

A Survey of Hong Kong's Putonghua Teaching in a Primary and Secondary School from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

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Abstract: Since implementing the "Biliteracy and Trilingualism" policy, Hong Kong's Putonghua teaching has achieved certain progress. Putonghua has not only been gradually incorporated into the formal curriculum of local primary and secondary schools but also shows a trend of being adopted as the medium of instruction (MOI) for specialized subjects. However, the use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching Chinese (PMIC) has not been widely adopted, which may blur students' identification with Chinese culture. To further advance Putonghua education in Hong Kong, this study examines primary-level students using PMIC and secondary-level students using both PMIC and Cantonese as the medium of instruction for teaching Chinese (CMIC) at a school in Hong Kong. The investigation covers six aspects: family environment, interpersonal interaction, school education, social development, social values, and social culture. Results indicate a positive correlation between Putonghua learning and cultural identity. Students who receive PMIC for longer periods are more likely to embrace Chinese culture and exhibit a stronger sense of national identity. Therefore, from the perspective of cultural identity, this paper proposes new approaches for Putonghua teaching in Hong Kong: avoiding reductive cultural identity, promoting productive cultural identity, improving the integrative tendencies of language learning, and exploring the social value of Putonghua to enhance the instrumental aspects of language learning.

Keywords: Putonghua Teaching, Cultural Identity, Biliteracy and Trilingualism, Medium of Instruction, Hong Kong

Introduction and Context

The planning and development of language policies play a crucial role in promoting regional economic growth, enhancing cultural integration, and fostering national identity. As the financial and innovation-driven center of the regional economy and a bridge connecting the Greater Bay Area¹, Hong Kong's language policy holds significant responsibilities in these three respects. Since the end of British colonial rule and Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the Hong Kong government has implemented a "biliterate and trilingual" policy to use Cantonese, Putonghua (also called Mandarin), and English as primary spoken languages, with written communication in both Traditional Chinese Character (versus Simplified Chinese) and English (Lam et al., 2024). The widespread use of English reflects Hong Kong's legacy as an international and multicultural hub. The preservation of Cantonese stems from the linguistic traditions of early immigrants from Guangdong Province, becoming a crucial symbol of local culture and identity. Promoting Putonghua, in turn, facilitates communication between Hong Kong and Mainland China, strengthening economic cooperation and cultural exchange throughout the Greater Bay Area. Such language policy is undoubtedly proposed in response to the socio-political and economic development of Hong Kong.

Traditionally, "Chinese" refers to a broad range of linguistic varieties in China, grouped into seven major dialects: Mandarin (官话), Wu (吴语), Min (闽语), Yue (粤语), Xiang (湘语), Gan (赣语), and Kejia (客家语), each with multiple sub-dialects (Chan, 2024, p.2). In such a diverse linguistic environment, *Putonghua*—the standard form of Modern Chinese—emerged as the national and common language. It is based on the phonological system of Beijing as its pronunciation standard, uses Northern dialects as its dialectal foundation, and draws on exemplary modern works in *báihuà*, or "vernacular literary language" (Chen, 1999, p.24, cited in Chan, 2024). Additionally, since 1998, Putonghua, along with English and Mathematics, has been compulsory in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. Today, over 1.1 billion people can communicate in Putonghua, making it a unifying medium across China (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020).

Given Hong Kong's unique historical context and geographical position, along with English's status as the global lingua franca, it is unsurprising that English has maintained a prominent place in Hong Kong's primary and secondary education. Meanwhile, Cantonese—widely favored by local residents and seen as a default marker of Hong Kong identity—naturally serves as the medium of instruction for various school subjects. Similarly, the

¹ The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) aims to integrate nine cities in Guangdong Province in China (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Zhongshan, Dongguan, Huizhou, Jiangmen, and Zhaoqing) with the two Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao into a globally competitive world-class city cluster. The GBA plan encompasses economic integration, technological innovation cooperation, infrastructure connectivity, environmental protection, and quality of life enhancement. Its goal is to foster regional synergy, establishing the GBA as an international center for technological innovation, modern services, and advanced manufacturing while creating a high-quality, liveable area for residents (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, 2019).

inclusion of Putonghua in the “biliterate and trilingual” framework is also significantly viewed as a “natural correlate and expected outcome of Hong Kong’s processes of decolonization and renationalization” (Li, 2022, p.7). In response to promoting Putonghua, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) allocated HK\$200 million to support 30 primary and 10 secondary schools annually in implementing “using Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language Subject” (PMIC) starting from the 2008/2009 academic year (Li, 2022; Qu, 2021). Detailly, the Education Commission has adopted a series of measures to advance Putonghua teaching, such as organizing seminars/workshops for teachers on the theory and pedagogy of PMIC, offering Hong Kong or Mainland exchange and observation activities to expose teachers to more variety of PMIC-based teaching methods, and so forth. This notwithstanding, the situation remains such that, as of 2016, only 16.4% of primary schools and 2.5% of secondary schools are fully PMIC-compliant (Hong Kong Legislative Council, 2016). The reasons for this issue, besides external factors such as the lack of qualified Putonghua teachers and professional Putonghua teaching materials (Tian, 2012), include a crucial internal factor: the identification of Hong Kong Putonghua learners with Chinese culture is weak.

