In terms of identity, it is mentioned in Song (2021) that there was a tendency for different dialect subgroups in KL to converge into the identity based on provincial division starting from early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lee Hau Shik, a Cantonese leader who later became the first Minister of Finance of the Federation of Malaya, proposed in 1931 that Chinese from different districts in Guangdong province should unite under a provincial association (Wen & Wong, 2021). This could also be observed when different Chinese subgroups from Guangdong province, i.e., Teochew, Hakka, Cantonese, and Hainanese (Hainan was under the administration of Guangdong province up until 1931), united under the Association of Kwong Tong Cemetery Management of KL to manage matters related to



burials and funerals. Hakka people who were originated from Guangdong province would be buried into Kwong Tong Cemetery. It could be presumed that Cantonese, since it is the official and prestige language of Guangdong province, was naturally made the common language when Hakka, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainanese people came together for meetings and discussions. This practice has been continuing until today, along with other more dominant languages creeping into its domains.

#### **4.1.5.3 Parents' Education Level**

The education level of parents may be a factor that influence a person's use of language. The presumption is that, given that the language is not an official language, there is a higher possibility that the parents will not be able to pass down their heritage language to their children if the parents received higher education, especially tertiary education. This is because these parents tend to use the official or mainstream language, especially if their partner is also from the same educational background. As stated in Yoshioka (2010), a person's level of education and socioeconomic status are negatively correlated to minority or indigenous heritage language usage. He reasoned that people who are highly educated and have higher socioeconomic status are more likely to interact with people who speak the mainstream language, and have less opportunities to learn and practise their heritage or indigenous language. Moreover, people in this category also tend to marry a person from a similar educational and socioeconomic background, who for the same reason do not speak or speak less of the heritage or indigenous language.

As this applies to heritage language, only the cases of Cantonese subgroup will be examined. For those who have Cantonese father, those whose father received up to primary education have an average frequency of 4 out of 5 for language use at home; those whose father received up to secondary education have a mean of 3.75; those whose father attended tertiary education showed Cantonese usage of 3.33. For Cantonese use outside home in general, those with father who attended secondary school have the

highest mean, i.e., 3.67, followed by primary (3.27) and tertiary (2.33). It is to be noted that there are only three participants whose Cantonese father attended university, as opposed to 11 who attended up to primary school, and 12 attended secondary school. For Cantonese use at home, we can see that the average number fits into the presumed pattern where the higher education would mean the next generation speak less heritage language. The situation is the same for the level of education of the mother. However, it seems that participants with Cantonese mother generally speak more Cantonese compared to when they have Cantonese father.

**Table 9**

*Cantonese language use and attitude as heritage language of participants, categorised by the education level of father of Cantonese origin (mean).*

| Education level of father of Cantonese origin | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|   | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| primary (N = 11)                              | 4.00                              | 3.27                      | 2.31                                   | 3.17                    |
| secondary (N = 12)                            | 3.75                              | 3.67                      | 3.11                                   | 3.54                    |
| tertiary (N = 3)                              | 3.33                              | 2.33                      | 2.43                                   | 3.04                    |

**Table 10**

*Cantonese language use and attitude as heritage language of participants, categorised by the education level of mother of Cantonese origin (mean).*

| Education level of mother of Cantonese origin | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|   | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| primary (N = 11)                              | 4.33                              | 3.56                      | 2.84                                   | 3.37                    |
| secondary (N = 12)                            | 3.83                              | 3.33                      | 2.15                                   | 2.94                    |
| tertiary (N = 3)                              | 2.00                              | 2.00                      | 2.31                                   | 2.98                    |

#### 4.1.5.4 Endogamy and Exogamy

Exogamy, the marriage of two people from different communities, has been found to be a determining factor of language shift (Pauwels, 2016). However, many of these studies

show the cases where one of the partners is from the community which carries the majority or dominant language. However, none of our participants have parents who speak Malay at home. From the data collected from the questionnaire, there is no information whether any of the participants' parents speak English or Mandarin at home. Though Cantonese is not a majority language (as the population of Cantonese is actually lower than Hokkien and Hakka), given the complex linguistic environment of KL, it is considered as a prestige dialect which is neither a fully dominating language. So, in the case of exogamy, where one of the parents is not Cantonese and another is a Cantonese, we cannot say for sure whether Cantonese has the same effect as those dominant languages observed in previous studies to cause language shift to a family.

What one could see from Table 11 is that 4 out of 7 female participants who perceived themselves as Cantonese with parents who are both Cantonese use Cantonese *all the time* at home, while 1 out of 3 male participants use Cantonese *all the time* with family. For those whose parents are in exogamous marriage (mother from non-Cantonese origin), there are also some who use Cantonese *all the time* at home. It seems that there is no conclusive link between exogamous/endogamous with Cantonese use at home. As stated in David & Dealwis (2011), exogamous marriages do not always result in language shift and other variables have to be considered, such as social identity and pragmatic factors. On the other hand, not all endogamous marriages result in language maintenance.

**Table 11**

*Cantonese language use within family by self-perceived Cantonese participants – Chinese subgroup of parents.*

| Self-perceived Chinese subgroup | Father's Chinese subgroup | Mother's Chinese subgroup | Gender | language use within the family (Likert scale 1 – 5) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------|---|
| Cantonese                       | Cantonese                 | Cantonese                 | Female | 5   |
| Cantonese                       | Cantonese                 | Cantonese                 | Female | 5   |
| Cantonese                       | Cantonese                 | Cantonese                 | Female | 5   |
| Cantonese                       | Cantonese                 | Cantonese                 | Female | 4   |
| Cantonese                       | Cantonese                 | Cantonese                 | Female | 5   |

|           |           |           |        |   |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|---|
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Cantonese | Female | 3 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Female | 4 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Female | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Female | 5 |
| Cantonese | Sunwui    | Hakka     | Female | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hokkien   | Female | 1 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hokkien   | Female | 3 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Kwangxi   | Female | 3 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Kwangxi   | Female | 2 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Teochew   | Female | 5 |
| Cantonese | Hakka     | Teochew   | Female | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Cantonese | Male   | 3 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Cantonese | Male   | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Cantonese | Male   | 2 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Foochow   | Male   | 1 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Male   | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Male   | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hakka     | Male   | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hokkien   | Male   | 4 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hokkien   | Male   | 5 |
| Cantonese | Cantonese | Hokkien   | Male   | 4 |
| Cantonese | Hakka     | Hokkien   | Male   | 5 |

#### 4.1.5.5 Birthplace

Other than the subgroup identity, the connection between the place of birth and Cantonese language use and attitude is also examined. It is presumed that those who were born in KL have higher average in terms of language use and attitude. Those who were not born in KL will have lower average of language use and attitude, but whether Cantonese is the prestige dialect of the birthplace may play a role. We could roughly categorise states such as Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Pahang, Selangor, and Sabah as states that have many people who recognise Cantonese as the prestige dialect (excluding KL) (termed roughly as ‘Cantonese-speaking states [excluding KL]’), while states like Johor, Kedah, Melaka, Perlis, Penang, and Sarawak do not have the same situation (termed roughly as ‘non-Cantonese-speaking states’). KL will be treated as a separate category in this section.

In terms of Cantonese language use at home, participants who were born in states where Cantonese is the prestige dialect (excluding KL) reported the highest frequency of usage,

3.34/5; followed by those who were born in KL, 3.04/5, and those who were born in states where Cantonese is not the prestige dialect, 1.74/5. The descending order of frequency of Cantonese use outside home is the same as the use at home, those who were born in Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL) has the highest language use (3.70/5), followed by those who were KL-born born (3.33/5), and those who were born in non-Cantonese speaking states (3.22/5). Participants who were born in non-Cantonese-speaking states reported the lowest means in terms of instrumental (1.95) and integrative (2.59) orientation towards Cantonese. As for KL-born and Cantonese-speaking-state-born, the means for instrumental orientation are 2.42 and 2.41 respectively, while those born in Cantonese-speaking states have slightly higher integrative orientation (3.13) than KL-born (3.11) on average.

**Table 12**

*Cantonese language use and attitude categorised based on the state of birth (mean).*

| State of birth                      |   | language use<br>(Likert scale 1 – 5) |                                 | language attitude<br>(Likert scale 1 – 4) |                            |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
|                                     |   | within the<br>family                 | outside<br>home (in<br>general) | instrumental<br>orientation               | integrative<br>orientation |
| KL (N = 51)                         |   | 3.04                                 | 3.33                            | 2.41                                      | 3.11                       |
| Not<br>born in<br>KL<br>(N =<br>50) | Cantonese-<br>speaking states<br>(N = 27)     | 3.33                                 | 3.70                            | 2.42                                      | 3.13                       |
|                                     | non-Cantonese-<br>speaking states<br>(N = 23) | 1.74                                 | 3.22                            | 1.95                                      | 2.59                       |

The factor that may contributes to a lower average numbers in terms of language use and attitude towards Cantonese in KL compared to Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL) is probably because KL as a capital region has to accommodate population from many other states, of which many which do not have Cantonese as prestige dialect. As indicated above, 50 out of 101 participants were not born in KL and 28.7% do not consider

themselves KL-ites. The frequency of the use of Cantonese is therefore ‘diluted’, for instance, a KL person who likes using Cantonese may have to speak Mandarin when dealing with a person from Penang who cannot communicate in Cantonese. Similar situation is happening even in Guangzhou, the heartland of Cantonese, as reflected in Sautman and Xie (2021), where local Guangzhou people have to accommodate the language habit of people coming from other provinces of China who cannot speak Cantonese. To discuss this in more detail, it is to be started with considering the two possible main effects of migration on language change. On one hand, migrants have to learn the regional language to cope with daily life activities and tasks. On another hand, the host communities may have to bear sociolinguistic consequence that does not favour the host language as migrants may make the destination society increasingly multilingual. One would assume that the host community of a capital, having higher status in terms of language and culture, will prevail in terms of the competition of language domains, but this is not always true. In Sautman and Xie (2021), the authors compared the sociolinguistic situations in Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Guangzhou is the provincial capital of Guangdong and is the heartland of Cantonese language and culture, while Hong Kong is the core location where modern and contemporary Cantonese language and culture have been thriving for decades. However, even so, both societies have somehow experienced some sort of change in linguistic landscape due to migrants from other parts of mainland China. Guangzhou’s situation regarding Cantonese may be more similar to the case of Cantonese in KL, in the sense that migrants have been moving in in great numbers; and unlike Hong Kong, Cantonese does not a very strong official and authoritative status, whereby ‘migrants can get by without high proficiency in Cantonese’. Like Guangzhou, Mandarin has an official status in Chinese education in KL. Therefore, even though Guangzhou is the core heartland of Cantonese language, more than 30% of the floating population claimed that they could not speak Cantonese. If this is happening

to Guangzhou, the core of Cantonese language, one could perhaps foresee the future of Cantonese landscape in KL where its presence is much weaker.

In addition, the linguistic situation of another city could be referred to. Guangzhou is not the only city that has undergone changes in their language due to the effect of immigrants. Even Beijing underwent changes affected by speaking habits from internal immigrants from all over China. Hu and Shakman (2022) reported how immigrants have changed the accent of young Beijingers, where a process of de-rhotocisation is happening. One would think that the accent of Beijing, being the capital of People's Republic of China, and Beijing dialect being the official prestige dialect of the whole China, would exert the most authoritative influence as to make all immigrants in Beijing to converge into Beijingers' accent. However, it seems that even Beijing dialect cannot stand its ground when it hosts huge numbers of immigrants from diverse linguistic background.

#### **4.1.5.6 KL-ite identity**

Language choice also acts as a manifestation of identity (Smakman et al., 2022). It is mentioned in Edwards (2009) that people need social anchors related to kinship and community. In small villages, it is probably easier to relate a particular language with the identity with the community. However, it is probably only true in more monotonous society, and/or a place where a particular language got to develop in isolation for quite a long time. In a diverse country in Malaysia, this is probably not so easy to identify a particular type of language that can be strongly linked to a particular location. Nonetheless, it could be done for languages that have rooted in Malaysia for a long time prior to large-scale globalisation, such as different forms or dialects of Malay. For Chinese dialects that arrived only around a century from China in Malaysia, the identity linkage may not be so direct. Nevertheless, the prevalence of certain Chinese dialects at certain places could establish a sense of identity related to that place. For example, we

usually link Fuichiu Hakka dialect with Serdang New Village, Selangor; or Hopo Hakka (河婆客) dialect with Malim Nawar, Perak.

In terms of cities, we generally relate Cantonese language with Chinese community in KL or Ipoh; and Hokkien with Georgetown, Penang. As to how strongly Chinese community in KL relate Cantonese with their city is something interesting to be explored. If there is a strong link, one could perhaps predict the maintenance of Cantonese in KL in the future, in the sense that the stronger the link of Cantonese with KL-ite identity, the better Cantonese could be maintained and preserved in the future.

As the use of Cantonese at home is mainly based on the Chinese subgroup identity, only the use of Cantonese outside home in general will be looked at in relation to KL-ite identity. When it is divided crudely, it can be observed that participants who do not consider themselves as a KL-ite have slightly lower use of Cantonese outside home and lower attitude towards Cantonese in average than those who consider themselves KL-ite.

As discussed earlier, there are participants who were born in KL and those who are not. All participants who were born in KL consider themselves KL-ite regardless whether they grew up in KL. For those who were born in Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL), there are those who do not consider themselves KL-ite and those who do. Coincidentally, those who grew up in KL all consider themselves KL-ite. Some of those who did not grow up in KL consider themselves as KL-ite, and some do not. As seen from Table 13, those who were not born in KL but consider themselves KL-ite have the highest average use of Cantonese in public domain (4.0), followed by those who were born in Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL) but do not consider themselves KL-ite (3.71), and then those who were born in KL (3.33). For those who were born in Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL), the identity of KL-ite is not the necessary condition for them to use Cantonese frequently outside home. In terms of language attitude, KL-born participants



have the highest average scale (slightly higher) for integrative orientation, while four participants who were born in Cantonese-speaking-states (excluding KL) who grew up in KL and consider themselves KL-ite have the highest average scale for integrative orientation towards Cantonese.

**Table 13**

*Cantonese language use and attitude categorised by perception of KL-ite identity (mean).*

| State of birth          |  | Do you consider yourself as a KL-ite? | Did you grow up in KL (0 – 18 years old)? | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|                         |  |                                       |   | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| KL (N = 51)             |  | Yes                                   | Yes (N = 51)                              | 3.04                              | 3.33                      | 2.41                                   | 3.11                    |
| Not born in KL (N = 50) | Cantonese-speaking states (N = 27)     | Yes                                   | Yes (N = 5)                               | 3.40                              | 3.20                      | 2.58                                   | 3.43                    |
|                         |  | Yes                                   | No (N = 8)                                | 3.00                              | 4.00                      | 2.38                                   | 3.03                    |
|                         |  | No                                    | No (N = 14)                               | 3.50                              | 3.71                      | 2.37                                   | 3.08                    |
|                         | non-Cantonese-speaking states (N = 23) | Yes                                   | Yes (N = 2)                               | 2.50                              | 3.50                      | 1.65                                   | 2.59                    |
|                         |  | Yes                                   | No (N = 6)                                | 1.67                              | 3.83                      | 1.94                                   | 2.71                    |
|                         |  | No                                    | Yes (N = 1)                               | 5.0                               | 5.0                       | 1.46                                   | 2.19                    |
|                         |  | No                                    | No (N = 14)                               | 1.64                              | 2.79                      | 2.04                                   | 2.57                    |

Interestingly, for those who were born in non-Cantonese-speaking states, those who considered themselves as KL-ite also exhibit higher average use of Cantonese than their

peers who do not consider themselves KL-ite. Even more interestingly, it is higher than those born in KL. However, their language attitude is relatively much lower than those who were born in KL and other Cantonese-speaking states. It could be summarised that, in the case of those who were not born in Cantonese-speaking states, there is an apparent link between KL-ite identity with the use of Cantonese outside home, as those who consider themselves KL-ite have much higher rate of Cantonese usage than those who do not see themselves as KL-ite. However, this does not mean that they have highly positive attitude towards Cantonese.

Nonetheless, looking at the integrative attitude that has been summarised above, more than 60% of the participants agree and strongly agree that Cantonese is important and is the language which best represents Chinese community in KL; the command of Cantonese is important and helpful in understanding and integrating with Chinese peers in KL; and it is important for the Chinese community to speak Cantonese. The combination of these few aspects of integrative orientation towards Cantonese shows a strong link of Cantonese language with KL-ite identity of the Chinese community of KL.

#### **4.1.5.7 Gender**

There are quite a few studies and articles that suggested the connection between gender and language use and language attitude. These studies reported that women are more inclined to using High language because this is a way of to manifest their conforming to the mainstream value and behaviour, and to exert status. There are also explanations which focuses on the status-consciousness of women (Trudgill, 1983), in the sense that women may wish to gain more status with the use of more standard language form if they are less socially secure. It is also claimed that women revert to language to mark prestige because they are unlike men who have access to other status markers such as income and occupation. Women may also be more conscious to make sure that their children acquire the more standard speech form (Edwards, 2009). Wang (2021) indicated that female

secondary students in KL exhibited higher preference for Mandarin instead of other Chinese dialects in terms of language choice and attitude than male students. Thus, one may predict that, the female participants of this study would use Cantonese less and use mainstream languages more, such as Mandarin or English, and not Cantonese, especially at public domain, and more specifically at the workplace. On the contrary, studies such as Edward (2009) show that guys tend to resort to L language, especially when talking with friends, as it strengthens their brotherhood, masculinity, community, or subculture identity.

However, the female participants in this study actually use more Cantonese than males in average, and the language attitude towards Cantonese is higher. Even the use of Cantonese with friends are slightly higher than male participants. The reasons that lead to this phenomenon is worth exploring. As we can see now, the linguistic environment in KL is actually quite complex. Though we may categorise Cantonese as a Low language, it is still a 'prestige dialect', which means it has a higher status than other dialects. Do the female participants, consciously or unconsciously, resort to Cantonese because it is more 'mainstream' than other dialects? As a resident of KL, I think using Cantonese for status purpose is quite unlikely, as many people would recognise more of the fact that English or Mandarin show more status. Therefore, other factors may come into play as to why these female participants have higher usage and more positive attitude of Cantonese.

Studies like Stevens (1985), Vries. (1994), Clyne & Kipp (1997), Dwyer (2000), Chowdhury (2016) show that females are custodians of heritage language and use more heritage language due to, *inter alia*, their role as caretaker of their family members. Large-scale surveys based on census (Stevens, 1985; De Vries, 1994; Clyne & Kipp, 1997), often shows that women use more heritage language in migrant settings. Table 14 shows that there is not much significant gender difference between the self-perceived Cantonese

participants of this study though female participants have slightly higher average in terms of language use at home and public in general.