Language, culture, and cultural identity are interlinked, with language serving as a vehicle for culture. Language use reflects cultural attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews, influencing behavior and decisions: “*It is through language that humans seek a sense of self in time, within and between different times and places*” (Norton, 1995, p.10). Although academics have actively considered promoting the teaching of Putonghua in Hong Kong—such as Yang (2013) proposing a constructivist approach, Zhou (2004) and Qi (2001, 2013) emphasizing the need for more engaging, scientific, and relevant teaching materials, and Gao et al. (2019) suggesting leveraging the instrumental nature of Putonghua to enhance learning motivation—these approaches lack a comprehensive, macro-level perspective that considers cultural identity.

Therefore, this paper presents the results of a questionnaire-based study on Putonghua teaching and cultural identity among primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong, aiming to explore innovative approaches for more effective Putonghua education. The research addresses two key questions: (1) How do the mechanisms of cultural identity influence students’ learning of Putonghua, and how do the medium of instruction and language use reflect students’ cultural identification with Chinese culture? (2) What innovative teaching strategies, under the influence of cultural identity constraints, can enhance Putonghua education to support the Greater Bay Area’s development? The findings aim to provide instrumental linguistic support for the Greater Bay Area’s strategic growth, strengthen Hong Kong’s role as an international exchange hub, and contribute to China’s economic development through increased openness.

Constraint-Based Mechanisms Relating to Cultural Identity and Putonghua Teaching

As explained by Collier and Thomas (1998), cultural identity manifests as a person’s self-perception, such that this is inclusive of his or her worldview, value system, attitudes and beliefs. These aspects are shared within a group, forming the group’s culture. In this way, cultural identity encompasses the distinctive behavior patterns of members of national, ethnic, regional, economic, or other social groups, distinguishing one culture from another. It also includes subtypes such as group identity, ethnic identity, and national identity. Lustig and Koester (2003) describe cultural identity as a sense of belonging to a particular culture and group. It is a psychological state where individuals recognize and endorse a specific culture, either between individuals or between individuals and groups.

A person’s recognition and acceptance of culture is influenced by various mechanisms, often termed cultural identity constraint mechanisms. Originally, the term “mechanism” refers to the principles of construction and operation of a machine, focusing on the interaction and function of its internal parts. Over time, it has been adopted by many disciplines to describe the internal structure and dynamics that drive movement, transformation, and development within a particular field. This includes the relationships between factors, their interactions, the procedures of functional action, and opportunities for transformation (Liu, 1993). The constraint mechanisms affecting cultural identity include cultural consciousness, emotional experience, interpersonal interaction, knowledge accumulation, social development, social culture, family environment, and school education (Deng, 2005).

Building on the above-mentioned conceptualization and aligning with the study’s operationalization, the theoretical framework in this study is mapped as follows to examine the relationship between cultural identity

constraint mechanisms and Putonghua teaching:

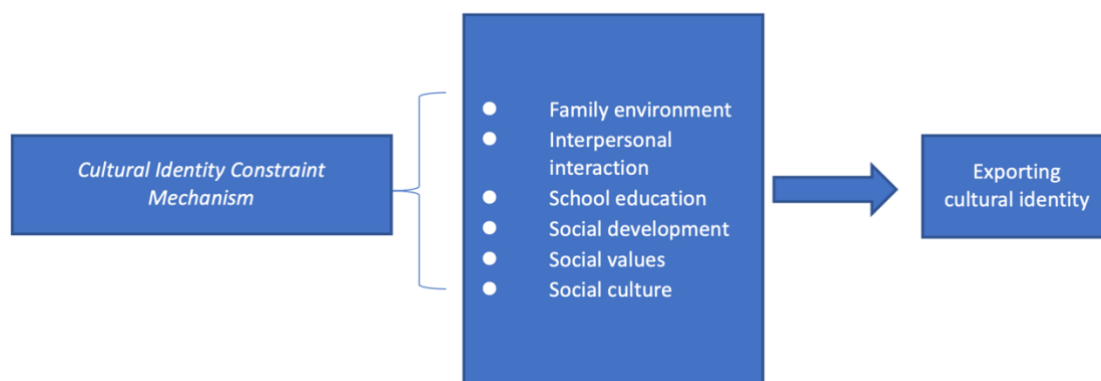


Figure 1: Cultural Identity Constraint Mechanisms

The cultural identity constraint mechanism encompasses various factors that collectively shape the process of exporting cultural identity. These factors include the family environment, which influences cultural values and upbringing; interpersonal interactions, where social relationships and communication play a role in reinforcing cultural identity; and school education, which impacts the transmission of cultural norms and values. Additionally, social development, reflecting broader societal changes, and social values, representing the prevailing moral and ethical standards, further contribute to this mechanism. Lastly, social culture, encompassing shared customs, traditions, and beliefs, helps define and shape a group’s cultural identity. This framework also extends to explore how these cultural identity constraints influence Hong Kong primary and secondary school students’ identification with Chinese culture, examining their connections to Mainland China, the Chinese nation, and Chinese ethnicity.

Research Method

This study employs a closed-ended questionnaire survey to explore the relationship between the medium of instruction and cultural identity among primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong. The survey was conducted from March to April 2018 at a school in Kowloon that includes both primary and secondary levels. The school primarily uses English as the medium of instruction, with 12 primary classes and 18 secondary classes. The primary and secondary sections are divided into grades 1 to 6. Considering the students’ maturity and availability, we mainly surveyed each class from primary grades 4 to 6 and secondary grades 1 to 5. A total of 310 questionnaires were distributed, 296 were returned, and all were considered valid responses. The details of the information are shown below:

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Responses by School Level

<i>School Level</i>	<i>Grades Included</i>	<i>Medium of Instruction (Teaching Chinese)</i>	<i>Number of Questionnaires Distributed</i>	<i>Number of Questionnaires Returned</i>	<i>Number of Valid Responses</i>	<i>Participant</i>
<i>Primary School (PS1-PS6)</i>	<i>Primary School (PS4-PS6)</i>	<i>Putonghua (PMIC)</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Secondary School (S1-S6)</i>	<i>Secondary School (S1-S5)</i>	<i>Putonghua (PMIC)</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>Students</i>
<i>Secondary School (S1-S6)</i>	<i>Secondary School (S1-S5)</i>	<i>Cantonese (CMIC)</i>	<i>130</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>Students</i>

*Note. Valid responses refer to questionnaires that were fully completed and met the inclusion criteria.

Moreover, the questionnaire consists of four main sections: (1) Personal Information and Background, which collected demographic details such as age, parental education level, and family language use; (2) Student’s Language Use and Proficiency, which assessed students’ use of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English in daily life,

their self-rated proficiency in these languages, and their language improvement during junior secondary school; (3) Perceived Status and Value of Languages, which examined students' views on the social status and relative significance of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English; and (4) Acceptance of Language Learning, which evaluated students' attitudes toward learning Putonghua, including their interest and motivation.

During the analysis phase, descriptive statistical methods were used to understand students' language use in different instructional settings and their perceptions of language status and value. Additionally, comparative analyses were conducted by grouping data based on the medium of instruction (PMIC vs. CMIC) and education levels (primary vs. secondary) to explore how different cultural identity mechanisms influence students' Putonghua learning. This multi-layered approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex impact of language education on cultural identity.

The researchers in this study primarily come from a Mainland Chinese cultural background, but they also have higher education experience in the Greater Bay Area. This cross-cultural background allows the researchers to have a deep understanding of Hong Kong's language policies and cultural dynamics, which helps in better interpreting the identity formation processes of Hong Kong students within specific linguistic and cultural contexts. However, the researchers recognize that their Mainland Chinese background may introduce potential bias, particularly when discussing the cultural relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China. To mitigate this, the research team has made every effort to maintain neutrality by employing diverse data sources and analytical methods, ensuring a more comprehensive and objective interpretation of language and cultural identity.

Cultural Identity Constraint Mechanisms and Related Investigations Results

Family Environment

The family is one of the core elements of society, and family education marks the beginning of a person's lifelong education. For primary and secondary school students, parents' cultural views profoundly shape their cultural values, often implicitly and at an early stage. The following Figure 2. provides data on the languages spoken by students' parents and the language training received by students within the sample investigated for this study.