**Table 14**

*Cantonese language use and attitude by gender (mean)*

| Gender | language use<br>(Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           |                   |                           |                 |                            |                                | language attitude<br>(Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|--------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|        | with in the family                   | outside home (in general) | with your friends | with your closest friends | with work mates | with your superior at work | with your subordinates at work | instrumental orientation                  | integrative orientation |
| female | 2.92                                 | 3.49                      | 3.10              | 2.76                      | 3.02            | 2.43                       | 2.35                           | 2.34                                      | 3.01                    |
| male   | 2.72                                 | 3.34                      | 3.09              | 2.77                      | 3.09            | 2.37                       | 2.45                           | 2.28                                      | 2.99                    |

#### 4.1.5.8 Number of generations

Nagy (2018) mentioned that successive generations of heritage language speakers are usually exposed to more contact with mainstream language and less with their own heritage language, will show greater ‘contact effects’, in the sense that it is more probable that language shift may occur. On a similar note, Pauwels (2016) observed that members of second generation may spend their pre-school year surrounded by heritage language environment, but they have to deal with the majority language through education sooner or later. There is a high possibility for the majority language to be their dominant language later in life.

As for the participants of this study, no significance difference or pattern which suggest that the use of Cantonese or the language attitude towards Cantonese decline by the number of generations having settled down in Malaysia (as seen from paternal lineage). Pauwels (2016), when discussing about the factor of the number of generations in relation to language maintenance and language shift, did mention that whether a person lives in a ‘concentrated’ area where a particular language is spoken counts. As KL is considered a

‘concentrated’ area where Cantonese is spoken, therefore we do not see reducing language use or attitude in successive generations. Furthermore, it is also hard to discern, just by number of generations alone, whether a third-generation Cantonese participant is losing his heritage language, or a third generation Hakka is using more Cantonese due to the influence of his surrounding, given the complex linguistic environment in KL.

**Table 15**

*Cantonese language use and attitude categorised by number of generations (mean)*

| Number of generations (paternal lineage) | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|  | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| one (N = 1)                              | 5.00                              | 2.00                      | 1.85                                   | 3.05                    |
| two (N = 26)                             | 2.85                              | 3.50                      | 2.41                                   | 3.14                    |
| three (N = 43)                           | 2.91                              | 3.44                      | 2.26                                   | 2.96                    |
| four (N = 17)                            | 2.35                              | 3.35                      | 2.36                                   | 3.02                    |
| five (N = 5)                             | 3.20                              | 3.40                      | 2.45                                   | 3.12                    |

#### 4.1.5.9 Age

Wang (2012) has shown that the younger the participants, the lower the language use towards Cantonese. Participants are categorised into those who were born in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. There are 11 participants who were born in the 1960s, 15 born in the 1970s, 54 born in the 1980s, and 18 born in the 1990s. Two participants who were born in the 1950s and one participant who were born in 2001 are left out because the number is too small to make comparison. The comparison regarding Cantonese use within family is also left out because this may be heavily influenced by the Chinese subgroup background of the participants’ family, i.e., those who are of Cantonese origin will definitely use more Cantonese compared to other subgroups.

The frequency of Cantonese language use outside home or public domain in general between participants born in different decades is compared instead, as the use of Cantonese in this instance is much more based on individual choice, especially in a

multilingual society in KL. The number of participants who chose ‘*often* (Likert scale 4)’ and ‘*all the time* (Likert scale 5)’ for each decade is combined together to represent those who use Cantonese frequently. There are 72.8% and 80.0% of participants born in the 1960s and 1970s use Cantonese frequently in public domain. When it comes to those who were born in the 1980s, less than half, i.e., 46.3% use Cantonese frequently in the public. As for those who were born in the 1990s, not even one participant said that they use Cantonese outside home *all the time*, and there are a mere 11.1% who use Cantonese *often* though 50% of them use Cantonese *sometimes* in public domain. As one could see, the use of Cantonese in public domain falls drastically starting from those who were born in the 1990s.

**Table 16**

*Cantonese language use and attitudes categorised by the decades in which the participants were born (percentage).*

| Decades born      | Domains       | Language Use (Likert Scale) |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                   |               | 5                           | 4     | 3     | 2     | 1     |
| 1960s<br>(N = 11) | within family | 27.3%                       | 18.2% | 18.2% | 9.1%  | 27.3% |
|                   | outside home  | 18.2%                       | 54.6% | 9.1%  | 9.1%  | 9.1%  |
| 1970s<br>(N = 15) | within family | 20.0%                       | 6.7%  | 6.7%  | 33.3% | 40.0% |
|                   | outside home  | 20.0%                       | 60.0% | 13.3% | 13.3% | 0.0%  |
| 1980s<br>(N = 54) | within family | 33.3%                       | 11.1% | 13.0% | 18.5% | 24.1% |
|                   | outside home  | 18.5%                       | 27.8% | 4.1%  | 13.0% | 0.0%  |
| 1990s<br>(N = 18) | within family | 11.1%                       | 16.7% | 11.1% | 5.6%  | 50.0% |
|                   | outside home  | 0.0%                        | 11.1% | 50.0% | 22.2% | 16.7% |

Perhaps the decline of the influence of Hong Kong entertainment industry contributed the decrease of usage of Cantonese in the public domain in KL. This phenomenon is illustrated in Chua (2012) – in terms of films, the production rate decreased significantly in the 1990s though Hong Kong remains the major production location but increasingly in Mandarin; Cantopop that reached its peak in the 1980s started to wane with the opening of China, which can be seen, for example, when Beijing-origin Faye Wong who had to sing in Cantonese in her early stage of career reverted to singing in Mandarin. Young

people born after 1990s particularly do not feel the need of speaking Cantonese to exhibit ‘coolness’. In their teenage years and twenties, Korean drama series are the one that dominated the entertainment scene, especially after the broadcast of Winter Sonata by TV3 in 2002.

It is also perhaps Mandarin-orientated education in Chinese schools is manifesting its effect. The new generation of Chinese are able to speak Mandarin more fluently than their predecessors, thus Mandarin has increasingly become the first language choice for Chinese from different background. This is accompanied by the fact that there are very few opportunities for students to speak Cantonese in any official occasions at school such as assembly, meetings, or co-curricular activities, etc. These factors demonstrate how self-perceived proficiency could influence language use and attitude – when one thinks that he speaks well in certain language, his preference towards the language will be more positive and he will use it more often; and vice versa – when a person use more of a language, his attitude and proficiency towards a language will increase. The relationship between proficiency, and language use and attitude will be discussed in the next section.

#### **4.1.5.10 Self-perceived proficiency**

It can be presumed that if a person uses a language more frequently, he will gain higher proficiency of the language. In Wang and Chong (2011), it is mentioned that ‘language proficiency is a strong indicator for LMLS’. Language is maintained well when language proficiency is high. In Wang (2012), one can see that language proficiency is compared with language use. In her study, she examined the connection between Mandarin and Hakka self-assessed language use and language proficiency. It was indeed found that language proficiency is directly proportional to the frequency of language use. Medvedeva (2012) also mentioned that self-reported language proficiency can be used to link attitudes of an individual towards a particular language as it also indicates personal comfort in that language.

One could also observe that the higher the participants rated their fluency in Cantonese, the higher their language use in both home and public domain, and their language attitude towards Cantonese, as shown in Table 17. Spoken fluency is chosen to be analysed because it is presumed that most participants who live in KL use Cantonese through speaking.

**Table 17**

*The link between Cantonese language proficiency and the participants' language use and attitude (mean)*

| How fluent is your spoken Cantonese (Likert scale 1 – 5; very poor – very good) | language use (Likert scale 1 – 5) |                           | language attitude (Likert scale 1 – 4) |                         |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
|   | within the family                 | outside home (in general) | instrumental orientation               | integrative orientation |
| 1   | 1.00                              | 2.25                      | 1.81                                   | 1.95                    |
| 2   | 1.10                              | 2.00                      | 2.18                                   | 2.68                    |
| 3   | 2.32                              | 3.16                      | 2.19                                   | 2.92                    |
| 4   | 2.85                              | 3.68                      | 2.32                                   | 3.09                    |
| 5   | 4.03                              | 3.97                      | 2.53                                   | 3.21                    |

#### 4.2 Interview

10 participants of the questionnaire were chosen for the interview to know the details of their use of and attitudes towards Cantonese. 2 Cantonese, 2 Hakka, 2 Hokkien, 2 Teochew, and 2 Hainanese were selected. The reasons as to why they were chosen will be explained under the report of each interviewee. The interviews were done from 19 April to 26 April 2023. The interviews were done mostly in Mandarin, except the ones with KTJ (in Malaysian English), and LLS (in Cantonese).

The interviewees were asked regarding the reasons and details as to why they use Cantonese in the frequency as stated in the questionnaire in the following domains or interlocutors – family, neighbourhood, friends, school, and workplace.



Regarding instrumental orientation towards Cantonese, the selected participants were asked to provide explanation for their response in the questionnaire for:

- Cantonese will help me much in getting better opportunities in business or career
- Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL
- Cantonese should be used in schools
- Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL.

As for integrative orientation towards Cantonese, the chosen participants were requested to explain their response in the questionnaire for:

- Cantonese is important for me
- Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL
- Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL
- I am worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese

As the interview will be done in a semi-structured way, the interviewees may not be asked to explain certain points listed above or may be required to answer additional questions when appropriate. From the analysis of questionnaire above, there are issues which worth exploring such as:

- why some participants speak Cantonese with such high frequency with their life partner?
- the phenomenon that Hakka people use Cantonese frequently
- whether gender causes differences in Cantonese use

Not all the explanations given by the participants are reported as some are not explained clearly or it was found during the discussion that it was not quite irrelevant to the participant's case.

From the analysis of the questionnaire, it is found that most participants think that drama series and films are the most effective way to promote Cantonese. Therefore, participants

were also requested to tell their experience with Cantonese entertainment media and their opinion on its future.

#### **4.2.1 Informational Reports of Interviewees**

##### **4.2.1.1 Hainanese Interviewee 01**

YSY is a male participant who was born in 1986. He is a doctor working at a public hospital. He was born in KL, and his family moved to several places in KL and finally settled down in Subang Jaya, Selangor. He considered himself as KL-ite. He perceives himself as Hainanese. His father is Hainanese and his mother is Hakka. He was chosen for this interview because he is the only Hainanese among the participants who grew and raised in the KL area. His overall use of Cantonese with his family is very low, and it is a bit higher outside home. His instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is low, and integrative orientation a bit higher than average.

##### **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

###### ***Family and Neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, YSY does not use Cantonese with most of his family members. Firstly, this is because his paternal grandfather was a Hainanese working as a captain for ships, and later migrated from Hainan Island to Terengganu where nobody spoke Cantonese. His paternal grandmother was a Vietnamese-Chinese who spoke Hainanese and she only spoke Malay with YSY. YSY's father was born in 1957, received his education in a *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina*, and moved to KL from Terengganu when he was around 18 years old. His mother was born in 1961, a Moiye Hakka from Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan, moved to KL when she was 14 years old because her mother sent her to study in Sekolah Menengah (Persendirian) Kuen Cheng (坤城中學). Her mother speaks Hakka with her siblings, which is why YSY understands Hakka. However, YSY's parents do not encourage speaking dialects at home as it is better to master English,

Mandarin and Malay without the interference from other dialects. Therefore, no Cantonese is spoken at home. YSY has one younger sister and they speak English most of the time because her sister does not like Mandarin.

Nonetheless, YSY did respond in the questionnaire that he speaks Cantonese with ‘uncles, aunts and cousins on mother’s side’. Probing further, it is because the wife of his mother’s third brother is a Ipohian who is a Cantonese and speaks lots of Cantonese with her husband and children.

His neighbourhood also influences how much he uses Cantonese. His parents originally lived in Pudu, then moved to Overseas Union Garden (located in Old Klang Road), and eventually settled in Subang Jaya in 1984, two years before YSY was born. According to him, most people who originally live in Subang Jaya are professionals and, like his immediate neighbours, are multiracial. Therefore, the main language for communication is English. Nevertheless, he speaks Cantonese quite often with his neighbours who are Cantonese. When he travels to KL city centre, he has to use Cantonese almost all the time. This is especially true when he is in Chinatown because when he was a child, he saw how his father faced difficulty buying things as he could not speak Cantonese. His father had to rely totally on YSY’s mother to purchase goods.

### ***Friends***

YSY indicated in the questionnaire that he uses Cantonese *sometimes* with his friends and he confirmed that this is true in a general sense. With his close friends, they speak Cantonese *often*. His friendship with his close friends started from high school (Form 4 and Form 5). Due to the fact that some of the members are not very good at speaking English, and some are not good at speaking Mandarin, the common language that everybody can manage happened to be Cantonese. Not all his close friends are Cantonese.

He recalled the activity which made them grow closer was watching Hong Kong series at each other's houses and Cantonese movies at the cinema.

### ***School***

As YSY's mother wanted to ensure that he had a solid foundation in English, she sent her to a kindergarten where English is the sole medium of instruction. Later, his mother wanted him to be good at Mandarin as well, thus sending him to Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (C) Lick Hung in Subang Jaya. The principal of the school was very enthusiastic in promoting Mandarin and implemented a strict prohibition on Chinese dialects. Class monitors would report to the head teachers if someone was found speaking dialects and the head teachers would cane the students on their palms. Stubborn students who did not comply would be sent to the discipline master. Most who got punished had spoken Cantonese and a few Hokkien. He said that whether this wrongdoing was reported oftentimes depended on whether the student had a good relationship with the class monitor. He remembered that girls and boys spoke equally much Cantonese but only boys got the punishment.

Subsequently, he went to SMJK Katholik in Petaling Jaya. This was when he started to have substantial contact with Cantonese because the school did not prohibit the use of dialects. His use of Cantonese became more frequent especially during high school when he met his close friends, as aforementioned. He observed that girls used even more Cantonese, most probably because they watched lots of Hong Kong TVB drama series. Students felt that it was cool to speak Cantonese. He mentioned that in his primary school, speaking Cantonese was even a much cooler thing to do for rebellious students due to the strict prohibition.

During his university years in Russia, the main language he used was English. There were Chinese Malaysian students from different states, and those whom he spoke Cantonese to were all from KL.

### ***Work***

In the questionnaire, he indicated that he *sometimes* speaks Cantonese with his workmates but *seldom* to superior, and *never* with his subordinates. He explained that in the last few years, he has been stationed in Terengganu, Kelantan, and Penang. There is an unwritten rule in the hospital that only English and Malay can be spoken when discussing official matters, and he always keeps his professionalism in terms of language use. However, he did not deny the fact that he would use Mandarin or Cantonese with his workmates when gossiping or talking about private matters. He has never used Cantonese with his subordinates because almost all of them are not Chinese. Especially in Penang, though a Chinese-majority state, some non-executive staff are particularly sensitive when they hear their colleagues speaking any Chinese languages in front of them, and there have been cases where complaints were lodged.

With his patients, he has spoken Cantonese to older Chinese patients who did not speak Mandarin. This has happened in Penang, and even Terengganu - though there were some patients who were from the West Coast of Peninsula Malaysia, there were also local Terengganu patients who spoke Cantonese as well.

### **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

#### ***Instrumental orientation***

As for the instrumental value of Cantonese, YSY *disagreed* that Cantonese will help him much in getting better opportunities in business or career. This is because he is not in business, but professional work. The Ministry of Health has a guideline that prohibits the

use of dialects in the workplace. However, he agreed that Cantonese is necessary if one is to do business in KL.

With regards to the presence of Cantonese in schools, he *disagreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL but *agreed* that Cantonese should be used in school. He reasoned that the main issue of dialects is to prevent the loss of dialects. If the usage of dialects is not encouraged in an important domain such as schools, they will surely be extinct. Though it should be encouraged at schools, to make it as a medium of instruction will be very difficult because there will be disagreement from different Chinese subgroups as to why their dialect is not the chosen one. On another note, Cantonese can be offered as an elective subject and to be offered based on demand. When asked whether it would be difficult to make Cantonese as an elective because the parents might think that to learn another language could burden their children, he said the parents' perception of language learning should be corrected. From a medical perspective, a person who is exposed to more languages before 6 years old will have a far better advantage of learning and absorbing new languages. Though there may be a short delay for a toddler to start speaking if he is taught several languages simultaneously, the benefits in terms of the capacity of language learning in later age greatly outweigh the slight delay. Nonetheless, he *disagreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL. From his observation, when one can communicate in Mandarin without much hindrance with most of the Chinese in KL. This reflects that Cantonese is not compulsory and just 'a plus point'. If it is just 'a plus point', it is hard to say that Cantonese is highly regarded. He added that he was probably seeing this from the situation of his own neighbourhood, Subang Jaya, which he considered part of Greater KL, where everybody is speaking mainly English.

### *Integrative orientation*

YSY does not think that Cantonese is important for him personally because he is not using Cantonese most of the time at work and in his neighbourhood. Nevertheless, he does *agree* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL because it is one of the vital languages for communication, especially in the city centre. In addition, he *agreed* that as a Chinese in KL, you should be able to speak Cantonese because though one will be able to survive, it can be difficult sometimes. He repeated the difficulties which his father faced in Chinatown not being able to speak Cantonese, which is still the case today.

On the other hand, he *disagreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. He said that perhaps Cantonese somehow became the prestige dialect at a particular time in history because there were many Cantonese who were involved in tin mining and trade. Most of the Chinese who happened to be able to speak Cantonese are not Cantonese, and there are also many people from other states who migrated or live here just managed to learn some basic Cantonese so that it is easier for them to order food at local restaurants. Taking into consideration the non-Cantonese communities and non-KL migrants, he concluded that Cantonese is probably not 'a symbolic thing' for KL Chinese.

However, when asked whether he thought that Cantonese is an important part of the identity of the Chinese community in KL, he said that he was not sure. When he thought of the adjoining areas in Selangor such as Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya, which he considered part of Greater KL, Cantonese is not so popular. When he is in the city centre, such as Petaling Street and Chow Kit area, he does have to use Cantonese. All of his friends from the core KL regions mainly speak Cantonese with him. After hesitating for a while, he finally concluded that Cantonese can be said to be an important part of the identity of KL Chinese, just like Cantonese is an identity marker of Ipoh.

YSY also *agreed* that he enjoys watching Cantonese entertainment media. During his high school time, he had the most contact with Cantonese media due to the influence from his friends. He said he particularly enjoyed Cantonese comedies produced by Stephen Chow Sing-chi (周星馳) because it was funny and watching Cantonese show could make him forget about language subjects, such as English, Malay and especially Mandarin, that he had to score. It was also a cool thing to speak Cantonese at school. Mandarin TV shows from Taiwan did not attract him too much as they were too long-winded and Mainland ones were not that popular yet. Having said that, there are a few Mainland TV shows which caught his eyes – historical fiction drama such as Ruyi's Royal Love in the Palace (如懿傳, 2018). He admitted that he does not watch Hong Kong TVB series now because the production, especially historical fiction ones, are not as good as Mainland productions. He added that most children nowadays, especially those born in the 2000s, are probably not exposed to TV shows from Hong Kong and this will affect their Cantonese speaking ability.

#### **4.2.1.2 Hainanese Interviewee 02**

HCY is a female participant who was born in 1979. She is an auditor. She was born and raised in Ipoh, Perak. She has been living in KL for the last 20 years. In the questionnaire she considered herself a KL-ite. She perceives herself as a Hainanese. Her father is Hainanese, and her mother Hokkien. She was chosen for this interview because she has very high usage of Cantonese both with her family members and outside home. It is also good to hear the opinion from a Hainanese who was not born in KL. Her instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is slightly above average and integrative orientation is quite high.