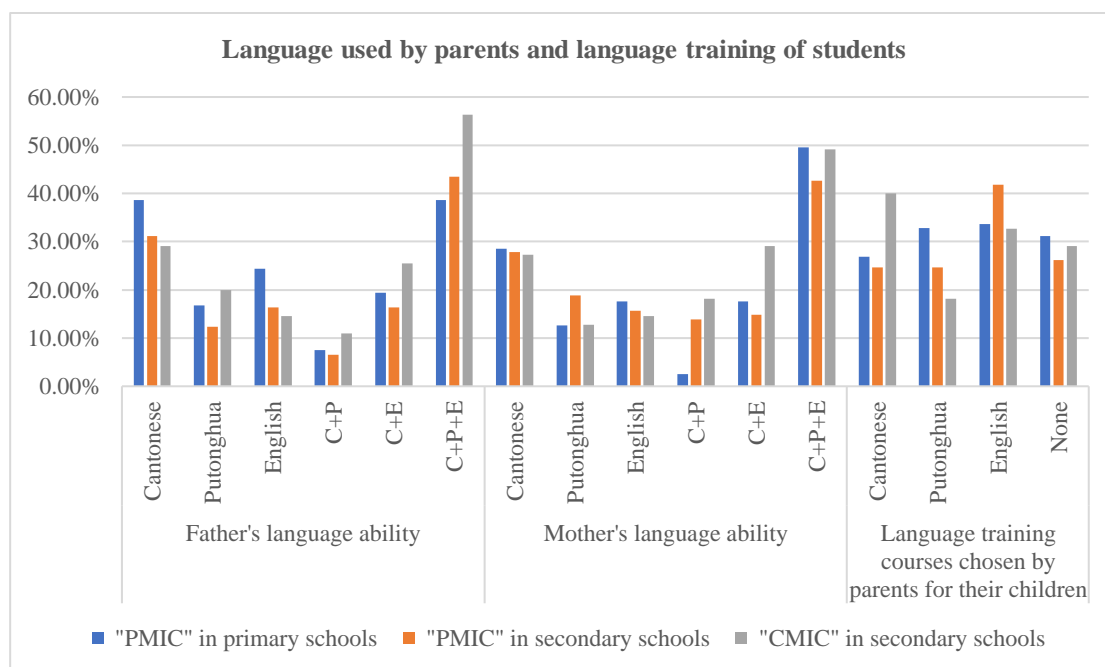


Figure 2: Language Used by Parents and Language Training of Students

The parents of the students surveyed in this study were overwhelmingly educated to tertiary level or above. Many of the parents are trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua, and English, indicating a high level of open-mindedness and literacy. This background suggests they are likely to prioritize their children's linguistic development. The majority of parents are willing to enroll their children in language classes, with 32.77% of primary school students attending Putonghua classes, compared to only 24.6% of secondary school students. This

indicates that, due to the increasingly close exchanges between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland in politics, economy, and culture, parents place greater emphasis on their children’s Putonghua skills from an early age. This highlights a social basis for strengthening efforts to teach Putonghua starting at the primary school level.

It should also be noted that the proportion of parents who could only speak Putonghua is higher in relation to the parents of the students in the CMIC classes than those parents whose children were in the PMIC classes. This is especially evident in the CMIC classes, where the proportion of fathers who could only speak Putonghua is as high as 20%. The proportion of parents who could speak both Cantonese and Putonghua is also higher in these classes than in the PMIC classes. This group also express a greater willingness to enroll their children in Cantonese classes. This demonstrates the phenomenon of “additive bilingualism” (Gardner, 1985) whereby people learn the target language and its culture while simultaneously expressing their L1 language user and cultural identity. That is, if parents speak only Putonghua, it is highly likely that their children will be L1 Putonghua speakers. If this is the case, then they are more likely to choose to undertake Cantonese classes to improve their skills and fluency in both the L1 language and the target language. This is the practice of the “biliteracy and trilingualism” policy. This can be regarded as a desirable phenomenon in language learning, enabling learners to move freely between their L1 language and the target language. This can also have positive consequences for the culture associated with each.

Interpersonal Interaction

A person’s cultural values and perceptions are closely tied to interpersonal interaction. These interactions help individuals establish a positive outlook on life and the world, enhancing their understanding and ability to transform their environment. Through various forms of interpersonal interaction, students can deepen their perspectives and approaches to different issues, thereby improving their ideological and conscious levels. Evaluating students’ identification with the culture carried by a language can be achieved by exploring the language they use during these interactions. Figure 3. below provides data on the language used by the students within the sample group in the context of interpersonal interactions.