## **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

### ***Family and neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, HCY responded that she generally uses Cantonese with her family *all the time*. Her paternal grandfather migrated from Mencheong, Hainan to Ipoh, Perak. Her father was born in Ipoh. Her paternal grandfather spoke Cantonese to her father, aunts and uncles. Her grandfather did not speak any other languages other than Hainanese. Her father refused to speak Hainanese but spoke only Cantonese with his siblings. As the prestige dialect in Ipoh is Cantonese, her aunts and uncles speak Cantonese with each other generally, and occasionally some Hainanese. Only her eldest aunt managed to pass down Hainanese to her children.

As for HCY herself, her grandfather passed away when she was two years old and therefore, she did not learn Hainanese. As her father speaks Cantonese to her, and the fact that her mother is a Cantonese, her mother tongue and family language is Cantonese. Cantonese is also the only language she communicates with her siblings and relatives. However, this does not apply to his niblings, both paternal and maternal sides. Influenced by the thought of giving their children a head start, her cousins merely speak Mandarin to their children. Moreover, as most of her niblings were born and/or grew up in KL where their schools implement Mandarin policy, none of her niblings can speak Cantonese. This is despite the fact that they live in Alam Damai, Cheras, which is supposed to have quite a strong Cantonese presence. She said that occasionally she would try speaking Cantonese to her niblings who understand but unfortunately cannot speak any.

HCY spent her childhood along Jalan Pengkalan, Ipoh. Her family moved a few times, every time farther away from the city centre. Her neighbourhood is the same as Ipoh city centre where Chinese naturally speak Cantonese with each other. Most of her neighbours and childhood friends were not Cantonese, but Hakka.

After graduation, she started to live in KL. Currently, she is living somewhere near Off Jalan Ipoh. As her residence is a modern condominium, neighbours rarely speak to each other. There are also more Malays and Indians at her condominium. On the same floor, she has only spoken to an old Chinese man in Cantonese. However, she heard that the old man spoke Mandarin to his grandson.

When she meets Chinese people around her neighbourhood, she generally uses Cantonese. However, her use of Cantonese is low 'when shopping locally' because she rarely buys things from traditional Chinese grocery stores but straight to shopping malls. As most shopping malls hire Malay and foreign shopkeepers, there is a very rare chance to speak Cantonese.

### ***Friends***

From the questionnaire response, HCY speaks Cantonese *all the time* both with her friends and closest friends. She said that in some occasions, she might start with Mandarin or English, but if she found out later that the person could speak Cantonese, she would switch to Cantonese.

Outside the school compound during primary and secondary schools, she spoke Cantonese with her school friends. However, during her university time, as there were too many Chinese course mates from the Northern Malayan states who spoke Northern Malaysian Hokkien, she had to learn their language. Her university was University Putra Malaysia Terengganu branch.

She started working in KL after graduation. In KL, there are many friends from many states. With Chinese friends who can speak Cantonese, she speaks Cantonese; those who cannot, Mandarin is spoken. Nonetheless, most of her friends can speak Cantonese. She did conclude that friends who do not speak Cantonese are mostly from other states, especially Penang and Johor; or they are at least 5 years younger than her.

With her six closest friends, they speak Cantonese *all the time*. They have known each other since secondary school in Ipoh. 4 out of 6 of them are Hakka. Even among her Hakka close friends, they speak Cantonese. When they were studying at school, they spoke Mandarin as it was prohibited to speak dialects. When they stepped out of the school compound, they would immediately switch to Cantonese.

### ***School***

HCY indicated in the questionnaire that she has used Cantonese *all the time* with classmates both now and during childhood. However, she has *never* used Cantonese with schoolmates. Probing further, she said that though her primary and secondary school, both *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* located along Jalan Pasir Putih, prohibited dialects, as her close friends were her classmates, and they would speak Cantonese all the time outside school, she considered her Cantonese use with her classmates during childhood as the *all the time*. Due to the prohibition and punishments such as taking names by prefects were implemented, she did not speak Cantonese with her other schoolmates. At kindergarten, as all classmates and schoolmates had not spoken Mandarin before, everybody would speak Cantonese though they started learning Mandarin as well. Regarding gender, she does not feel that there was any difference between boys and girls regarding the use of and attitude towards Cantonese.

Currently, she is learning calligraphy in an art academy located at Jalan Panggung, Chinatown KL. Her teacher is a Hakka, but insists on speaking Cantonese. She has another classmate, a Hakka and seven years younger than her, who is a Cantonese advocate, involved actively in promoting Cantonese. As her calligraphy teacher teaches in Cantonese, all of her classmates speak Cantonese.

## ***Work***

HCY responded in the questionnaire that she speaks Cantonese *all the time* with her workmates, superiors and subordinates. She has been working in multinational corporations all this while. Whenever she started working at a new company, she would start with English. Oftentimes, after getting familiar with her colleagues, either her or her colleagues would switch to Cantonese, though they definitely use English during formal meetings. She recalled that she was warned by her head of audit to stop speaking Cantonese with her closest colleague so that she would not to exclude colleagues who did not speak Cantonese. This was despite the fact that this head of audit spoke Cantonese himself.

According to her, she also uses Cantonese *all the time* with her customers. She always has to deal with agents who would later speak Cantonese though they initiated their dealings with English or Mandarin at the beginning. Not all her agents are from KL and even agents from Melaka speak Cantonese. However, a few of her clients, those from Northern and Southern Malaya, and Sarawak, speak Mandarin to her.

### **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

#### ***Instrumental orientation***

HCY *strongly agreed* that Cantonese will help her much in getting better opportunities in business or career. Working as an auditor for multinational corporations, a lot of her clients' regional offices are located in Hong Kong because Hong Kong has been/was the largest financial centre in Asia. When her colleagues in Hong Kong know that she is fluent in Cantonese, they tend to get closer with her. When there is any opportunity, she will be chosen to join their projects. She has benefited much from these working opportunities. Nonetheless, she mentioned that Cantonese is still not 'a formal language'. It serves only as a complementary advantage. It does not necessarily apply to other people.

However, since the last 5 years or so, more and more regional offices are moving to Singapore where Cantonese has minimal role to play.

HCY *agreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, and Cantonese should be used in school. The first reason is that Cantonese is a very ancient language which preserves the pronunciation of Middle Chinese while Mandarin appeared much later. There is no reason why a language which has a longer history should give way completely to another language which is much younger. Secondly, since Cantonese is the most popular of all ‘dialects’, and widely used in KL, why should it not at least be a second language? We should not forget that there exists a very standardised teaching syllabus and methods for Cantonese in Hong Kong all these years. It can be easily transplanted and adapted to Chinese schools in KL. Thirdly, Cantonese is one of the important regional symbols of Southern Chinese. Before Mandarin was officially made the standardised language, every region spoke its own unique language. Fourthly, if it is taught in school, the chance of Cantonese being passed down to the next generation is highly increased. “Even if it cannot *pass through the hall into the inner chamber* (quoting a Chinese proverb, 登堂入室, which means to gain official recognition) to be a school subject, we should set up societies or organise co-curricular activities which expose students to Cantonese.” she said determinatively. She explained that family domain alone cannot guarantee the preservation of dialects anymore, as she has seen from all the children of her friends who cannot speak any dialects, not even the popular ones like Cantonese.

HCY *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL. This is despite the fact that she has not seen a lot of information, at least on the surface, which shows that KL Chinese are actively promoting Cantonese. However, when she is in Petaling Street and Pudu every Saturday, she can see that people are communicating mainly in Cantonese. From the insistence of her calligraphy teacher and her Cantonese-

advocate classmate on speaking Cantonese, she can see the value of the existence of Cantonese.

### ***Integrative orientation***

She *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is important for her as an individual. This is because it is, simply, “my mother tongue.” However, she does not go to the extent to admit that she is a Cantonese person. Her subgroup identity is still Hainanese. Nevertheless, Cantonese language and culture represent another half of her identity, as her mother is a Cantonese.

Other than that, Cantonese is also a representation of her Ipohian identity. The prestige dialect for the Chinese community in Ipoh is also Cantonese. The strong link between Ipoh and Cantonese is the reason why her Hong Kong friends would always ask whether she was from Ipoh when they heard her speak Cantonese. She further explained that though Northern Malaysian Hokkien is the main dialect to the north from Taiping onwards, and Selangorian Hokkien is the main dialect to the south of Tanjong Malim, Cantonese is the mainstream dialect in Central Perak, such as the area of Ipoh and Kuala Kangsar.

When asked how she would reconcile with her claim that she was a KL-ite in the questionnaire and her Ipohian identity, she answered that she is sometimes confused. To her KL friends, she said “I’m going back to Ipoh”; to her mother, she said “I’m going back to KL”. Though she has been living in KL for a much longer time, she still considers herself a Ipohian deep down in her heart. She thinks that she is a KL-ite in the sense that she is permanently living and working in KL. In a Chinese way, she said that “I was born as a Ipohian person and will die as a Ipohian ghost (生是怡保人，死是怡保鬼).”

Other than that, she also *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL. She explained that she struggled quite a bit when she was answering this question.

This is mainly due to the fact that KL is a place with lots of working opportunities, and this attracts people from *five lakes and four oceans* (五湖四海, a Chinese proverb, which means all over the world) to live here. On one hand, she thinks that Cantonese is important especially to the ‘native’ of KL. Chinese migrants from other places should do as the Romans do and learn Cantonese. On the other hand, she opined that KL-ite should also be flexible and accommodate migrants from other states. This also explains why she *disagreed* that as a Chinese person in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese. Due to KL’s status as a capital, many people who called themselves KL-ites are not like ‘original KL-ites’. For example, one of her cousin sisters who moved to KL from Ipoh has since considered herself KL-ite, and so do her children. However, they do not speak Cantonese. She added that compared to KL, Cantonese is more strongly correlated to the identity of Ipoh as there is no such dilution from migrants.

Moreover, she *agreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. She did not go to the extent of *strongly agree* because based on her impression, the KL area should cover the whole Klang Valley, where the Hokkien-speaking region is also included. However, if it only covers the administrative region of KL, then Cantonese can very well represent the Chinese community in KL. She shared that some of her Hong Kong friends who moved to KL after the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement (2019 – 2020) told her how familiar and intimate they feel in KL as if they are living in Hong Kong due to the prevalent use of Cantonese, especially in Petaling Street, Pudu and some old neighbourhoods.

She *strongly agreed* that she is worried about the young generation’s low proficiency in Cantonese. This is because all of her friends’ and cousins’ children cannot speak any Cantonese. The parents merely speak Mandarin and English with the children because they want their children to be able to master these languages. However, she observed that their children are trained to speak broken Mandarin and English. It could have been better

if they speak their own dialects at home. If the next generation does not speak Cantonese anymore, KL-ites will lose the existing fun of having diversity. She said as there are more and more TV and radio programmes broadcasted in Mandarin, she felt bored due to the monotony. KL Chinese also lose their present competitive edge in doing business and attracting investment from Cantonese-speaking regions. More importantly, KL Chinese will lose their symbol of identity, especially when the colloquial Cantonese spoken in KL is actually unique.

Elaborating her experience with Cantonese entertainment media, Cantonese music and TV shows were the mainstream since she was born up until she was around 28 years old or so. After she was 30 years old, she could feel that Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese entertainment were starting to gain ground, as well as the Japanese and Korean ones. These had to do with the opening up of the latter places.

She is particularly fond of the older Cantonese songs, such as those sung by Paula Tsui Siu Fung (徐小鳳) and Samuel Hui Koon-kit (許冠傑), because the lyrics are closer to daily life, and have strong Cantonese flavour. The current Hong Kong songs have lost much of their Cantonese originality though she still prefers the work of lyricists such as Wyman Wong (黃偉文), but not Albert Leung (林夕) whose work is too commercialised. She also mentioned that stand-up comedies from Hong Kong will not be understandable if one does not know Cantonese. However, she does prefer some Mandarin songs, such as those written by Vincent Fang (方文山) from Taiwan, which has strong *chinoiserie* touch.

As for TV series, since she was amazed by Nirvana in Fire (琅琊榜, 2015), a historical drama produced by Mainland China, she somehow stopped watching Hong Kong series. This is because the themes of Hong Kong TV series have been limited to crime and detective genres. Furthermore, the content and filming technique of Mainland production



are much better. Not only that, the acting skills of Hong Kong actors are getting worse, and even the Cantonese pronunciation is getting worse - there has been more and more relaxed pronunciation. She sighed that it is such a pity for Hong Kong productions.

#### **4.2.1.3 Teochew Interviewee 01**

CKY is a female participant who was born in 1992. She is a company secretary. She was born and raised in Kepong, KL. She perceives herself as a Teochew. Her father is Teochew and her mother is Cantonese. She was chosen because she is a Teochew born in KL and represents the 1990s generation and has high usage of Cantonese with her family members. Her instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is slightly above average, and her integrative orientation is considered quite high.

##### **(a) Cantonese language use**

###### ***Family and neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, she uses Cantonese *all the time* with most of her family members. To start with, she explained that her father is English educated and does not speak Mandarin. Though her father and paternal grandfather spoke Teochew, his father did not speak it with her. On her mother's side, her maternal grandparents spoke Cantonese with her mother. Her parents have spoken Cantonese with each other since they first met. As both her father's and mother's family reside in Kepong, a predominantly Cantonese-speaking area, since her grandparents' generation, therefore Cantonese became the dominant language in her family.

However, she responded in the questionnaire that she has *never* spoken Cantonese with her cousins. At first, she explained that she has not had any contact with his paternal relatives. Then, she realised that she left out her cousins on her mother's side. With her maternal cousins, they speak mainly Cantonese with each other, sometimes resorting to Mandarin when they could not come out with words that are more advanced.

Since she was born up to her secondary school years, she remembered speaking Cantonese almost all the time with her neighbours. This changed after she graduated from high school where there have been more neighbours who communicate in Mandarin and English. She does not know the reason which caused this.

### ***Friends***

She has never spoken Cantonese to her closest friend because her closest friend is an Indian. Her Indian friend is learning Mandarin but has no interest in Cantonese. With those she considered friends, they used to be her classmates and schoolmates. They started speaking Cantonese at school though it was not allowed at school.

### ***School***

She responded in the questionnaire that she has *never* used Cantonese with classmates, but *sometimes* with her school mates. She explained that when she was in kindergarten, the medium of instruction was English, so her classmates spoke only English. Later, she went to SJK (C) Kai Chee, Segambut which was very strict in implementing their language policy. No dialects were allowed to be spoken at school. Those who broke the rules would be caned and the discipline master would meet their parents. She saw a few cases where such punishment had been done. Nonetheless, she said her ex-primary classmates speak Cantonese when they are gathering now. She explained that this is because they did not just meet at school. Since they lived in the same neighbourhood, they met each other frequently after school. As to why they had to speak Cantonese, she said that Mandarin would be too formal and it was just a natural thing for her neighbours to speak Cantonese with each other.

In secondary school at SMK Sinar Bintang, the students were not allowed to speak any languages other than English and Malay. This is because all the teachers were Malay, and the principal thought that it was disrespectful to speak languages that the teachers did not

know. However, since over 90% of the students were Chinese, such a rule was impossible to implement. She did recall that several students got the punishment of eating *cili padi* when caught speaking Chinese. The situation was more relaxed when she was in Form 3 to Form 5 where students just spoke whatever language they liked freely.

When she was studying her diploma at Universiti Malaya, there was no chance of speaking Cantonese as all her course mates were Malay. When she was studying her undergraduate degree and chartered secretary professional certification at Wawasan Open University and Brickfields Asia College respectively, there was no chance to speak Cantonese with any classmates as lessons were done online due to the nature of the course (distant learning) and Movement Control Order.

### ***Work***

At her workplace, she responded that she speaks Cantonese *all the time* with her workmates and superiors, but *sometimes* with subordinates. From the day she started working, she has been speaking Cantonese all the time with all the colleagues whom she has to work closely and directly with. She said that speaking Cantonese creates a sense of cordiality and it seems that her colleagues will solve her problem faster than usual. As her superiors are all Chinese, they speak Cantonese. Currently, she has two Malay subordinates who are around 50 to 60 years old. As they are curious to learn a bit of Cantonese, they sometimes try to speak Cantonese with her. As to why she uses Cantonese all the time with her customers, the reason is just simply because all her customers initiated their telephone conversations in Cantonese.

### **(b) Language attitude towards Cantonese**

#### ***Instrumental orientation***

She *agreed* that Cantonese will help much in getting better opportunities in business or career. As stated above, she has experienced the benefit from speaking Cantonese with

her colleagues from different departments which made her colleagues feel closer and work can be done much faster. However, she did not agree totally because there are only 30% of Chinese in her company. She is only speaking from her experience and she does not think that it applies to other people as our society is very diverse.

She *disagreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL. She is worried that other dialect groups may request for their dialects to be one of the mediums of instruction at school. Among all the Chinese languages, Mandarin should be the only one listed as it is the most widely used. Moreover, many Chinese who live in KL come from other states where Cantonese is not the main dialect. She opined that if there is one dialect which needs to be made the medium of instruction, perhaps she would choose Hokkien because Hokkien is much more widely used not just in Malaysia but in other countries. Dialects should be learned at home and it is not necessary to make it a formal language in a classroom setting. We have to consider the feelings of many people who do not speak Cantonese.

During her secondary school time, she witnessed how difficult it was for her school, a Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan, to make Mandarin as a compulsory subject despite more than 90% of the students being Chinese. She also remembered how reluctant some of her classmates were to take the Chinese subject for the exam of Sijil Penilaian Menengah (SPM) because they thought that it was difficult to score distinction for this subject. If Mandarin is facing such difficulties, it is unimaginable and impossible for Cantonese to elevate to the status as one of the mediums of instruction. Furthermore, she *disagreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL because she has not seen them putting any effort to promote the language.

### *Integrative orientation*

Personally, she *agreed* that Cantonese is important for her because Cantonese is her main language which she can express herself the best with, and using it gives her a sense of intimacy. It is the first language she learned since she was born. However, she does not feel that Cantonese is her mother tongue. Her reason is that “It should be Mandarin because I did not learn Cantonese formally and properly at school.” She insisted though I casted doubt on her reason as nobody learns their Chinese dialects formally at school but most people would treat it as their mother tongue.

She also *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL because it is the Chinese dialect which represents this community, just like how Hokkien represents Penang, and Mandarin represents Johor. This is why she also *agreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. Other than that, she also *agreed* that as a Chinese person in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese. She did not go to the extent of *strongly agree* because KL-ites seems to be quite flexible in accommodating people from other states but she said sometimes this may not be true as she has seen her friend, having lived in KL for 20 years, being laughed at when she could not speak Cantonese properly. She could also see how this friend of hers felt left out because she could not understand the jokes and humours when other friends were speaking in Cantonese. This implies that one may have difficulty integrating fully with the Chinese community in KL with low proficiency of Cantonese.

Moreover, she thought that Cantonese is an important part of the identity of the Chinese community in KL. For her, the way of life is one aspect of identity. The fact that KL Chinese are quite good at Cantonese means that their lifestyle is somehow closely related to Cantonese. For example, this in a way tells us that KL Chinese are highly exposed to Cantonese media, which manifests where their interest lies. In Johor, however, the fact that Mandarin has become the most popular Chinese language in Johor indicates that the

media that they have been exposed to are mostly Mandarin shows, and it is obvious that such influence came from Singapore TV programmes. Even TVB series from Hong Kong was dubbed in Mandarin.