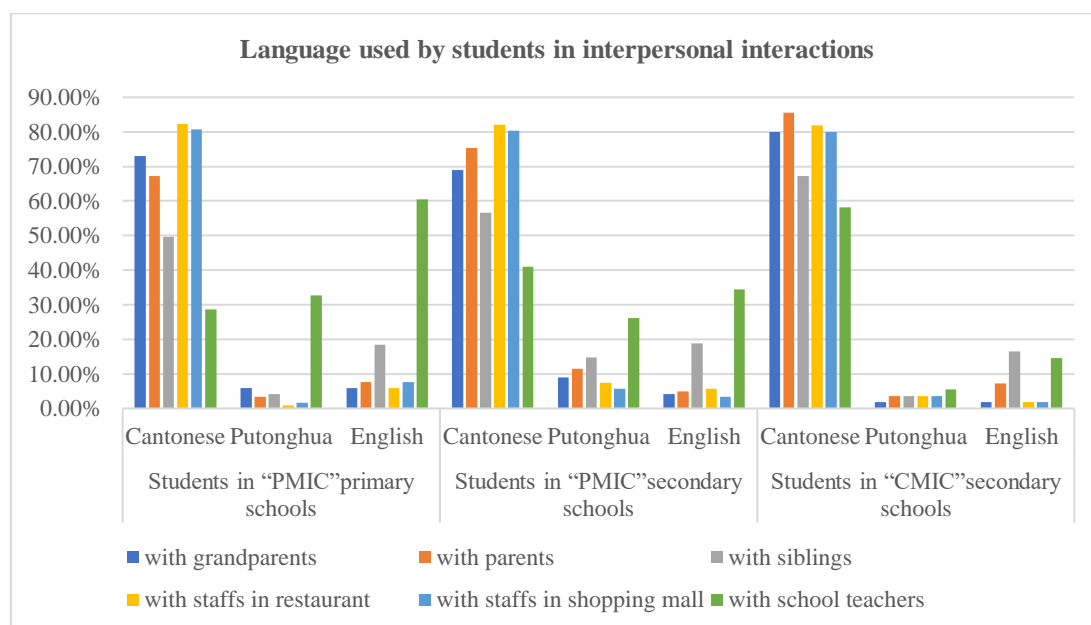


Figure 3: Language Used by Students in Interpersonal Interactions

It is clear from the data that, in Hong Kong, interactions between the three groups of students and their grandparents, parents, siblings, restaurant attendants, shopping mall salespersons and teachers, are mainly in Cantonese, with such interactions featuring very little use of Putonghua. When interacting with each other, secondary school students in the PMIC class use Putonghua more often than those in primary school, and far more often than students in the CMIC class. The frequency with which Putonghua is used in communication with schoolteachers emerges as much higher than that with other audiences, showing that schools are the main venue for the promotion of Putonghua and, furthermore. This also indicates that the teaching and promotion of

Putonghua are both necessary and effective.

School Education

As a social activity that nurtures individuals, school-based education can be conceptualized as a cultural process of accumulation, innovation, precipitation, and continuation of human civilization. Education and culture are intertwined and dialectically unified. The school curriculum, learning atmosphere, and teachers' conduct (and the example they set) all influence students' ideology, thereby affecting their identification with a certain culture. The students' assessments of their language skills after enrolling in school are as follows:

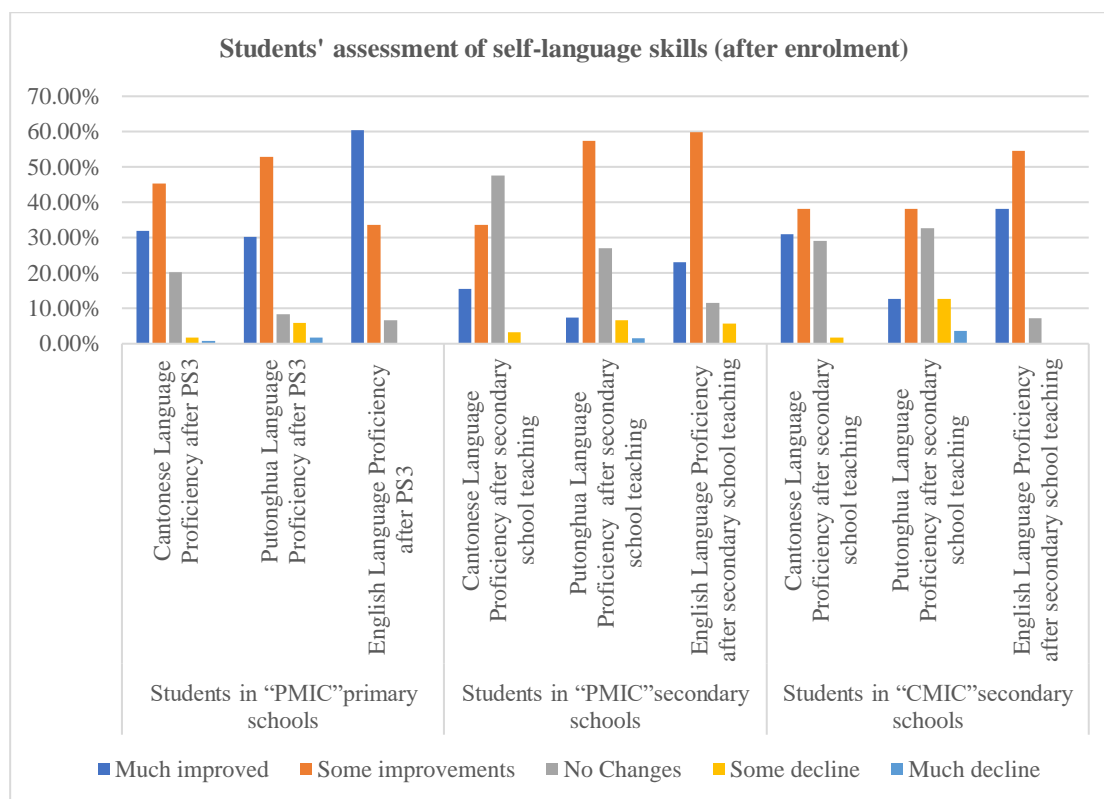


Figure 4: Students' Assessment of Self-Language Skills

Considering the Putonghua skills specifically, the majority of students in the PMIC classes feel that their Putonghua level has improved after registering in school. Indeed, the fact that both secondary and primary students in PMIC classes improve their Putonghua more than their CMIC counterparts provides further evidence of the effectiveness of Putonghua teaching.

In the CMIC class, 50.9% of the students express that their Putonghua level has enhanced since PS3, whereas 12.7% of the students express that their Putonghua level has decreased since they started secondary school. 3.6% of the students state that this decrease is significant. It is evident that the promotion of Putonghua depends heavily on the precise nature of classroom teaching and that students in the CMIC class have not had access to the benefits that Putonghua lessons offer or an environment in which to learn such a language, which may have consequences for their proficiency in Putonghua.

Moreover, the proportion of students who consider that their Putonghua skills have improved significantly after they commenced secondary school is not as high as that reported by primary school students, irrespective of whether they are in the PMIC classes or the CMIC classes. Meanwhile, the proportion of students who consider that their Putonghua skills have not changed or have even worsened is higher than that reported by primary school students. These figures suggest not only that primary school students are more effective in learning Putonghua and their language skills improve quickly, but also that there is still a need for the teaching of Putonghua in Hong

Kong to be enhanced, especially at the secondary level.

Social Development

The language is geographical in nature. The developmental status can also vary across regions, with corresponding variations in their socio-cultural functions. Given this, this study also examines the extent to which the students in the CMIC and PMIC classes in secondary schools identified with Cantonese, Putonghua and English from the three different perspectives broadly associated with Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and a more international outlook. Because this matter relates to subjective attitudes and features a social evaluation of language issues, more mature students from Secondary 5 (S5) are recruited to participate in this component of the survey (57 students from S5 CMIC and 32 students from S5 PMIC). The findings obtained are shown in Figure 5. below.

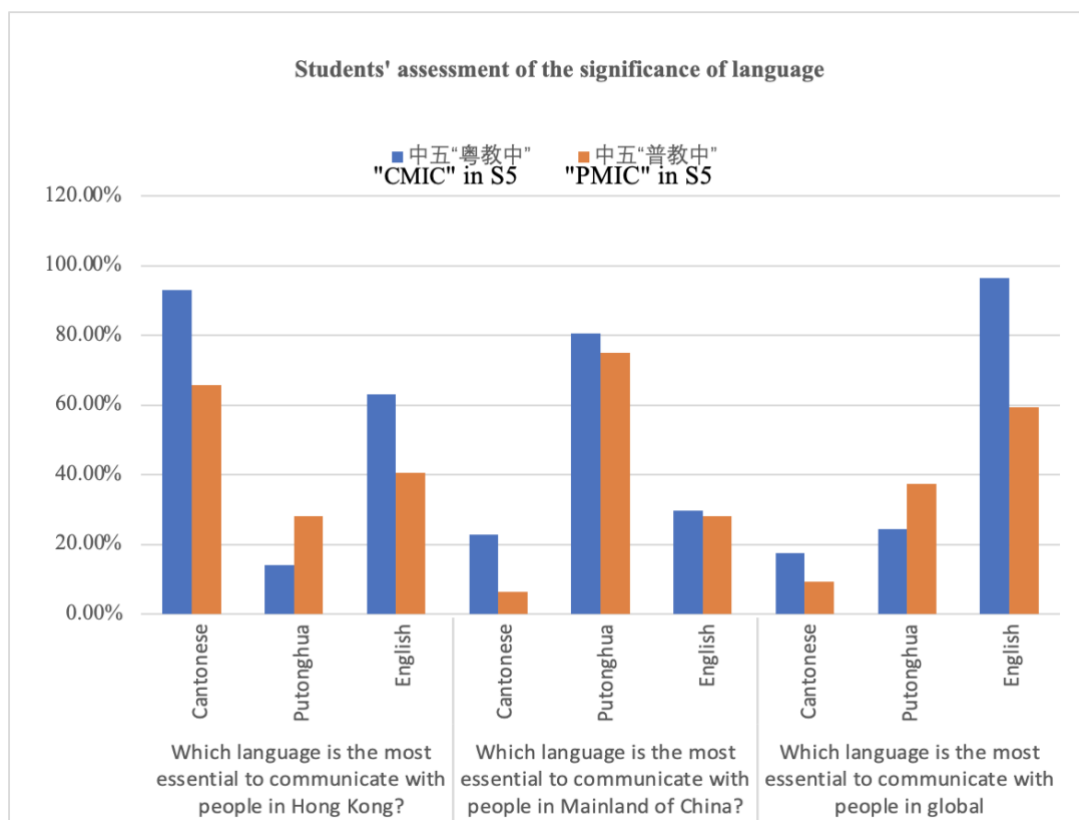


Figure 5: Students' Assessment of the Significance of Language

The data demonstrate that identification with English remains the dominant form, with Putonghua following. The students are largely of a single view that Cantonese is limited in terms of its utility within the international context. With respect to the Chinese Mainland, the students identify strongly with Putonghua and are more likely to identify with English than Cantonese. In Hong Kong, however, both groups of students consider Putonghua to be less valuable than Cantonese and English. In particular, students in the classes in which the medium of teaching is Cantonese tend to have low regard for Putonghua. This may be one of the reasons why such students chose to study in a Cantonese class rather than a Putonghua class.