Between Mandarin and Cantonese pop culture, CKY said that she rarely watches any Mandarin shows because she is not familiar with Taiwanese and Mainland-Chinese celebrities. She really likes Cantonese movies, especially those acted and produced by Stephen Chow Sing-chi (周星馳). This is also true for her close friends. They do not really listen to any Mandarin or Cantonese songs because they prefer English or Korean ones.

She *agreed* that she is worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese because all of her friends who are proficient in Cantonese do not speak Cantonese with their children. The reason is because her friends thought that there are many foul words in Cantonese, and it is linked with bad behaviours (probably from Hong Kong movies which often portray stories about gangsters and violence). When she was reminded that KL has its own variety of Cantonese, she agreed as to the importance of preserving KL Cantonese so that the history and identity can be passed on to the next generation. However, she said that as most of the KL Chinese can speak multiple languages nowadays, there should not be any problem with communicating with the next generation if we lose just one dialect – Cantonese.

#### **4.2.1.4 Teochew Interviewee 02**

KKY is a female participant who was born in 1980. She is an IT consultant and works as property agent part time. She was born in Tawau where Hakka is the prestige dialect of the Chinese community as in most parts of Sabah. She has been living in KL for 20 years, but does not consider herself as a KL-ite yet. She perceives herself as a Teochew. His father is Teochew and her mother is Hokkien. She was chosen because she can give her

views as a non-KL-ite, and she is the only participant from Sabah. She has very high Cantonese use outside home. Her instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is moderate, but her integrative orientation is very high.

#### **(a) Cantonese language Use**

##### ***Family and neighbourhood***

KKY responded in the questionnaire that she spoke Cantonese *all the time* with her grandparents. However, after thinking carefully, she rectified that it was actually merely with her paternal grandmother, who migrated to Tawau from Hong Kong. Her paternal grandmother spoke solely in Cantonese with all her children, including KKY's father. His paternal grandfather usually spoke Teochew but Cantonese with her paternal grandmother. As her grandmother taught her Hong Kong Cantonese, she could sense that the Cantonese spoken in KL was different. This sets the foundation of her Cantonese usage later in her life.

Other than that, she also speaks Cantonese with all her paternal granduncles and grandaunts. It seems like Cantonese is the dominant language in her paternal family. With her maternal grandparents and extended family, they speak Hokkien, Teochew and Mandarin. With her cousins and niblings, the main language is Mandarin, mixed with less Cantonese.

Her neighbourhood in Tawau is located in the town centre. Though her neighbours spoke Hakka to each other and to her parents, she remembered speaking mainly Mandarin to them. She said that was maybe because she did not like speaking Hakka when she was a kid. According to her, though the prestige dialect of Sabahan Chinese is Hakka, the majority of them can speak Cantonese, especially those born before 1990s.

In her own nuclear family, she speaks Cantonese with her husband. His husband is Hainanese, was born and raised in KL, and his grandfather migrated from China. His

parents speak Cantonese to him in the family. As to why KKY speaks Cantonese with her husband, she explained that they started with Cantonese when they first met at Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman which was located in Setapak, KL; his husband joined a group of her close friends from SS2 Petaling Jaya who spoke Cantonese. With her children, she emphasised the importance of Cantonese but she speaks Mandarin and English with them too.

In her current neighbourhood which is located in Ampang Saujana, everybody just naturally speaks Cantonese and she speaks Cantonese with her neighbours regardless of their Chinese subgroup background. As for her, since she moved to KL for study when she was 19, she will initiate conversation in Cantonese almost all the time. She reasoned that this is because her impression of KL as a Cantonese-speaking city was ingrained in her mind when she travelled to KL during childhood. She thought that initiating conversation in Cantonese will not be unsuitable as even for those who do not speak Cantonese should be able to understand what she says.

### ***Friends***

Since she moved to KL, she has been speaking Cantonese with all her friends. There are a few whom she speaks Mandarin to, but when they are in 'gossiping mood' or need to say something that Cantonese can express better, they will switch to Cantonese.

With her closest group friends, they speak Cantonese *all the time*. Although her two bosom friends are Hakka, they speak Cantonese from the day they knew each other at Kolej TAR. They started with Cantonese because this was what the majority of the schoolmates would do.

### ***School***

KKY attended kindergarten, primary school and secondary school in Tawau. She recalled that her primary school was the strictest in prohibiting the use of dialects where names of



students who broke the rule would be recorded to show disapproval of such behaviour. In secondary school, the implementation of such prohibition was much relaxed. The habit had already been created since primary school to speak Mandarin in class settings but students would secretly speak Hakka during recess or after school. She also spoke Cantonese to close friends whose subgroup were Cantonese. She noticed that female students in secondary school were more compliant to the language rule while male students tended to speak more Hakka. It was even more evident for students from classes with lower grades to speak more dialects.

Subsequently, she started her studies in Kolej TAR, Setapak in 1999. All her classmates spoke Cantonese with each other. The group of close friends from SS2 Petaling Jaya that she joined also spoke Cantonese. A friend from Kuchai Lama, a typical KL-ite, also spoke Cantonese with her. She said it was natural to communicate in Cantonese and it had nothing to do factors such as the influence of Hong Kong pop culture.

### ***Work***

As stated above, KKY is an IT consultant and worked as property agent part time. From her account, she really pays attention to the importance of Cantonese, especially its economic value.

She even trained two of her assistants to speak good Cantonese. She had an assistant from Alor Setar, Kedah who could not speak a single word of Cantonese. Determined to train her, she only spoke Cantonese to her. After one year, the assistant thanked her for the language training because it was very useful to survive in the business world in KL. Recently, a fresh graduate, around the age of 19, who has very low proficiency in Cantonese joined her company as an assistant. She can see how he is struggling when communicating with customers. She is very determined to train him since she has already done one successfully.

With regard to her property business, she strongly suggests her trainees to initiate their greetings and sales talk in Cantonese, especially when their potential customers are in Cheras area. This is the first step to bridge the gap and to cultivate intimacy with their prospects. She encourages her trainees to speak Cantonese with her if they want to improve their communication.

As for her customers, most of them initiate their conversation in Cantonese, especially those looking for property. She has not noticed any reduction of the use of Cantonese from her customers yet; on the contrary, she has seen customers who express their wish to learn Cantonese.

Moreover, she shared that as her IT consultancy job is based in Bangkok, she has the chance to attend events at relevant business chambers and associations in Thailand. When she met her Malaysian peers, all of them communicated in Cantonese though some were actually from Penang, Johor, and Melaka.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

Despite of her highly positive attitude towards Cantonese, yet when answering the questionnaire, she *disagreed* that Cantonese will help her much in getting better opportunities in business or career. She reasoned that it should not be Cantonese alone. Other more important languages such as English, Mandarin, and Malay play a vital role in helping us to excel.

Furthermore, she *disagreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL. She explained that students should focus on learning mainstream languages i.e., Mandarin, English and Malay, so that students know the proper language to use in formal settings. As our country is multiracial, we have to serve customers from different background. "Dialects are still dialects, lower in status." she

emphasised. Cantonese can be an elective subject but not a compulsory one as it is not, in her words, 'a language of globalisation'. Nonetheless, she opined that Cantonese should not be prohibited at school. Teachers should do activities related to Cantonese such as playing Cantonese TV programmes so that the students are exposed to a popular language used in KL.

She *agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL, especially in business and trade. Such impression was engraved in her mind since childhood when she travelled to KL. Petaling Street was a place which had to be visited for every trip. She saw everybody did business and bargaining in Cantonese.

### ***Integrative orientation***

She *agreed* that Cantonese is important to her personally especially when she is a business woman. It is a language which can bring more opportunities to her. However, she does not think Cantonese is extremely important to the extent that it became part of her heritage identity.

Moreover, she *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL because it reflects the history and development of their society. With this, she also *agreed* that Cantonese has become an important part of the identity of KL. She recalled how her friend so proudly told her "I am a KL-ite, of course I can speak Cantonese!" It is very common to identify someone as KL-ite when one speaks Cantonese. "It is either you are from KL, or Ipoh." She also agreed that Cantonese is the language which best represents Chinese community in KL because it is so commonly used to the extent that she thought the Cantonese community was the largest subgroup in KL.

She '*agreed*' that she is worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese. It is more of concerning her children's competitiveness in the future. She hopes that her children will fine-tune the pronunciation and improve their speaking skills

in Cantonese. She also extends the care to her staff wishing that they will enhance their language ability in Cantonese to strengthen their communication skills.

She really enjoys watching and listening to Cantonese programmes. She remembered Cantonese shows and music reached its height of popularity during her secondary school time. She rarely had any contact with Mandarin shows. She does not reject Mandarin programmes, but she is not particularly fond of them either. She felt that Taiwanese series were very long-winded. However, she noticed that Hong Kong TV shows are declining in the last few years and those from Mainland China are gradually rising. Her Cantonese-speaking friends have started to watch Mainland Chinese shows more frequently. At home, there is a conflict as to what TV programmes to watch because her children prefer Mainland-Chinese shows. The children are using Mainland slang words which she is unfamiliar with. She said that she has not been 'assimilated' yet. She still prefers Cantonese shows as she is familiar with the celebrities. She likes the storyline and shooting methods of Hong Kong TV shows especially those related to crime, police and detective fictions. The acting skills of the actors in Cantonese shows are also much better. She also added that the Cantonese way of speaking is much more 'flavoursome' (韻味) that it can easily make her absorbed into the story. She said that perhaps she is outdated and a new age has come.

#### **4.2.1.5 Hokkien Interviewee 01**

HSL is a female participant who was born in 1963. She was born and raised in KL all her life, except for a few years studying abroad. She perceives herself as a Hokkien though when we were doing the interview, she said that her great grandfather came from HengHua (興化). However, HengHua is identified as a separate subgroup in Sarawak, as confirmed by Chan (2011) and Tien (2013). Nonetheless, the fact that HSL identified herself as Hokkien matches with the account found in Song (2021) where people from

Fujian province (including Southern Min, Foochow, Henghua) in KL and Selangor would claim themselves based on the province name 'Hokkien', instead of having separated identity as in Sarawak; and unlike in Penang and Melaka, 'Hokkien' merely refers to those whose ancestry originated from Southern Hokkien area (mainly those from Tsiang-tsiu [漳州] and Tsuan-tsiu [泉州]). Nonetheless, HSL's mother was of Tsuan-tsiu (Hüi-uann county; 惠安) origin.

#### **(a) Cantonese language use**

##### ***Family and neighbourhood***

HSL had been chosen for the interview because she has exceptionally high usage of Cantonese language and language attitude towards Cantonese. Though a Hokkien, she considers Cantonese as her mother tongue and spoke Cantonese *all the time* with her parents, and even with her paternal and maternal uncles and aunts. Both her parents were Hokkien, as were her grandparents. Her grandparents were the first generation migrated to Malaya, and they were still speaking Hokkien with her parents. However, things changed during her parents' generation when both her parents started to speak solely Cantonese to their siblings. Even her grandmother, whom she got to meet during her childhood, spoke Cantonese to her. Therefore, from her generation onwards, her family did not get to preserve their heritage language, and it was totally replaced by Cantonese. She considers Cantonese as her mother tongue, and it is a language that she feels most familiar, at ease, unrestrained and comfortable. She can express her inner feelings the best with Cantonese; unlike when using Mandarin, she has to think of the wordings; while using English, she has to constantly be aware of the grammar. However, she does not go to the extent of identifying herself as Cantonese. With her husband, though also a Hokkien, she speaks Cantonese most of the time, and occasionally English. As her in-laws do not

speak English, the only language she can speak with them is solely Cantonese although they are also Hokkiens.

When discussing the reasons which had caused this, she mentioned that her grandparents settled in High Street (which was named Jalan Tun HS Lee after Independence) – at the heart of Chinatown KL - and her family still owns three shophouses there. It was immediately clear why her family switched to Cantonese as their family language – the environment – the prevalent and overwhelming Cantonese use surrounding her family. As illustrated above, the prestige Chinese language at the centre of KL was, especially during the time when she was growing up, exclusively Cantonese. She said for the most part of her life, she would think that Chinese who could not speak Cantonese came from outstation and definitely not KL-ites. In other words, being able to speak Cantonese was the identity marker of Chinese from the capital region.

In addition, she explained that she asked her mother the reason her parents chose to speak Cantonese within the family. ‘Business’, she emphasised. As her family was involved in doing business in Chinatown KL, Chinese customers from different subgroups communicated solely in Cantonese. Their employees, especially ‘those who cook’, were all Cantonese. Moreover, their neighbours spoke Cantonese; at cafes, restaurants, grocery stores, stationery shops, everybody was speaking Cantonese. Even her family doctor at Petaling Street, the famous Dr Dou Zi Cheong (杜志昌醫生) (1927 – 2017), a Cantonese from Shuntak district (順德) of Fatshan (佛山), spoke Cantonese with her family during consultation and treatment. However, she did not feel that the Cantonese community had particularly high purchasing power which made everybody started using Cantonese as a prestige language during her time. Nonetheless, she tried to reason that perhaps in the early days of KL, there were probably some capable Cantonese who became the leaders of the Chinese community which set the foundation of Cantonese being the prestige dialect.

### *School*

HSL studied in a Chinese primary school, and Kuen Cheng High School (坤城中學) which is still a Chinese independent school today. At school, HSL spoke Cantonese almost *all the time*, but a bit less with her classmates because the medium of instruction in the class was Mandarin. Other than having to speak Mandarin to do academic discussion with teachers and classmates, Cantonese was the only language her classmates and schoolmates would speak to her. She mentioned that even her teachers spoke Cantonese when they were not teaching. This is surprising because when we think of Chinese independent schools nowadays, the impression is that students solely speak Mandarin and they strive to be good at it. This was also the same for her maternal cousins who lived farther away from the city centre of KL. During the discussion, it was found that several factors might have contributed to the prevalent use of Cantonese among HSL's classmates and schoolmates. First and foremost, as HSL repeatedly explained, it was a very natural thing to do. Students did not speak Cantonese at school due to the popularity of Hong Kong pop culture, which she said that the popularity was only felt much later. Secondly, there was no prohibition to speak Cantonese or other dialects at school (however, she had not heard anyone speaking dialects other than Cantonese). This excludes the possibility of students speaking Cantonese for rebellious purposes to exhibit coolness which is quite a normal phenomenon during teenage years. Thirdly, almost all the students at her school were from KL. Fourthly, the unstable and uncertain situation of Mandarin. There was no clear standardised form, though students mainly followed the older style of local Malaysian pronunciation, which was pretty much based on the Southern Chinese version, taught by their Malaysian teachers. Taiwanese Mandarin was another variety of Mandarin that people had more contact with. Therefore, according to HSL, this would more or less render students to resort more to Cantonese to communicate. Furthermore, when she was studying in the USA during her undergraduate years, all her

Chinese Malaysian friends, of which all from KL except one from Seremban, spoke Cantonese, and it did not matter which Chinese subgroup they belonged to. Moreover, during her younger time, one could not distinguish whether someone had received higher education if the person started conversation in Cantonese (as opposed to English or Mandarin) as all the Chinese in KL would do so.

### *Friends*

HSL *often* used Cantonese with her friends. At first, she described her Cantonese usage with her friends whom she always met at an art and cultural centre in Jalan Klang Lama where she has learned Chinese calligraphy and painting for the last few years. As it is a place of refined culture, she automatically uses Mandarin to initiate conversations. People at the centre generally do the same. However, once she got closer with some of the friends, regardless of their Chinese subgroup background, they switched to Cantonese very soon, and it did not take a long time, maybe just after one or two times of meeting. This is because there was a sense of intimacy felt when conversing in Cantonese. She recalled that when she was learning singing at an academy when she was much younger, everybody spoke solely Cantonese.

Nonetheless, she did admit that those friends whom she spoke Cantonese to at the art and cultural centre were mainly born around the 1960s – 1970s. She recounted her experience at a spiritual centre where she learned about improvement of mind and soul. She had joined the centre for quite a few years and initially she spoke Cantonese to all her friends there. However, things changed around 2018. New members around the age of 20 to 30 started to speak Mandarin. As previously she had encountered quite a few cases of vicenarians (those in their twenties) being unable to speak in Cantonese, she automatically spoke Mandarin without trying to switch to Cantonese.



Those around her age always had a perception that their own Mandarin was not very standardised and well-spoken. She recalled once when she was speaking Mandarin with friends similar to her age, some younger friends tried to correct their pronunciation. It is quite common for Malaysian Chinese born in the 1960s and earlier to speak an older Southern-style Mandarin which those born later tend to perceive as broken Mandarin. However, she actually could not accept ‘the more standardised form of Mandarin’ which was spoken by younger friends born around the 1980s onwards. She could not even understand some of the words due to different pronunciation and choice of words. Due to the alienation from the newer version of Mandarin, she prefers to speak Cantonese when possible.

### ***Work***

When she started her career after graduation, she would use Cantonese to communicate with her customers most of the time. This is especially true when she got closer to her customers. She added that this remains the same until today.

HSL *often* speaks Cantonese with workmates. When she graduated from the USA, she joined a finance company dealing with corporate loans. All her workmates were graduates like her. Other than one or two colleagues who were not originally from KL, all spoke Cantonese. It did not matter whether they were English or Chinese educated. ‘It just happened naturally,’ she explained.

However, due to the formality in certain settings such as meetings, reporting and presentations, she had to use English. This explains why her usage of Cantonese is a bit lower with her superiors and subordinates at work. On the other hand, she added that they would revert back to Cantonese when they were not at settings mentioned above.

Currently, she is managing her family business which is involved in development. During formal meetings, Cantonese is used all the time, regardless of whether her colleagues are of Cantonese origin. Even property agents, young and old, all speak Cantonese.

Based on her observation, she did not think that females would resort to speaking mainstream languages in order to exhibit a higher stature in terms of position, as stated in some studies. Despite this, she did not deny the importance of English when communicating in formal corporate settings. Nonetheless, she admitted that there is a perception among Chinese KL-ites, especially during her younger time, that Cantonese speakers were viewed as being more urban-like, unlike Mandarin speakers who would be perceived as coming from the countryside. She did not think that this phenomenon was caused by the popularity of Hong Kong entertainment culture, because the prevalent use of Cantonese in KL started much earlier, though she did not deny that the influence of Hong Kong pop culture in fortifying the use of Cantonese. She felt that Mandarin is gradually receiving more recognition only in the last ten years or so.

### ***Outside home in general***

Outside home, for example shopping centres and restaurants, she observed that more younger Chinese (denarians and vicenarians) initiated conversation in Mandarin instead of Cantonese though they might be able to speak Cantonese. However, some young people even asked whether she could switch to Mandarin even though she started with and insisted on Cantonese. Initially, she would perceive these Mandarin speakers as non-KL-ites. In the last 10 to 15 years, there have been more cases as such which made her come to a conclusion that these Mandarin speakers were not merely non-KL-ites, but young KL-ites who did not know or did not have the habit of speaking Cantonese. Thus, whenever she sees people with a denarian and vicenarian look, she will naturally and subconsciously start the conversation in Mandarin. She believes that this change has to do with the rise of China economically.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

HSL *strongly agreed* that the knowledge of Cantonese is one of the most crucial factors which have contributed to the success of KL's prosperity and development today. It has played a vital role in uniting people from different backgrounds, educational levels, and social classes as a common language. It made possible for various groups of people to work together to develop KL from Chinatown, expanding to Bukit Bintang area, and transforming into a prosperous city today. Referring back to her family history, they shifted their family language to Cantonese due to trade and business though they were Hokkien. This showed that Cantonese was inseparable with the development of trade. She concluded that Cantonese had definitely been an impetus for KL's success as a capital.