Conversely, the proportion of students in the PMIC class who express the view that Putonghua is essential is higher than that relating to students in the Cantonese class. This suggests that language teaching and students' perception of language share a mutually reinforcing and influential relationship. Given the objective of raising the status of Putonghua in the perceptions of Hong Kong students, there is a clear need to promote teaching of Putonghua.

Social Value

Language is a tool, and the social value of a language is determined in the process of its use. When a language is more socially functional, it can play a leading role in areas such as science, technology, culture and knowledge,

and it is often on this basis that a given language is used as a medium of instruction. The consequence of this is that levels of acceptance and recognition of this language by students are bound to be high. Given this, an investigation is also conducted into how Hong Kong students perceived the social value of Cantonese and Putonghua. Given the young age and level of maturity of primary school students, only Secondary 5 students are surveyed in relation to this question. In view of the current biliteracy and trilingualism policy of Hong Kong, the questionnaire is designed to explore the social value of Cantonese and Putonghua such that they are presented as equal components of a bilingual approach rather than pitting them against each other. The results of this part of the survey are shown in Figure 6. below.

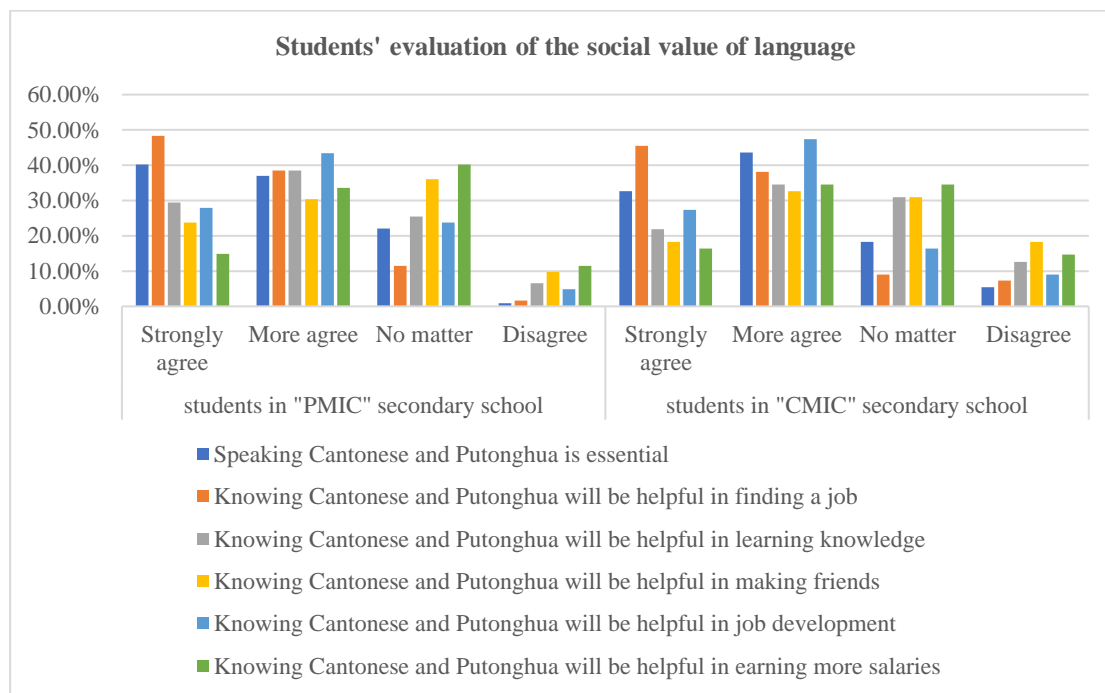


Figure 6: Students' Evaluation of the Social Value of Language

The survey data demonstrates that the majority of the students in both the PMIC and CMIC classes express the view that mastering Cantonese and Putonghua facilitates gaining employment, knowledge, and friends, as well as increasing the likelihood that one will secure promotion in one's work and earn more money. This is a typical example of productive bilingualism or productive cultural identity change. Put another way, in the process of acquiring the target language, the acquisition of the L1 language and the target language, together with the appreciation of the culture associated with the L1 language and the target language, can result in a mutually beneficial or complementary state of affairs (Gao, 1994, 2008). Students' knowledge of both Cantonese and their knowledge of Putonghua can thus reinforce each other, and the cultures associated with the two languages interact in a positive manner. This results in overall progress in the students' cognitive, affective, and action-related abilities, thus giving rise to a '1+1 > 2' effect.