Regarding making Cantonese as one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, she agreed for personal reasons because she would be very happy as she was good at Cantonese, and such a situation would be beneficial to her. On the other hand, she understood why some would oppose this idea, because they might be worried of not being able to speak and write Mandarin properly due to Cantonese interference. She opined that throughout history, when writing literature and formal reports, Mandarin has always been the standard form. Learning to write and speak Mandarin in the proper form is very important for the next generation, especially when China's influence is getting stronger. Unlike during her younger years, Mandarin speakers were generally being looked down upon as Mandarin was linked to backwardness due to the state of political and social turmoil in China and Taiwan.

### ***Integrative orientation***

Based on her response to the questionnaire, she *strongly agreed* that Cantonese was a very important part of being a member of the Chinese community in KL. For the most

part of her life, KL Chinese that she met solely communicated in Cantonese (other than English) most of the time. Cantonese was also very important for herself as an individual, as she felt that Cantonese language and culture was the only type of Chinese culture that she was familiar with. She really appreciated how Cantonese helped KL to grow economically. “Cantonese is a part of my life, a very important part of my life,” she emphasised. When asked whether Hokkien people generally have lower sentiment towards Cantonese, she did not feel this was the case as quite a few of her Hokkien friends put effort into learning Cantonese after they had moved to KL. Speaking from her own life experience and her observation to the surroundings, she concurred that Cantonese is a very important part of the identity of KL Chinese though her belief was a bit shaking when there is a trend that more KL young people cannot speak Cantonese.

Although such linguistic trends made her *agreed* that she is worried about the young generation’s proficiency in Cantonese, she is not extremely troubled as KL Chinese are generally very adaptable and flexible in terms of learning languages. She opined that Chinese in KL have the passion of mastering a new language but to attain proficiency in a particular language does not mean that we should abandon an existing one which we are already quite good at. Learning languages should not be a zero-sum game. In other words, the Chinese community should continue to improve Mandarin but should not put Cantonese aside since it has been with us for such a long time. Nevertheless, she did not think Cantonese would disappear in the foreseeable future as Cantonese entertainment production still has its charm.

When asked what would KL Chinese lose if the next generation did not speak Cantonese anymore, she answered that KL would not be KL anymore, and it would be shrouded with strangeness and unfamiliarity. She was also uncertain whether with the disappearing Cantonese language, certain customs related to Cantonese such as the habit of drinking soup, dining etiquettes, manners of addressing relatives and seniors, which had long

seeped into the culture of other Chinese subgroups, would dissipate. She mentioned that as a citizen of a capital of a nation, KL Chinese should be inclusive, however such inclusiveness would render our local language use and the identity which came with it being diluted.

Despite the change, she was still confident that Cantonese would continue to play its role in KL. Nonetheless, she was not sure which direction Cantonese would be leading with the rise of Mandarin. “I hope that Cantonese can occupy an important domain at least... but which domain?” she wondered.

After a few discussions, she was reminded that the Cantonese in KL is unique compared to Hong Kong and Guangzhou varieties. Having realised this, she concluded that perhaps it is not important which particular domain Cantonese should occupy in the future but it should be an overarching representation of our history and identity. If we start to embrace our variety of Cantonese, which is mixed with Malay, Hakka and elements from other dialects, and recognise the status of our own Cantonese, and understand how KL Cantonese reflects the historical development of KL, then it will intertwine with our core identity. With this idea, we should, perhaps not to the extent of actively promoting, strive to maintain the use of Cantonese.

#### **4.2.1.6 Hokkien Interviewee 02**

KTJ is a male participant who was born in 1996. He is running a chocolate shop in Serdang Raya, and studying for his Master’s degree in International Hospitality Management. He was born in Singapore but moved to KL after two years, and since then he lived in KL for most of the time of her life, except for the two years when he studied in Singapore. He considered himself a ‘KL boy’. He perceives himself as a Hokkien, and both his parents are Hokkien too. He was chosen for the interview because he has extremely low usage of Cantonese both at home and outside, as well as his attitude

towards Cantonese. Another reason is that his paternal family has settled in Malaysia for 8 generations. It was suspected he might be a Baba.

**(a) Cantonese language use**

***Family and neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, he has *never* used Cantonese with almost all his family members before. He explained that he is indeed from a Baba-Nyonya family that originated from Penang. Both of his parents are actually Baba-Nyonya. His parents moved to Singapore with the intention of starting a business (KTJ was born there), however they had to move back to Malaysia due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis, and later they decided to settle in KL (when he was two years old). His parents continued to speak mainly Penangite Hokkien along with English at home. He explained that Penang Baba-Nyonya speak Penangite Hokkien, unlike Malaccan Baba-Nyonya that speak Baba Malay. He said that there are generally lots of Malay loanwords in Penangite Hokkien; for his parents' generation, they would add in some English words; nowadays, young people tend to include Mandarin.

However, he spoke Cantonese with her maternal grandmother who was originally from Johor. Her maternal grandmother was not a Nyonya, but a Cantonese. She could speak not only Cantonese, but also Teochew and Hakka. KTJ would purposely speak Cantonese casually with her just to get the hang of it. He added that his cousins from Singapore would try speaking Cantonese with him whenever they travelled to KL. Due to the Speak Mandarin Campaign launched in 1979, young Singaporeans generally do not have a chance to speak Chinese dialects. Therefore, when his Singaporean cousins were in KL, they tried to expose themselves to Cantonese by speaking it with KTJ. He said that it was like 'the blind leading the blind'. He tried to do his best with his cousins, but he has no confidence to speak Cantonese to people other than his family members.

As for his neighbourhood in Sungai Long, Kajang, most people speak Cantonese. However, as his neighbours know that his family members do not speak Cantonese, they speak Mandarin or English. This explains why he has *never* spoken Cantonese with his neighbours.

He further recounted that he has never encountered a situation where somebody initiated conversation with him in Hokkien. “It is always, first off ... Cantonese!” he sighed. Occasionally he might utter a few sentences of Cantonese if another party insisted on speaking Cantonese, which usually happened at local restaurants. When shopping locally, he speaks English though most of the Chinese in Sungai Long speak Cantonese.

### ***Friends***

According to his response to the questionnaire, he has *never* spoken Cantonese to his friends and closest friends. Bizarrely, when his friends and closest friends speak Cantonese with him, he will listen, understand, and reply in Mandarin! He recalled that this mode of communication went on for hours at his friend’s party a few days ago. This has been the case for years since he knew his friends. His friends are from different Chinese subgroups, mostly Cantonese and Hakka, but they speak fluent Cantonese. He noticed that Hakka especially tend to speak a lot of Cantonese.

With his closest friends who are born around the 1990 – 1995, he uses English because he can express himself the best in this language. His closest friends speak Cantonese well. He attempted to speak Cantonese with them but had to give up because his closest friends laughed at his pronunciation.

### ***School***

In the questionnaire, KTJ responded that he had *never* used Cantonese at school. His kindergarten was in Sungai Long and everybody spoke English. He subsequently went to SJK (C) Batu 11 where he had never heard anyone speak Cantonese because Cantonese

was prohibited. Students had to pay a fine if they spoke languages other than English, Malay, and Mandarin. It was only until Standard 6 that he realised there were other Chinese dialects after he started going home with his friends frequently. Interestingly, he started to realise and developed an awareness that he was a Baba because he experienced cultural shock when he saw his friends' parents not wearing *sarong* at home; neither did his friends eat curry, rendang or food with thick soy sauce – instead, their food was very plain.

After that, he went to SMK Bandar Baru Sungai Long. There was no restriction in using any languages. During his Form 3 time, his classmates set one of the weekdays as 'Cantonese Day' where everybody should speak Cantonese. This lasted for two years but unfortunately, he merely got to learn how to listen to Cantonese. He could not learn to speak and felt left out because the whole class would get very excited to the extent that everybody was speaking too fast. Even now, when he hangs out with his ex-classmates, they speak Cantonese in the same old way and what KTJ can do is just listen.

At university, he studied hospitality and most of his classmates wanted to practise speaking English. Thus, English was the main language and it was rare to hear people speaking other languages. At the campus, Mandarin was used more often especially by students from other states such as Penang. He occasionally heard his KL and Ipoh classmates speaking with each other in Cantonese.

Based on his observation, he noticed that his female friends speak more Cantonese, and get especially lively and excited when doing so. Male friends are more considerate and will switch to Mandarin when talking to him.

### ***Work***

In his previous work involving sales, his boss spoke Cantonese to him but he would reply in Mandarin as usual. He said that his colleagues were 'very confident with their



Cantonese' and did not switch to Mandarin to accommodate him. He did not blame them because he thought that they should go ahead as that was the language his colleagues were most comfortable with.

At his current workplace, most of his staff are either Malay or Bangladeshi, so there is no chance to speak Cantonese. Though he does not speak Cantonese to his customers due to his low proficiency, most of his Chinese customers will initiate the conversation in Cantonese with him. "They just assumed! Then I'll be like... 'why are you so confident that I can speak Cantonese?'" he exclaimed.

### ***Low proficiency in Cantonese***

KTJ explained that several factors caused his low proficiency in Cantonese. As seen above, he was from a Hokkien-Peranakan family where no Cantonese was spoken. At school, the mediums of instruction were solely Mandarin, English and Malay. He only started to notice there were other dialects which were different from Mandarin when he was 12 years old. When he had the opportunity to learn during secondary school, it was a bit too late as his classmates' proficiency in Cantonese was way too advanced.

However, he responded in the questionnaire that he enjoyed watching TV programmes and movies in Cantonese. As most of the non-Cantonese KL-ites learned their Cantonese through Cantonese TV series, it is interesting to find out that why KTJ did not manage to acquire Cantonese at his young age, which will in turn explain the key reason as to why his use of Cantonese is so low.

To one's surprise, it stems from the fact that his father placed great importance on reading the Malay subtitles because his father was worried that their Baba Malay, which was considered *bahasa pasar* (colloquial language, lit. *bazaar language*), would interfere with his learning of the standardised Malay (*bahasa baku*). Therefore, when he was watching

TVB drama series, he ignored the Cantonese speech and focused on reading the Malay subtitles.

He went on to say that between Mandarin and Cantonese pop music, he preferred Mandarin songs from Taiwan and Singapore, such as those from Wayne Lim Jun Jie (林俊傑). He rarely listened to Cantonese songs because of the language barrier. He merely knew a few Cantonese songs, such as those sung by Beyond and Leslie Chung.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

KTJ *disagreed* that Cantonese will help him much in getting better opportunities in business or career. “This is because we are still in a very diverse society; unlike in Hong Kong, if you do not speak Cantonese, then you might face difficulties.” he reasoned. People can still thrive if they know Malay, English, and Mandarin. However, he did not deny the economic value and benefits one would gain in career and business because the number of Cantonese speakers in the KL area is still very large.

Other than this, he *strongly disagreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, and also *strongly disagreed* that Cantonese should be used in school. He opined that we are living in a fast-paced society. Technology is always changing and the methods of education have to always be updated to keep up with the development. It would be more strategic to learn school subjects in the recognised mainstream languages such as Mandarin. This was why Lee Kwan Yew implemented the Speak Mandarin Campaign to make Singapore more competitive. On the other hand, he did not think that Chinese dialects are losing out in Malaysia if we do not teach or use it at schools because there is no restriction in using dialects on media broadcasting as in Singapore. Studying Mandarin at schools in Malaysia is also beneficial for the unity of the Chinese community because it closes the gaps between different dialect groups.

Moreover, he *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL. This is mainly because he has constantly received questions such as “Hey, you’ve lived in KL for so long, you don’t know how to speak Cantonese *meh????*” From this perspective, it occurred to him that if you live in KL, you have the pressure to speak Cantonese. “It is as if Cantonese is the icon of KL.” he added.

### ***Integrative orientation***

He *strongly disagreed* that Cantonese is important for him personally. This is because he does not speak Cantonese and he can live without any hindrance in KL. Nonetheless, he *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL because at the end of the day, it is still the identity and lingua franca of the Chinese community. However, its importance does not go to the extent that it is a must to master Cantonese. With the same reason, he also *strongly disagreed* that as a Chinese in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese.

He *disagreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. He inferred that in a Hokkien village like Batu 11 Cheras, the villagers insist on speaking Hokkien. In addition, people speak mainly Hakka in Hakka villages like Serdang. It is not definite that Cantonese is the best language to represent all Chinese in KL. Cantonese is not compulsory; it is only an added convenience if one could speak Cantonese to those who can speak. He did not *strongly disagree* partly because it is unfair to invalidate the large community of Cantonese people and Cantonese speakers.

He thought that Cantonese is an important part of the identity of the Chinese community in KL from a sociocultural aspect. It is important to understand the history of KL as the locals will open up when you speak a language that they are familiar with. It would be the same in Penang where the locals will be more excited to share their stories more if

one asks them in Hokkien. Nonetheless, He reminded that other Chinese dialects should also be considered as part of the identity of KL Chinese.

He *strongly disagreed* that he was worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese because so many people can still speak Cantonese in KL. He referred to the opposite situation in Singapore where Chinese dialects were so discouraged that they are almost lost. He said the fact that he did not pick up any Chinese dialects was partly due to the influence of his Singaporean relatives who kept instilling the idea that Chinese dialects should be abandoned and one should only focus on Mandarin and English when he was a child. Nonetheless, he shared that the young people from Singapore like his cousins were interested in understanding their roots. As one of his cousins was Cantonese, the cousin always tried to speak Cantonese with him and the locals when he visited KL; KTJ could feel that his cousin was trying to draw sustenance related to his heritage language and culture here in KL. Even some of his Penang friends, who are usually very proud of their Penang-style Hokkien, tried to pick up Cantonese when they were in KL. Therefore, since people from other language backgrounds still aspire to learn Cantonese, and the fact that unlike Singapore where there is no place and interlocutor to practise, he was sure that it is not a lost cause for Cantonese in KL.

#### **4.2.1.7 Hakka Interviewee 01**

PYM is a female participant who was born in 1985. She is a legal officer for an insurance company. She was born and grew up in KL. She considers herself a KL-ite and a Hakka. Her father is Hakka, and her mother is Cantonese. She was chosen for this interview because she has the highest Cantonese use among Hakka participants. Her instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is above average and integrative orientation is extremely high.

## **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

### ***Family and neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, PYM uses Cantonese *all the time* with her family members, except her cousins (*often*) and niblings (*never*). She said this is because her parents speak Cantonese to each other and also to her since she was born. She explained that her father spoke Hopo Hakka with her grandfather who migrated from JieXi (揭西) and Fuichiu Hakka with her grandmother migrated from Hong Kong but somehow her father chose not to teach her the language. Her paternal grandparents did not manage to teach her Hakka too because they passed away when she was too young. Even her Hakka maternal grandmother spoke Cantonese because she lived in Tanjung Tualang, Perak where most Chinese speak Cantonese.

Her paternal cousins who are mostly much older than her (born in the 1970s) speak Cantonese with her though they speak Fuichiu Hakka with each other. She has only one paternal cousin who was born in the 1980s who does not speak Hakka and therefore they speak Cantonese. She speaks Mandarin with her maternal cousins.

Her husband has the same situation as her where though he is a Hakka, his parents and family speak Cantonese since he was born. Therefore, it is only natural that PYM and her husband communicate in Cantonese.

Since she was born, she has been living in Taman Midah, Cheras. In her close neighbourhood, she speaks Cantonese *all the time*, except in recent years she has to start speaking Mandarin to teenagers and vicenarians because they do not speak Cantonese. She also found that girls tend to speak Mandarin probably because they are more conforming. The probability of men speaking Cantonese is much higher.

### ***Friends***

PYM uses Cantonese *sometimes* with her friends and *often* with closest friends. Most of her friends are almost the same age as her, and he speaks Cantonese to slightly more than half of these friends. With her close friends, the use of Cantonese is even more. She has never spoken Mandarin to her friends. With those who are from Penang or English educated, she speaks English. It does not come to her mind which Chinese subgroup that they belong to.

### ***School***

PYM responded that she *seldom* used Cantonese with classmates, and *often* with schoolmates. In SJK (C) Tsun Jin (循人華小) located in Taman Maluri, dialects were prohibited and corporal punishment would be imposed. She was very unconvinced why her home language and mother tongue were banned so forcefully. She recalled that boys were indeed more unruly and spoke more Cantonese.

In SMK Pudu Girl School where 70% of the students were Chinese, no prohibition was imposed on the use of Cantonese. She spoke Cantonese with classmates and schoolmates. She did not speak Mandarin at all. When she was studying A Levels in TAR College and law in Advance Tertiary College in KL, most of her friends were Indian, and she spoke Cantonese with a few Chinese friends

### ***Work***

PYM *seldom* speaks Cantonese with her workmates, and *never* with her superiors and subordinates. This is because English is the main language in her line of work. The occasional use of Cantonese happens when she discusses private matters with some colleagues though she started speaking solely Cantonese with a colleague who originated from Ipoh recently. Most of her colleagues do not speak Mandarin. Her superior is a Sarawakian Chinese who does not know Cantonese. She does not think that women tend

to speak mainstream language for the sake of status. Her answer of Cantonese use with customers is *never* because she rarely has the opportunity to meet them directly.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

PYM *strongly disagreed* that Cantonese helps her in getting better opportunities in her career because she is not involved in business but office paperwork which involves reviewing agreements in English. In fact, it is not suitable to speak Cantonese in her office. However, she does not deny the fact that Cantonese is very useful for business dealings in KL.

Nonetheless, she *agreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, and it should be used in school. Firstly, Cantonese is truly her *mother tongue* as her mother is a Cantonese. She opined that Mandarin has no natural relationship with her and most of the Chinese in Malaysia right at the beginning. To say that Mandarin is the *mother tongue* or *the language* for Chinese in Malaysia is quite absurd. She explained that her primary school SJK (C) Tsun Jin was founded by Fuichiu Hakka and now the use of Hakka is prohibited. “What logic is this?” she argued with resentment.

She *agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL, especially in the past. She has a reservation now because she saw that her cousins, friends and colleagues who can speak Cantonese do not expose their children to Cantonese. The eldest of these children are already in their twenties. Overall, it is still highly regarded in the present moment because at least one can still see most people in KL speak Cantonese, unlike places like Johor and Singapore where Mandarin has already occupied the domains for dialects.

### *Integrative attitude*

PYM *agreed* that Cantonese is important for her because it is her mother tongue which is intimately related to her heritage and bloodline. She also *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL and is the language which best represents them because it has been the prestige language for a long time and is truly *the language* of KL Chinese. “Mandarin has no natural direct connection right at the beginning and was somehow imposed and enforced upon us.” Moreover, there are lots of common Cantonese phrases that have very ancient origins and have to be preserved. Due to this reason, she *agreed* that Chinese in KL should be able to speak Cantonese and especially to their children as they are now more exposed to Mainland Chinese media to reverse the loss of Cantonese. KL Chinese will lose this important part of their identity which used to and still play a role in connecting and uniting different Chinese communities, especially when one considers that Cantonese spoken in KL is unique with its slightly peculiar grammar and mixture with different languages.

She *strongly agreed* that she enjoys Cantonese movies. However, the production of Cantonese after 2000 declined tremendously. Except for Taiwanese variety shows, she rarely watches Mandarin programmes.

#### **4.2.1.8 Hakka Interviewee 02**

LWY is a male participant who was born in 1988. He is a personal assistant. He is also a Cantonese opera actor. He is a Fuichiu Hakka who was born and grew up in Kepong, KL. His father is Hakka and mother is Hokkien. He was chosen for this interview because his Cantonese use at home is very high though none of his parents are Cantonese. His instrumental and integrative orientations towards Cantonese are very high.



## **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

### ***Family and neighbourhood***

From the questionnaire, LWY uses Cantonese with his family members *all the time*. His father did not learn Mandarin because he was English educated, and speak Cantonese and English. His grandfather had already started speaking Cantonese with his father. Even between his paternal grandparents, LWY heard them speaking Cantonese most of the time. LWY's mother is Hokkien but was raised speaking Hakka in the family because of the influence of LWY's maternal grandmother, who was a Hakka.

LWY speaks Cantonese with his siblings since he started primary school though prior to that his father spoke English with them. With his niblings on his father's side, they mainly speak Cantonese; whilst with maternal niblings, they speak English.

He has been living in the same neighbourhood in Kepong where Cantonese-speaking Chinese are the largest ethnic group. It is therefore only natural and convenient for him to speak Cantonese with his neighbours and when he goes shopping locally. He indicated in the questionnaire that he spoke Cantonese less during childhood because his father spoke English with them before he was seven years old and due to the Mandarin policy in primary and secondary schools. However, in other areas of KL, he will only initiate conversation in Cantonese sometimes because there have been many people from other states who do not speak Cantonese coming in to KL. He usually starts with English at high-end locations or shopping malls, but converse in Cantonese at more casual places such as markets.

### ***Friends***

He uses Cantonese *often* with his friends and closest friends mainly because Cantonese is his family language and since Cantonese is so common in KL, it is the most convenient choice. Another reason is that Cantonese has a more sense of humour, using Cantonese

for sarcasm is more subtle and well-placed. With his close friends during childhood, he spoke Cantonese all the time despite the prohibition in school, especially when teachers were not around. At secondary school, he had close friends who insisted on speaking Mandarin. At university, he spoke Mandarin with a few who could not speak Cantonese fluently.

### ***School***

Due to the prohibition during primary school starting from standard 3 or 4, he rarely used Cantonese. It was announced that a fine would be incurred but it was never implemented. Occasionally, warning would be given by teachers but this did not stop him from speaking with classmates when the teachers were not present. He found that gender was not the determining factor but the grade of class – students in good grade classes were more conforming while those in lower grade classes did not care about the language rules. There was no such prohibition in his secondary school SMK Taman Bukit Maluri and therefore his use of Cantonese increased.

During the time when he was studying at UTAR, as there were many schoolmates from other states, he subconsciously initiated his conversation in Mandarin though he would switch to Cantonese later if the other party could speak fluent Cantonese.

### ***Work***

LWY indicated that he speaks Cantonese *often* with workmates, but *rarely* with superiors and subordinates. In most of his previous jobs, English had to be spoken with superiors and subordinates due to formality. However, his current boss likes speaking Cantonese with him. With workmates, it is impossible to speak Cantonese all the time because there are other races. He uses Cantonese *sometimes* with his customers because not all of them initiated conversation in Cantonese.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

LWY *strongly agreed* that Cantonese will help him much in getting better opportunities in business or career because it happened to be that most of his bosses speak Cantonese. As the bosses are rich and surrounded by wealthy people who speak the same language, knowing Cantonese helps build connections.

He *agreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL, and should be used in school. Dialects like Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Hokkien have preserved the characteristics of Middle Chinese and they are valuable gemstones to be protected and promoted. Chances of them being successfully maintained will be greatly increased if these languages are introduced in the classroom. At least some introduction has to be made in the classroom to inform the students that such languages exist. It is a ludicrous thing to prohibit dialects with the reason that they would affect the proper learning of Mandarin. By the same logic, schools should prohibit the use of English or Malay so that students will be freed from any interference when learning Mandarin. Perhaps it would be more politically correct for students to learn only Malay because it is the official language and all other languages should be banned to ensure the pristine and sanctity of Malay.

He *agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL because of the language phenomenon in local Chinese radio stations. Private radio stations broadcast Mandarin and Cantonese programmes for the whole day. Other dialects do not exist or merely exist in a few-minute slot. It is the same for local Chinese TV programmes. However, such high regard is not reflected in other domains.

### ***Integrative orientation***

LWY *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is important for him mainly because he is a Cantonese Opera actor. Yet, he does not consider it as his mother tongue due to his Hakka background.

He *agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL because it has been the mainstream language. However, in recent years, it is not crucially important because of the Mandarin policy implemented in schools. It seems that KL Chinese do not really care whether the status of Cantonese is declining because they are multilingual and are very adaptable in language.

As the majority of KL Chinese speak Cantonese, he *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL, and as a Chinese in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese. He *agreed* that Cantonese is an important part of the identity of the Chinese community in KL because he could not think of anything else which is equally symbolic. However, as KL is becoming a melting pot and as the time is changing, newcomers from other states may not do as the Romans do. In the old times, there were many people who could not speak good Mandarin. With the Mandarin policy implemented in schools, a new generation who can speak relatively fluent Mandarin has been created. Now, there are more people who can speak Mandarin than those who can speak Cantonese. He mentioned that those born from the 1970s onwards can speak Mandarin well. He predicted that Cantonese is becoming unnecessary and may only be the language of those who want to preserve it as their heritage language. As to what KL Chinese will lose if young people do not speak Cantonese anymore, he answered that language is a mere tool for communication and thus it does not matter much if it is lost. Cantonese was not spoken in KL a few hundred years ago. Who knows what will happen in a few hundred years to come as change is a constant? Nonetheless, as a *cantonised* Hakka, he agreed that Hakka generally have higher acceptance to Cantonese language and culture because they originated from Guangdong province after all. It is also because

Hakka identity is not defined by geographical boundaries and thus Hakka is more flexible in accepting other cultures.

He also enjoys Cantonese TV shows very much. During his primary and secondary school time, it was the peak of the popularity of TVB series. The storyline, screenwriting, editing, and themes were slightly better than Taiwan's and much better than Mainland's productions. However, he opined that TV shows from Hong Kong have greatly regressed.

#### **4.2.1.9 Cantonese Interviewee 01**

WSY is a female participant who was born in 1972. She is responsible for the sales and tea education in her company. She was born and raised in Batu Arang, Selangor. She has been living in KL for 17 years and considers herself as a KL-ite. She is Cantonese. Her father is Cantonese and her mother is Kwongsai. She was chosen for this interview because although she is Cantonese her Cantonese language use is only average. It is also worth exploring how she will teach her children Cantonese. Her instrumental orientation towards Cantonese is quite low and integrative orientation is not that high.

##### **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

###### ***Family and neighbourhood***

WSY's paternal grandparents migrated from Toishan, Guangdong to Batu Arang, Selangor. Her grandparents spoke Seiyap dialect with their close neighbours though the majority of the Chinese in Batu Arang spoke Hakka. However, WSY's father and his siblings did not learn Seiyap dialect. WSY has not really heard her mother, who was born and raised in Kalumpang, Selangor, speaks the Kwongsai dialect as her mother speaks Cantonese with her maternal family. WSY grew up speaking Cantonese with her parents and siblings *all the time*. Now, she lives in the Old Klang Road area where most people speak Cantonese. Thus, she speaks Cantonese *all the time* when shopping locally. In other

areas of KL, she also speaks Cantonese *often* to strangers as most of the people she encountered speak the language.

She speaks Cantonese to her husband *sometimes* although they started speaking Cantonese more frequently in the last 5 to 8 years. They started with speaking Mandarin when they dated each other when both of them were working in the cultural industry in Jalan Sultan, Chinatown KL. Though a Hokkien of Tsin-kang origin, her husband likes speaking Cantonese with his friends, even his childhood friends in Teluk Intan. She added that she particularly preferred speaking Cantonese with her husband when things should be kept secret from her children because her children did not really understand Cantonese when they were much younger. She speaks Mandarin almost all the time with her children and they were not exposed to much Hong Kong TV shows. However, her daughter managed to learn Cantonese at the nursery, and has improved her spoken Cantonese greatly recently after attending secondary school. In recent years, WSY is speaking more Cantonese with her children because she realised that it is also important to master this language because there are many people who can speak Cantonese in KL.

In the questionnaire, she answered that she speaks Cantonese to her niblings *sometimes*. Niblings on the side of her family are able to speak Cantonese but those on her husband's side cannot though they live in KL.

### ***School***

WSY responded in the questionnaire that she *sometimes* used Cantonese with classmates and schoolmates. She went to a kindergarten in Batu Arang where all schoolmates spoke Hakka and Cantonese. In primary school, she went to SJK (C) Chap Khuan, Batu Arang where classmates naturally spoke Hakka and Cantonese up to Standard 5 when a fine of 50 cents would be incurred if dialects were spoken. Then, she went to Kuen Cheng High School where it was also stipulated that dialects were prohibited though the school did

not have to really implement it as students had already been trained to speak only Mandarin. However, this did not stop WSY speaking Cantonese privately with her schoolmates. Subsequently, she attended the Malaysian Institute of Art where most students spoke Mandarin and English. She explained this was because most students were from different states. Only two of her close friends spoke Cantonese at that time.

### ***Friends***

WSY uses Cantonese *often* with her friends and closest friends. There is no other reason but simply because all her friends are KL-ites, and their Chinese subgroup origin does not matter at all. Some of her friends whom she privately spoke Cantonese to at school continue their communication in Cantonese until today.

### ***Work***

WSY speaks Cantonese *sometimes* with her workmates. As to how they started with Cantonese, she said it was based on intuition in the sense that she could somehow sense whether a colleague could speak Cantonese. Her colleagues who speak Cantonese with her are mostly KL-ites. Those who originated from Penang, Johor and Klang speak Hokkien to each other. Another group of colleagues speak Mandarin. Her boss likes speaking Cantonese to her but Mandarin with others. In formal meetings, only Mandarin is used. She did not feel that women use particularly more Mandarin at work than men though she agreed that some men and women may resort to English in the attempt to exhibit higher status.

With customers, she speaks Cantonese *sometimes*. It is usually the customers who start asking about the products. If the customer speaks Cantonese, she will respond in Cantonese. Though she noticed that young customers in their twenties tend to speak Mandarin in the last few years or so, as most of her customers are 35 years old and above,

she does not feel that there are too many changes in the use of Cantonese from her customers.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

WSY responded in the questionnaire that she *strongly disagrees* that Cantonese should be one of the official languages of Malaysia. Though she is Cantonese and she likes Cantonese very much, she was considering the reality and the trend where Mandarin is gaining popularity very fast. It cannot be denied that Mandarin is an international language.

WSY also *strongly disagreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction and be used in Chinese schools because if Cantonese is chosen, there will be lots of disputes as to why other dialects are not listed as the medium of instruction as well. For her, Mandarin is more neutral. However, she did not object to the introduction of Cantonese as a separate subject. Even if an exam has to be taken for the Cantonese subject, it should not be a problem as children are not as fragile as we think and should be able to handle the learning.

### ***Integrative orientation***

As to whether Cantonese is important for her personally, she *disagreed* because if she does not speak Cantonese, it does not affect her daily life. It will be a more serious matter if she does not speak Malay or English. Nonetheless, she *agreed* that Cantonese is an important part of the identity of KL Chinese, maybe just because she is Cantonese; for others who are not Cantonese, they would probably disagree. She compared Cantonese to a saucer - in a complete tea set, it is a perfect thing to have a beautiful saucer; however, if the saucer disappears one day, it will not affect your drinking tea at all although it is a pity.



From her questionnaire response, it can be seen that she does not enjoy Cantonese entertainment. She listens to Mandarin songs most of the time, except during her primary school time (in the 1980s) when the Hong Kong TV Show Jade Solid Gold (勁歌金曲) was extremely popular. She also paid attention to the famous Hong Kong band Beyond. Other than these, she prefers listening to Mandarin songs because Mandarin is her stronger language and therefore it is easier to understand the lyrics of Mandarin songs.

#### **4.2.1.10 Cantonese Interviewee 02**

LSS is a female participant who was born in 1967. She specialised in IT. She was born and raised in Seremban. She has been living in KL for 36 years and considers herself a KL-ite. She perceives herself as a Cantonese. Her father is Cantonese and her mother is Hakka. She was chosen for this interview because she is a Cantonese who has the highest average score for Cantonese language use and language attitude.

##### **(a) Cantonese Language Use**

###### ***Family and neighbours***

From the questionnaire, LSS uses Cantonese with her family members *all the time*. Probing further, her grandparents were born in Sunning/Toishan (新寧/台山), Guangdong and they went to the Netherlands after marriage. When World War II broke out, they escaped to Penang and eventually settled down in Seremban. Her grandmother lived until 104 years old and passed away in 1991. Due to the longevity of her grandmother, she managed to learn Sunning/Toishan dialect.

LSS's mother is a Dunggon (東莞) Hakka born in Bidor, Perak. LSS's mother speaks Hakka with her parents and siblings. However, all of LSS's uncles and aunts speak Cantonese to LSS because they perceive her as Cantonese.

LSS's parents speak only Cantonese to her. Her Hakka mother adopted Seiyap and Cantonese culture which is particularly reflected in her cooking – *savoury soup* and *sweet soup* (湯水、糖水) are served with meals; pomelo skin and mandarin skin are used for cooking.

With her own children, she insists on teaching them Cantonese. However, she noticed that her children once refused to speak Cantonese at home because most of their peers in the nursery did not speak dialects.

LSS uses Cantonese in her neighbourhood *all the time*, and it has not changed much until today. LSS grew up in the city centre Seremban, a Cantonese-speaking town though there were many Hakka speakers in surrounding villages. In the city centre, all Chinese spoke Cantonese regardless of their subgroup background. When she moved to KL to study for college at the age of 20, she found that the language environment in KL was no different from her hometown. After getting married, she moved to Serdang with her husband. Although most people speak Hakka, they speak Cantonese without any hindrance. In addition to speaking lots of Cantonese, she also uses Hakka when she goes shopping, hoping that the vendors will give her a good price. She usually initiates conversation with strangers in Cantonese *all the time* in KL because she thinks that Cantonese is the mainstream and people from other states should do as the Romans do.

Surprisingly, she used Cantonese with the police before. This happened when she made a police report in Serdang at midnight. The person whom she reported to was a part-time officer who was trained to take statements. She said the officer was a woman who was hired because of the large population of Hakka in Serdang. Moreover, she has spoken Cantonese with Chinese officers in many government departments such as the income tax department at Jalan Duta. She said that she does not notice any gender difference in terms of Cantonese use.

### ***Friends***

LSS uses Cantonese *all the time* with her friends and closest friends. She has normal friends from different age groups and it just happened naturally that they started with Cantonese because they are in KL. Her closest friends are mostly Hakka. The youngest is 15 years younger than her, and some are older. She agreed that Cantonese is somehow more distant for Hokkiens, and therefore naturally she has very few Hokkien friends.

### ***School***

LSS used Cantonese *all the time* with classmates and classmates. She started her primary education in a *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)* in Seremban. Though there was no official prohibition of speaking dialects, some teachers discouraged them from speaking dialects and threatened them with punishment. However, as the punishment had never been implemented and the teachers spoke dialects among themselves openly, the students did not really care. Subsequently, she went to SMK Tunku Ampuan Najihah where all Chinese students communicated mainly in Cantonese and there was no prohibition on speaking Chinese dialects. Then, she went to Tunku Abdul Rahman College where there were many students from other states who could not speak Cantonese. She would still insist on speaking Cantonese unless after trying hard the other party really could not adapt. Some of her lecturers were actually quite curious why she was so insistent on speaking Cantonese. She did not feel that there was any gender difference in Cantonese usage at school.

### ***Work***

LSS speaks Cantonese *all the time* with her workmates, superiors and subordinates to the extent that her colleagues thought that she does not know Mandarin at all and were surprised when they heard her uttered a few words of Mandarin. Her colleagues are mostly KL-ites, and even those from other states speak Cantonese in the office.

She also uses Cantonese *all the time* with customers. This is because most of her Malaysian clients are from KL and only a few from other states. She also has many clients from Hong Kong and Macao.

## **(b) Language Attitude towards Cantonese**

### ***Instrumental orientation***

LSS *strongly agreed* that Cantonese helps her much in getting better opportunities in business or career because it enables her to get clients from Hong Kong and Macao. She also *strongly agreed* that Cantonese should be one of the mediums of instruction in Chinese schools in KL. Though it is difficult to implement in reality, it is a good thing to have. She explained that the influence from Mainland China can be seen since Malaysian Chinese schools changed to simplified Chinese and follow the official pronunciation based on Beijing. It is a global trend which is happening at the macro level that we cannot stop but we can do something in the micro environment starting from our family and community. To offer Cantonese as a subject should not be viewed as creating something new but preserving and continuing what we have already had. If it is difficult to be done at home, as can be seen from the mindset of parents who speak exclusively Mandarin and English with their children, we have to resort to schools. It will be better if we have a Cantonese subject which teaches children the language formally. Or at least create co-curricular societies for Chinese dialects to expose our younger generation to these languages. Action has to be taken fast because our heritage languages will disappear in a blink of an eye and she does not want to see that we turn into a monotonous linguistic society like Singapore. Most of the romanised Chinese school names are actually spelt in Cantonese or Hakka – if we lose our dialects, how should the next generation have real understanding as to why their school names are spelt as such? Nonetheless, she agreed that oftentimes it is the Chinese schools that suppress the use of Chinese dialects the most compared to the national schools which do not impose such prohibition.

LSS also *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is highly regarded by the Chinese community in KL. When she was in Seremban, she always heard from her friends and sister that one had to learn Cantonese in order to survive in KL. Her sister told her that her colleagues from Penang and Sarawak who did not speak Cantonese could not even order food. When she started working in KL in the 1990s, she did feel the importance of Cantonese. At that time, if one speaks Mandarin, people would “start to look at you up and down”. This was even more true in the corporate world – if one could not speak Cantonese, their colleagues would ‘show you their true colours’. She also noticed that KL-ites could still speak their dialects during those days, especially Cantonese and Hakka, even if they did not attend Chinese schools because it was learnt in the family.

### ***Integrative orientation***

LSS *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is important for her personally because it represents her identity as a Cantonese and a Toishanese. She recalled how her father taught her reading Chinese character on billboards and posters in Cantonese. She feels that Tang poems rhyme better if chanted using Cantonese due to its closeness to Middle Chinese. She likes listening to Cantonese songs because the artistic conception brought out by Cantonese lyrics are beyond the reach of Mandarin lyrics.

She also *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is important for the Chinese community in KL. She reasoned that KL Chinese and/or Cantonese are subsets of the larger Chinese community in Malaysia. If we do not value and defend our language and the identity it represents, other Chinese communities will not take it seriously either, and our status will be marginalized. Cantonese is an important part of the identity of KL Chinese, especially if we realise that KL Cantonese is unique and cannot be duplicated in any other places in the world. KL Cantonese reflects the unique characteristics of the Chinese who survived in Malaysia in our generation. We have to also remember that KL Chinese started

speaking Cantonese way before the popularity of Cantonese pop culture from Hong Kong.

If we lose the passion and love towards KL Cantonese, we lose our soul.

Moreover, LSS *strongly agreed* that Cantonese is the language which best represents the Chinese community in KL. Since the opening of KL, Cantonese has been the common language, especially in business and trade, although the people who communicate in Cantonese are not all Cantonese. This represents the mainstream culture in KL. However, the use of Cantonese has been weakening recently because more and more people are beginning to use Mandarin as their first language, and also partly due to the cohesion of the Cantonese community is not as strong as before. She also *strongly agreed* that as a Chinese person in KL, one should be able to speak Cantonese. She admitted that Mandarin can also work, but personally she insisted that we should maintain the existing status of Cantonese. People from other states should do as the Romans do when they are in KL.

LSS *strongly agreed* that she is worried about the young generation's low proficiency in Cantonese which she noticed around 20 years ago. Parents of her generation do not speak dialects with their children but only Mandarin or English. Young workers in the shopping malls do not speak Cantonese. Even her sister speaks English with her kids. She opined that this is a huge mistake as children can learn the mainstream languages when they attend schools. Parents should teach their heritage language to their children at home or else there will be no more ideal place to do so.

Finally, LSS *strongly agreed* that she enjoys Cantonese entertainment shows. She explained that there have been changes every ten years. In the 1960s to early 1970s, she watched mostly 'Cantonese long films' (粵語長片) acted by Patrick Tse Ka Yuk (謝賢), Lee Heung Kam (李香琴), and listened to songs from The Wynners (溫拿五虎). She remembered that *Cantonese songs* (粵曲) such as 'The Sexual World (色情世界)' were

played every time before a movie was shown in the cinema. When she was in primary school, Cantonese celebrities such as Teresa Carpio (杜麗莎) from Hong Kong and Cheng Kam Cheong (鄭錦昌) from Malaysia were her favourites. She recalled how everyone is obsessed with the theme song of the Hong Kong movie 'Golden Ten Years (黃金十年)' – 'The Ruin of Infatuation (癡心的廢墟)', sung by Alan Tam - in Petaling Street, every household and shophouse were playing it. In the 1990s, Anita Mui (梅豔芳) and Leslie Cheung (張國榮) reached their peak of popularity. However, after the popularity of Eason Chan (陳奕迅), she has not heard any Cantonese songs that are as interesting, and the production of Hong Kong Cantonese songs have declined. She was also shocked to see the subtle change of Hong Kong society portrayed in a recent TV series – instead of responding 'yes sir! thank you sir!' in English to their superior, the police officer merely said 'yes (有)' in Cantonese. She has never seen such a phenomenon in any Hong Kong TV series before – this is the very first one. She could feel that there is a strong pressure of assimilation from the culture of Northern China – recent social movements in Hong Kong may reflect itself as political, but her concern is that it will sooner or later extend to culture and language.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**Research Question 1:** *How frequently do Chinese Malaysians in KL communicate with different interlocutors in different domains in Cantonese?*

From the questionnaire analysis, roughly one-third of the participants speak Cantonese regularly in the home domain. This proportion is similar to Wang (2010, 2021). It can be seen that the home domain is not where the popularity of Cantonese in KL lies as Cantonese does not form the majority of the Chinese population. This is despite Cantonese having successfully entered non-Cantonese families and become their family language and mother tongue, where it was also mentioned in Wang and Chong (2011) that Cantonese induced language shift of other subgroups. Nonetheless, from the account of the interviewees, it seems that Cantonese still has a strong presence in the life of KL Chinese in the family domain (in the sense that some are *cantonised*). It can be seen that six out of eight families of non-Cantonese interviewees have been *cantonised*, and it often happened during their parents' generation regardless of which decades the interviewees were born. Even their non-Cantonese spouses were *cantonised* since their parents' generation. This also provides a clue as to why some participants speak Cantonese with their life partner with such high frequency as reflected in the questionnaire. Those who mentioned their children did say that they speak Cantonese with their children but often mixed with Mandarin. Wang (2010, 2012, 2021), and Wang and Chong (2011) reported a much less use of Cantonese with younger siblings compared to older family members, which is not the case for this study. However, none of these previous studies reported the use of Cantonese with the next generation. It is very low on average as shown by quantitative data.

It is the use in public domain that matters in terms of popularity, without which Cantonese will be reduced to a minority language and become a mere home language of Cantonese and those who have been *cantonised*. There are still many neighbourhoods in KL where



Cantonese still plays a vital role for daily dealings. From the description provided by the interviewees, residential areas in KL such as Kepong, Ampang, Cheras, Old Klang Road, and adjacent Selangor areas such as Kajang and Serdang, are still dominated by Cantonese though there are signs that those under twenties do not have the habit of speaking Cantonese.

In Wang and Chong (2011), Cantonese was used in almost all public settings studied. Wang (2012) mentioned that Cantonese was frequently used in informal domains such as markets, food courts, and workplaces. Wang (2010) observed that the use of Cantonese was relatively high in informal domains such as coffee shops compared to more formal domains like shopping centres. Similar pattern is found in this study, where the use of Cantonese is the highest in markets and much lower in shopping centres.

As previous studies merely reported on the use of Cantonese of students, no information at workplaces were provided. At workplaces, Cantonese is used with workmates but less when the participants are acting in the capacity of superiors or subordinates. It seems like none of the interviewees have escaped the presence of Cantonese. A few shared how being able to speak Cantonese has expanded their career and business to Hong Kong, Macau and China. Some did not agree that Cantonese is helpful for their career but they are aware that it is because they are not doing business. We can also see from both quantitative and qualitative data that Cantonese still plays an important role in business. Interviewees born in the 1960s described that one would be somehow looked down upon if one could not speak Cantonese in the office. None of the female interviewees agreed that women resort to language in the attempt to exhibit status.

From the questionnaire, most participants have spoken Cantonese to their friends quite frequently. Almost all interviewees speak Cantonese with their close friends except for one whose close friend is an Indian. This is even true for a Baba interviewee who speaks very limited Cantonese as his friends are so insistent on Cantonese. Though their schools

prohibited Cantonese, those friends whom they still keep in touch with speak Cantonese. There were three participants who mentioned the high usage of Cantonese by their Hakka friends, and one agreed that Hokkiens generally do not speak Cantonese much and thus naturally she has very few Hokkien friends

At school, the use of Cantonese is very low. The use of Cantonese during childhood in the questionnaire reflects that participants generally spoke less Cantonese when they were children. However, to predict that Cantonese will decline and disappear solely based on the use of Cantonese among primary and secondary students (Wang 2010, 2012, 2021) may not be complete because Cantonese is not encouraged at schools. Not only that Cantonese is not prohibited in the public domains, it is still widely spoken. There is a possibility that one will gradually improve their Cantonese in the society after leaving their schools. The accounts from the 10 interviewees provide a more detailed picture. Interviewees born in the 1960s have never experienced the banning of dialects. It seems like dialect prohibition started during the primary school time of those born in the 1970s where one interviewee stated that it commenced from Standard 5 (year 1983) onwards. Those born from the 1980s went through such prohibition during primary school time where implementation was the strictest but relaxed during secondary school years because the students were already trained not to speak dialects. It seems that those who studied in SMK secondary schools did not face such prohibition. Interestingly, such prohibition at school did not stop the interviewees and their friends speaking Cantonese.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the factors which have contributed to the frequency of use of Cantonese?*

From the analysis of quantitative data, factors which may affect the frequency of Cantonese language use are the Chinese subgroup background of the participants,

subgroup background of their parents, educational level of parents, birthplace, proficiency of Cantonese, self-perceived identity of the individual, gender, and age. Qualitative interviews show that family culture, neighbourhood, school policy, occupation, environment of workplace, era which the person lives in, mindset of parents, attitude of a person towards Cantonese, and popular entertainment culture are other elements that will affect the frequency of Cantonese language use and the attitude towards Cantonese.

Subgroup background is an important factor. Among the three largest Chinese subgroup communities, i.e., Hokkien, Hakka, and Cantonese, Hokkien people generally have the lowest use of and attitude towards Cantonese. It is discovered that Hakka tend to use more Cantonese language outside home than Cantonese participants themselves.

In terms of the influence of parents, it is found that participants with Cantonese mother tend to use more Cantonese at home than those with Cantonese father. The data does show a general pattern where participants with parents who attended tertiary education have lower use of and attitude towards Cantonese.

Those who were born in 'Cantonese-speaking states (excluding KL)' have the highest average frequency of Cantonese usage in both family and public domains, and the most positive attitude towards Cantonese. Those who were born in KL have slightly lower average use and attitude, which is most probably due to the more diverse Chinese population in KL. Non-Cantonese-speaking states, mostly dominated by Hokkien dialects, have much lower average use of and attitude towards Cantonese. Generally, those who were not born in KL but consider themselves as KL-ite exhibit higher usage of and attitude towards Cantonese than their counterparts. The participants also show very high integrative attitude and the majority of them do consider Cantonese representing the identity of Chinese community in KL.

Those who perceived themselves as speaking better Cantonese have higher Cantonese language use and attitude. When the participants are categorised into decades of birth, it can be seen that averagely, the younger the participant, the less Cantonese they use in public domain. It is also found that female participants use more Cantonese than male participants with friends and co-workers, and have more positive attitude towards Cantonese.

In terms of gender, quantitative data indicate that female participants prefer and use more Cantonese than male on average, which is the opposite from Wang (2021). Two interviewees mentioned that their female classmates did speak much more Cantonese. One reasoned that it might be due to the popularity of Hong Kong pop culture. This provides insight as to why sometimes women use more Cantonese than males as shown in the questionnaire. One interviewee observed that male students do speak Cantonese at school due to rebelliousness and coolness. A few interviewees said students from lower grade classes do speak more Cantonese.

Wang and Chong (2011) illustrated hierarchical factors which determine language maintenance and shift - population, status, institutional support, and mode of settlement. Applying the hierarchical model to this study, it is discovered that population played an important role especially during the shaping stage towards a prestige language for inter-subgroup communication. It is found that status can be a determining factor when there is a competition between two groups which have similar number of populations. Together with institutional support which comes mainly from media and Cantonese communities abroad, Cantonese has retained its popularity despite the decreasing percentage of population, especially when Hokkien became the largest community in Kuala Lumpur (Wen & Wong 2021). Mode of settlement might have contributed to the rise of Cantonese when the Cantonese people settled in large numbers concentrated in the city centre. It is

submitted that subgroup identity, and language environment in the family and neighbourhood exert much greater influence to language use and attitude.

It is also interesting to discover that the popularity and vitality of Cantonese are not due to the number of populations of the Cantonese in KL since Cantonese people are not the most populous Chinese subgroup. Its position is kind of similar to English in Malaysia, where the population of native speakers of English has always been so rare since the starting of British rule, yet it has been so widely used in many domains. The odd thing about Cantonese is that it had never been made an official language in the government as English, nor an officially enshrined lingua franca for the Chinese community and associations in KL since 19th century, nor did it serve as the medium of instruction in all Chinese schools like Mandarin. In the past, it was because of the elevated status of Cantonese leaders in KL and their contribution in commercial and business realms that set the foundation of Cantonese as the prestige dialect. The fact that Cantonese was the official and urban language in Guangdong, where most of the Chinese immigrants in KL originated from, including Hakka, Teochew and Hainanese at that time, played an important factor of making Cantonese the prestige dialect. The success of Hong Kong entertainment industry during British rule from the 1950s to 1980s, coinciding with the close-door Mainland China and the martial-law period of Taiwan, pushed the status of Cantonese to an unprecedented high ground. However, with the seemingly waning Cantonese entertainment production from Hong Kong and its decreasing status as a free-trade and financial centre (Filipovski, 2023; Millson & Bloomberg, 2022), which coincide with the relatively low usage of Cantonese of those born in 1990s in KL, one would wonder how Cantonese could revive its past glory and maintain its current vitality. Fortunately, the attitude towards Cantonese is very high and it can be seen that Chinese community in KL does relate their identity with Cantonese. As we can see, the use and attitude of Cantonese by Hakka community are important to maintain its current status as

the prestige dialect, without which Cantonese will just be a heritage language for the Cantonese subgroup community, as from this study the Hokkien community does not show as much interest in the language and other subgroups are too small in terms of population to exert any significant influence.

**Research Question 3:** *How is the attitude of Chinese Malaysians in KL towards Cantonese, and why?*

As mentioned, Wang (2012, 2021) investigated the language attitude of secondary school students in KL towards Chinese dialects. The questions asked in the questionnaires were mostly integrative-orientated. Wang (2012) reported that the participants have relatively negative attitude towards dialects, while Wang (2021) showed that though the students preferred to speak Mandarin, almost half of the students thought that they need to speak their own dialects. None of these studies investigated language attitude towards Cantonese *per se*.

Regarding instrumental attitude towards Cantonese, though the questionnaire result of this study shows that most participants do not have high hopes on Cantonese in the realm of education, most interviewees of the qualitative interviews are quite supportive for Cantonese to be an elective subject. Five interviewees have particularly strong instrumental orientation towards Cantonese in the sense that they hope for Cantonese to be one of the mediums of instruction at school mainly because the school domain can do a better job in exposing the younger generation to the language. One interviewee mentioned that it is not a difficult task to do as we can adopt Hong Kong teaching materials at any time for a start. Even those who did not agree thought that it can be an elective subject. All interviewees thought that it is unreasonable to prohibit the use of dialects at schools.

As for integrative orientation, quantitative data indicate that most of the participants have deep affection for Cantonese and from qualitative responses, participants could not deny the fact that Cantonese has become an important part of the identity of KL Chinese. Interviewees who think that Cantonese is important for them personally mostly have Cantonese as their mother tongue. All interviewees think that Cantonese is important for KL Chinese because KL Cantonese is unique and it represents the identity of KL Chinese. All except one interviewee are worried about the lack of fluency in Cantonese for the next generation because their siblings, cousins, friends and colleagues do not speak Cantonese to their kids and younger workers at the shopping malls do not speak Cantonese.

However, worrying trends such as the immigration of Chinese population from other states, declining production of HK Cantonese programmes, attitudes of parents, educational policies, and low proficiency of young people pose substantial challenges to the maintenance of Cantonese as the prestige language for the Chinese community in KL.

For entertainment, most interviewees reflected that Hong Kong TV shows and songs are declining in production and quality. They stopped subscribing to Hong Kong programmes and switched to Mainland Chinese media as the acting and filming skills are getting better. This is a wake-up call for Cantonese advocates as most people think that entertainment programmes are the best medium to promote Cantonese. Most people in KL learned their Cantonese via watching and listening to Cantonese entertainment programmes. If Cantonese loses its most advantageous publicity medium, it will not be good news for the sustainability of Cantonese as a popular language.

The factors which influence the attitude towards Cantonese are intertwined closely with those that affect the use of Cantonese, as can be seen above.

## **Conclusion**

This study and analysis have painted a picture and provided an outlook of the details of the use of and attitude towards Cantonese among the Chinese in KL, as well as the contributing factors such as subgroup identity, family, birthplace, age, neighbourhood, school policy, gender, self-perceived proficiency of Cantonese, and pop culture.

The findings can provide a clearer picture to relevant parties to understand the situation of Cantonese use in the capital area of Malaysia. For example, the use of Cantonese by the Hakka people has to be maintained to retain its status as an inter-subgroup intermediary language. Relevant parties should pay attention to the low transmission of Cantonese to the next generation within family despite the highly positive integrative attitude towards Cantonese, which implies that people have the heart to transmit the language but somehow are lacking the means to do so – perhaps by creating more opportunities for family members and friends to speak Cantonese together by organising activities.



## REFERENCES

- Axler, M., Yang, A. & Stevens, T. (1998). Current language attitudes of Hong Kong Chinese adolescents and young adults. In M. C. Pennington (Ed.), *Language in Hong Kong at century's end*, 329-338. Hong Kong University Press.
- Barnes, H. (2018). Language ideologies in an immigrant language setting: The case of a European language in Mexico. *Caribbean Studies*, 45, 21 - 41.
- Bernaisch, T. (2012). Attitudes towards Englishes in Sri Lanka. *World Englishes*, 31, 279-291.
- Bilaniuk, L. (2002). Gender, language attitudes, and language status in Ukraine. *Language in Society*, 32, 47 - 78.
- Brindley, E.F. (2015). *Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and identities on the southern frontier, c.400 BCE-50 CE*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carstens, S.A. (2012). *Histories, cultures, identities: Studies in Malaysian Chinese worlds*. NUS Press.
- Chan, E.S. (2011). *砂拉越华人社会史研究 [Studies on Sarawak Chinese social history]*. Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association.
- Chen, J.H. (1996). 甲必丹时代的吉隆坡华人社会 [The era of Capitan and Chinese society in Kuala Lumpur]. In Lee Y.L. (Ed.). *吉隆坡开拓者的足迹 甲必丹叶亚来的一生 [Yap Ah Loy the pioneer of Kuala Lumpur]*, pp. 153 – 184.
- Chiam, Y. T., Ser, W.H., Thong, M.W. (2016). *海滨潮乡：雪隆潮州人研究 [Homelands in the coastline: the Teo Chew in Selangor & Kuala Lumpur]*. Centre for Malaysia Chinese Studies.
- Chong, S.W. (2017). *甲必丹葉觀盛時代的吉隆坡客家幫權政治發展 (1889 - 1902) [The clan politics in Kuala Lumpur – Hakka dialect group in the time of Capitan Yap Kwan Seng (1889 – 1902)]*. *Global Hakka Studies*, 9:183 - 206.

- Chowdhury, Q.H. (2016). Construction of heritage language and cultural identities. In S. Preece (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 476 - 503). Routledge.
- Chua, B.H. (2012). *Structure, audience and soft power in East Asian pop culture*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Clyne, M., & Kipp, S. (1997). Trends and changes in home language use and shift in Australia, 1986-1996. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 18, 451-473.
- Coates, J. (2003). *Men talk*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cole, A. (2021). Disambiguating language attitudes held towards sociodemographic groups and geographic areas in South East England. *Journal of Linguistic Geography*, 9, 13 - 27.
- Coluzzi, P., Riget, P.P., & Xiaomei, P.P. (2013). Language vitality among the Bidayuh of Sarawak (East Malaysia). *Oceanic Linguistics*, 52, 375 - 395.
- Crezee, I.H. (2012). Language shift and host society attitudes: Dutch migrants who arrived in New Zealand between 1950 and 1965. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 16, 528 - 540.
- David, M.K., & Dealwis, C. (2011). 3. Do Exogamous marriages result in language shift? Focus on the Sindhis of Kuching, Malaysia. *National Language Planning and Language Shifts in Malaysian Minority Communities: Speaking in Many Tongues* (pp.59 - 69). Amsterdam University Press.
- David, M., Dealwis, C. & Alagappar, P. (2011). 2. Ethnic identity in the Tamil community of Kuching. In D. Mukherjee & M. David (Ed.), *National Language Planning and Language Shifts in Malaysian Minority Communities: Speaking in Many Tongues* (pp. 43-58). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048513383-005>
- Dealwis, C. & David, M. (2011). 6. Language and identity. Children of Indian Bidayuh mixed marriages. In D. Mukherjee & M. David (Ed.), *National Language Planning and Language Shifts in Malaysian Minority Communities: Speaking in Many Tongues* (pp. 101-114). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048513383-009>

DeFrancis, J. (1984). *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy*. University of Hawaii Press

Department of Statistics, Malaysia. (2016). *Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur*.  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20160623213303/https://www.statistics.gov.my/index.php?r=column%2Fcone&menu\\_id=bjRlZXVGdnBueDJKY1BPWEFPRlhIdz09](https://web.archive.org/web/20160623213303/https://www.statistics.gov.my/index.php?r=column%2Fcone&menu_id=bjRlZXVGdnBueDJKY1BPWEFPRlhIdz09)

Ding, S.L., & Goh, K. (2020). The impact of religion on language maintenance and shift. *Language in Society*, 49, 31 - 59.

Ding, S. L., & Koh, Q. Y. (2015). 馬六甲新村客家羣體的口語使用、語言態度與方言羣認同 [Language use, language attitude and sub-ethnic identity among the Hakka in Malaysia]. In W. A. Chang (Ed.) 客家文化、認同與信仰 [Hakka culture, identity and religion: Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau], pp. 59-97. National Central University.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, Longman Pearson Education.

Dragojevic, M., Fasoli, F., Cramer, J., & Rakić, T. (2021). Toward a century of language attitudes research: looking back and moving forward. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 40, 60 - 79.

Dwyer, C. (2000). Negotiating diasporic identities: young british south asian muslim women. *Womens Studies International Forum*, 23, 475-486.

Edwards, J.R. (2009). *Language and identity: Language, gender and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Ferguson C.A. (1982). Religious factors in language spread, in Cooper R.L. (ed.) *Language spread*, Indiana University Press.

Filipovski, B. (2023, January 4). Singapore — the leading financial centre in the Asia-Pacific region. *Capital Finance International*. <https://cfi.co/asia-pacific/2023/01/singapore-the-leading-financial-centre-in-the-asia-pacific-region/>

- Fishman, J.A. (1972). The relationship between micro- and macro-sociolinguistics in the study of who speaks what language to whom and when. In *Sociolinguistics*, ed. J.B. Pride and J. Holmes, 15 – 32. Penguin Books.
- Fishman, J.A. (1977). The spread of English as a new perspective for the study of ‘language maintenance and language shift’, in Fishman J.A., Cooper R.L., & Conrad A. W. (eds.) *The Spread of English*, Rowley, Newbury House Publishers, pp. 108 – 133.
- Fishman, J.A. (1989). The spread of English as a new perspective for the study of ‘language maintenance and language shift’, in Fishman J.A. *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistics Perspective*, Multilingual Matters LTD, pp. 32 – 263.
- Fishman, J.A. (Ed.). (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- FMT Reporters (2022, July 19). 90% penjawat awam Bumiputera, tiada kuota, kata Menteri. *Free Malaysia Today*.  
<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/tempatan/2022/07/19/90-penjawat-awam-bumiputera-tiada-kuota-kata-menteri/>
- Foo, Y.C. (Ed.). (2014). *Shengsi qi kuo: Jilongpo Guangdong yishanmubei yu tuwen jiyao* 死生契阔: 吉隆坡广东义山墓碑与图文辑要 [Important tombs, epigraphs, documents of Kwong Tong Cemetery Kuala Lumpur]. Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and social language learning: The role of motivation and attitudes*. Edward Arnold Inc.
- Gardner, R.C. & Lambert W.E. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology/Revue Canadienne de Psychologie*, 13(4), 266 – 272.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Garrett, P. (2010). *Attitudes to language*. Cambridge University Press.

- Granhemat, M., & Abdullah, A.N. (2017). Gender, ethnicity, ethnic identity, and language choices of Malaysian youths: The case of the family domain. *Advances in language and literary studies*, 8, 26-36.
- Grin, F. (2003). Language planning and economics. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 4, 1 - 66.
- Grin F., Vaillancourt, F. & Sfreddo C. (2009). *Langues étrangères dans l'activité professionnelle (LEAP)*, Rapport final de recherche, Université de Genève
- Grin, F., Sfreddo, C., & Vaillancourt, F. (2010). *The Economics of the multilingual workplace*. Routledge.
- Guangdong Academy of Education (Ed.) (2017). *广东历史 [History of Guangdong]*. Guangdong Ditu Publishing House
- Gullick, J.M. (1990). The growth of Kuala Lumpur and the Malay communities in Selangor before 1880. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. LXIII (1), 15–17.
- Gullick, J.M. (2000). *A history of Kuala Lumpur 1857 – 1939*. Malaysia Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- Haberland, H. (2005). Domains and domain loss. In B. Preisler, A. Fabricius, H. Haberland, S. Kjærbeck, & K. Risager (Eds.), *The Consequences of Mobility: Linguistic and Sociocultural Contact Zones* (pp. 227-237). Roskilde Universitet.
- Hassan, R., Ghazali, R.K., & Omar, R.K. (2015). Vitality of the Orang Asli languages in Gerik, Perak. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 54, 492 - 506.
- Hu, H. & D. Shakman (2022). Rhotics frequency in Beijing. In Smakman, D., Nekvapil, J., & Fedorova, K. (Eds.). *Linguistic Choices in the Contemporary City* (pp. 275 – 286). Routledge.
- Hyland, K. (1997). Language attitudes at the handover: Communication and identity in 1997 Hong Kong. *English World-wide*, 18, 191-210.

- Ishizawa, H. (2004). Minority language use among grandchildren in multigenerational households. *Sociological Perspectives*, 47, 465 - 483.
- Jackson, J.C. (1964). Population changes in Selangor state, 1850-1891. *Journal of Tropical Geography* 19, 42 – 57.
- Kalmar, I.D., Yong, Z., & Hong, X. (1987). Language attitudes in Guangzhou, China. *Language in Society*, 16, 499-508.
- Kulyk, V. (2017). Language attitudes in independent Ukraine: Differentiation and evolution. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 35(1/4), 265–292.
- Kuo, L.W. (2015). 記憶與再現:消失中的香港客家村與認同 [Memory and Reappearance: Disappearing Hakka Villages and Identity in Hong Kong]. In W. A. Chang (Ed.) 客家文化、認同與信仰 [Hakka Culture, Identity and Religion: Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau], (pp. 59-97). National Central University.
- Lai, K. (2002). *Bilingual education for secondary schools in Macau*. MA thesis, University of Macau.
- Lai, M. L. (2001). Hong Kong students' attitudes towards Cantonese, Putonghua and English after the change of sovereignty. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 22(2), 112–133.
- Lai, M. L. (2005) Language attitudes of the first postcolonial generation in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Language in Society*, 34(4), 363–388.
- Lai, M.L. (2009). 'I love Cantonese but I want English' - A qualitative account of Hong Kong students' language attitudes. *Asia-pacific Education Researcher*, 18, 1-1.
- Lai, M. L. (2012). Tracking language attitudes in postcolonial Hong Kong: An interplay of localization, mainlandization and internationalization. *Multilingua*, 31(1), 1–29.
- Lawson, S., & Sachdev, I. (2004). Identity, language use, and attitudes. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 23, 49 - 69.

- Lee, L. (2017). 從經營視角看高雄與吉隆坡之客家社團 [Assessing the management of the Hakka associations in Kaohsiung and Kuala Lumpur]. In Hsiao, M.H. (Ed.) *臺灣與東南亞客家認同的比較：延續、斷裂、重組與創新* [Comparing the Hakka ethnic identity in Taiwan and Southeast Asia: Continuity, breakdown, remaking and innovation]. National Central University Press.
- Leeman, J. (2015). Heritage language education and identity in the United States. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 100 - 119.
- Leong, S. (2009). The impact of intergroup attitude on language: A survey study of Macau high school student. *Journal of Macau Studies* 2009, 51: 146-154.
- Li CSD (2017). *Multilingual Hong Kong: Languages, literacies and identities*. Springer.
- Li, E. S. H. & Luk, G. (2012). ‘The changing language attitudes towards English of Chinese secondary students in Hong Kong’. In S. C. Chan (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Conference of The Asian Studies Association* (pp. 887-913). The Contemporary China Research Centre, The Shu Yan University of Hong Kong.
- Li, R.R. (2012). *Hanyufangyan de bijiao yanjiu 汉语方言的比较研究* [Comparative Studies of Chinese Dialects] (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Commercial Press.
- Liew, K.B. (Ed.). (2014). *Zoujin Basheng shenmiao: gangkou Bandamalanxincun miaoyu wenhua cutan 走进巴生神庙：港口班达马兰新村庙宇文化初探* [Encountering Chinese temple culture in Pandamaran new village, Port Klang]. New Era College.
- Liu, R. (2022). *沙巴客家的形成與發展* [The Formation and Development of Hakka in Sabah]. Ju liu tu shu gong si.
- Liu, S.X. (2006). *Yueyu ZhuangDaiyu wenti 粤语壮傣语问题* [Cantonese - the issues with Zhuang and Dai language]. Commercial Press.
- Mair, V.H. (2013). The classification of Sinitic languages: What is “Chinese”? In Cao G., R. Djamouri, H. Chappell, T. Wiebusch (Dds.), *Breaking down the barriers: Interdisciplinary studies in Chinese linguistics and beyond* (pp. 735–754). Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica.

- Mann, C.C., & Wong, G. (1999). Issues in language planning and language education: A survey from Macao on its return to Chinese sovereignty. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 23, 17-36.
- Margić, B.D., & Širola, D. (2014). ‘Jamaican and Irish for fun, British to show off’: Attitudes of Croatian university students of TEFL to English language varieties. *English Today*, 30, 48 - 53.
- McKenzie, R. M. (2010). *The social psychology of English as a global language: Attitudes, awareness and identity in the Japanese context*. Springer.
- Medvedeva, M. (2012). Negotiating languages in immigrant families. *International Migration Review*, 46, 517 - 545.
- Millson, A. & Bloomberg (2022, September 23). Singapore just took Hong Kong’s place as Asia’s top financial center—and as the new partner to London and New York. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2022/09/23/singapore-hong-kong-place-asia-top-financial-center-new-partner-to-london-new-york/>
- Mukherjee, D. (2011). My son has to maintain his language because that is his culture: The persistence and adaptation of the Bengali community in Malaysia. In Dipika Mukherjee & Maya Khemlani David (Eds.), *National Language Planning and Language Shifts in Malaysian Minority Communities*. pp. 127 - 149. Amsterdam University Press.
- Nagy, N. (2018). Linguistic attitudes and contact effects in Toronto’s heritage languages: A variationist sociolinguistic investigation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 22, 429 - 446.
- Ng, R., & Wong, K.H. (2023). *PALOH: Founded by Hakka, made vibrant by the Cantonese*.
- Noels, K., Pelletier, L. G., & Clement, R. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning*, 50, 57–85.
- Norhafzan Jaafar (2019, October 29). Tiada ketidakseimbangan kaum dalam perkhidmatan awam. *Berita Harian*. <https://www.bharian.com.my/berita/nasional/2019/10/622759/tiada-ketidakseimbangan-kaum-dalam-perkhidmatan-awam>



Norman, J. (1988). *Chinese*, Cambridge University Press.

Ong, T.W., & Ben Said, S. (2021). Selective Language Maintenance in Multilingual Malaysia. *Indigenous Language Acquisition, Maintenance, and Loss and Current Language Policies*.

Pauwels, A. (2016). *Language maintenance and shift*. Cambridge University Press.

Pennington, M. C., & Yue, F. (1993). *Assessing pre-1997 language attitudes in Hong Kong*. Research Report No. 28. Department of English, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong.

Pennington, M.C., & Yue, F. (1994). English and Chinese in Hong Kong: pre-1997 language attitudes. *World Englishes*, 13, 1-20.

Pierson, H.D., Fu, G.S., & Lee, S. (1980). An analysis of the relationship between language attitudes and English attainment of secondary school students in Hong Kong. *Language Learning*, 30, 289-305.

Ragone, A.C., & Mark, P. (2006). Language maintenance in the Meseta Purépecha region of Michoacán, Mexico. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 48, 109-131.

Ryan, E., & Giles, H. (1982). *Attitudes towards language variation*. Edward Arnold.

Salli, A. (2019). Role of motivation and attitude: Learning Turkish and Greek in Cyprus. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 23, 831 - 842.

Sautman, B. & Xie, X. (2021) Today in Guangzhou, tomorrow in Hong Kong? A comparative study of the language situation in two cities. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 49(1):186810262098393

Scherer, K.R., & Giles, H. (1980). *Social markers in speech*. Cambridge University Press.

St. Hilaire, A. (2007). Postcolonialism, identity, and the French language in St Lucia. *NWIG: New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 2007, 81(1/2), 55-77

- Sánchez, L., Mayer, E., Camacho, J., & Alza, C.R. (2018). Linguistic attitudes toward Shipibo in Cantagallo: Reshaping indigenous language and identity in an urban setting. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 22, 466 - 487.
- Shing, K. (2013). The current language attitudes towards English of 21-or-above 1 in Hong Kong. *European Academic Research*, 1(7), 1793 – 1827.
- Smakman, D., Nekvapil, J., & Fedorova, K. (2022). *Linguistic choices in the contemporary city*. Routledge.
- Siu, K. (2022). *Huanan minus wenhua tanjiu 華南民俗文化探究* [A Study of Folk Culture in South China]. Chung Hwa Book Company (Hong Kong) Limited.
- Song Y.P. (2021). *马来西亚吉隆坡福建社群史研究：籍贯、组织与认同* [A history of Fujian province community in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Birthplace, organization and identity] (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). China Social Sciences Press.
- Stevens, G. (1985). Nativity intermarriage and mother-tongue shift. *American Sociological Review*, 50, 74-83.
- Szeto, C. (2001). Testing intelligibility among Sinitic dialect. In A. Keith & H. John (Eds.), *Proceedings of ALS2k, the 2000 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society*.
- Tan Y.H. (2012). *华南两大族群文化人类学构建* [The construction of cultural anthropology of the two major ethnic groups in South China]. People's Publishing House
- Tang, S.-W. (2015). *粵語語法講義* [Lectures on Cantonese grammar]. Commercial Press.
- Tien, J.K. (2013). *砂拉越华人社会结构研究报告* [The Chinese of Sarawak – A study of social structure]. Sarawak Chinese Cultural Association.
- Ting, S. (2011). 9. Intercultural communication in Sarawak: Language use of the Chinese-speaking communities. In D. Mukherjee & M. David (Ed.), *National language planning and language shifts in Malaysian minority communities: Speaking in many tongues* (pp. 151-162). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048513383-012>

- Ting, S.H., & Rose, S.L. (2014). Ethnic language use and ethnic identity for Sarawak indigenous groups in Malaysia. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 53, 109 - 92.
- Trudgill, P.W. (1972). Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich. *Language in Society*, 1, 179 - 195.
- Tsou, B. (1980). Critical sociolinguistic realignment in multilingual societies, in Afrendras E. (ed.) *Patterns in Bilingualism*, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, pp. 261 – 286.
- Tsou, B., Chin, A., Ouyang, J., To, C., Mok, K., & Yang, W. (2007). Critical multilingual shift in Sanya, China: Accelerated urbanization and possible sociolinguistic repair, in David M.K. et al (eds.) *Proceeding of FEL XI, Working Together for Endangered Languages*, University of Malaya, pp. 67 – 73. 137.
- Voon, P.K. (2018). *聚族于斯：马来西亚华人研究 [Calling Malaysia home: studies on the Malaysian Chinese community]*. Wisma Kebudayaan SGM.
- Vries, J.W. (1994). Canada's official language communities: an overview of the current demolinguistic situation. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 37-68.
- Wang, G.Z. (2014). Hou shuli yinghua zhengce de Malaixiya huashe: yingyu, huayu ji malaiyu de gongneng zhuanbian 后数理英化政策的马来西亚华社：英语、华语及马来语的功能转变 [Malaysian Chinese Community in the after the anglisation policy - the Functional Transformation of English, Chinese and Malay]. In Zhuang, H.X., Pan, Y.Q., Xu, D.F, Zhang, Y. H, Zhang, J.Y., Zhu, J.F., Xu, W.X., Zheng, T.H., Rao, Z.B., Qiu, K.W., Zhan, Y.D. (Eds.), *Malaysia and the Chinese community in transition: Selected papers on the second biennial International Conference on Malaysian Chinese Studies, 2014 (Social and Politics)* (pp 213 – 264). Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies.
- Wang, H. J. (2014). *历史语言学方法论与汉语方言音韵史个案研究 [The methodology of historical linguistics and case studies on the phonological history of Chinese dialects]*. The Commercial Press.
- Wang, X. (2007). *Aomen tusheng Puren de yuyan taidu ji yuyan shiyong zhuangkuang diaocha [A survey of language attitudes and language use of Macao Macanese]*. MA thesis, Jinan University.

- Wang, X. M. (2010). The sociolinguistic realignment in the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur: past, present and future. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 31(5), 479-489, DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2010.505656
- Wang, X.M., & Chong, S.L. (2011). A hierarchical model for language maintenance and language shift: Focus on the Malaysian Chinese community. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 32, 577 - 591.
- Wang, X. M. (2012). *Mandarin spread in Malaysia*. University of Malaya Press.
- Wang X.M. (2021). *马来西亚华人社会语言研究 [Research on the languages of Malaysian-Chinese community]*. The Commercial Press.
- Wen, X., Deng, K., & Qiu, S. (2011) *广东客家 Guangdong keja* [Hakka in Guangdong]. Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Wen, Z. (1979). *Keren zai Bingcheng* [Hakkas in Penang]. In *Binglang yu keshu gonghui sishi zhounian jiniankan* [Penang Hakka Association 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Volume]. Penang, Malaysia.
- Wen, W., & Wong, T.K. (2021). The development of Cantonese Chinese community in the Klang Valley, 1860-1941. *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 8, 1-24.
- Woolfolk, A. E. (2001). *Educational psychology*. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.
- Wu, Chunming (2012). *从百越土著到南岛海洋文化 [The maritime cultural interation between Indigenous Yue and Austronesian]*. Cultural Relics Press, Beijing.
- Xi, Y. & Moody, A. (2010). Language and society in Macao: A review of sociolinguistic studies on Macao in the past three decades. *Chinese Language and Discourse*, 1(2), 293–324
- Yan, M.M. (2006). *Introduction to Chinese dialectology*, LINCOM Europa.

- Yeoh Seng Guan (ed.). *The other Kuala Lumpur: Living in the shadows of a globalising Southeast Asian city*. Routledge, 2014. pp. 220
- Yoshioka, H. (2010). Indigenous language usage and maintenance patterns among indigenous people in the era of neoliberal multiculturalism in Mexico and Guatemala. *Latin American Research Review*, 45, 34 - 5.
- Young, M.Y. (2006). Macao students' attitudes toward English: a post-1999 survey. *World Englishes*, 25, 479-490.
- Zhang, D., & Slaughter-Defoe, D.T. (2009). Language attitudes and heritage language maintenance among Chinese immigrant families in the USA. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 22, 77 - 93.
- Zhou, Z. H., & You, R.J. (2019). *Fangyan yu Zhongguo wenhua 方言与中国文化 [Dialects and Chinese Culture]* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Shanghai People's Press.