Social Culture

Every society has a culture that corresponds to its own social form, and learning and accepting a language means acquiring and adopting the culture that it embodies. Such matters also affect human behavior implicitly, albeit also profoundly, and over the long term. Therefore, social culture is one of several vital environmental factors that influences students' cultural identity and functions as a constraint on their cultural values. To investigate these matters as they manifest in the students making up the sample of this study, a session was designed to examine

the Hong Kong students' sense of socio-cultural identity. The findings are presented in Figure 7.

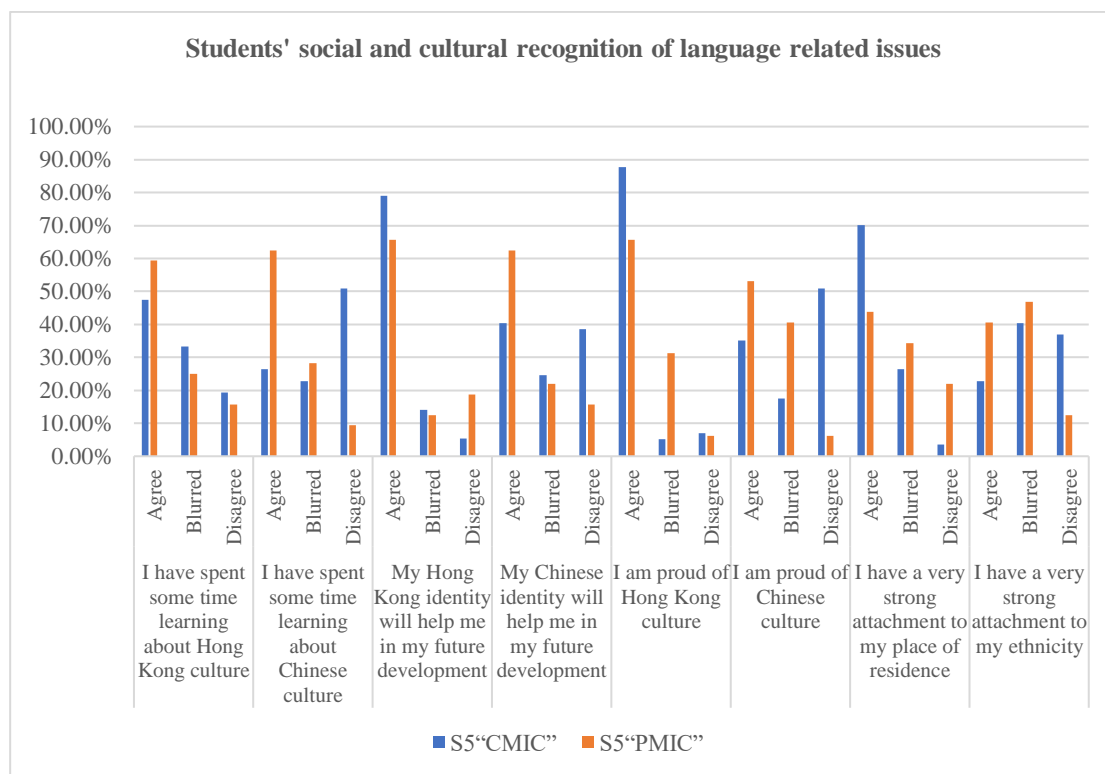


Figure 7: Students' Social and Cultural Recognition of Language-Related Issues

Once again, only students in S5 are surveyed for this component of the study. The data show that students in the PMIC class report spending more time learning about culture associated with Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese culture than their counterparts in the CMIC class. In addition, both groups of students appear to have identified themselves with Hong Kong. At the same time, students in the CMIC class identify themselves with the Chinese position and culture significantly less than students in the PMIC class. It is evident that students in the PMIC classes are more inclusive in terms of the Cantonese-dominated social environment. Moreover, these students appear to have expressed a strong emotional attachment to their place of residence. On the other hand, when ask whether they have a strong attachment to their own nation ethnicity, more secondary school students respond with “I don’t know,” suggesting that the matter of their national ethnic identity is rather unclear in terms of its precise nature. In particular, the proportion of students in the CMIC class who report having feelings of attachment to a Chinese identity is not as high as that reported by those in the PMIC class.

In summary, in this context, there is a case to be made that language teaching has had a profound effect on the participants' perception. The students who have been taught Putonghua for a long time are more likely to report accepting Chinese traditional culture and having a stronger sense of national identity. Therefore, for students in the PMIC class, more efforts should be made to teach Putonghua, thus enhancing these students' identification with Chinese identity and culture. For students in the CMIC classes, there is a need to foster a more positive language environment in which they can use Putonghua to stimulate their curiosity about Chinese culture, to understand it and to identify with it, and to deepen their sense of national identity.

Strategies for Teaching Putonghua in Hong Kong from the Perspective of Cultural Identity

Respecting Language Policies and Avoiding the Reductive Cultural Identity

Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region under “one country, two systems,” follows a “biliberate and trilingual” language policy. This policy has historical, social, and strategic reasons: English supports international exchange, while Cantonese and Putonghua together represent Chinese national identity. Research indicates that a bilingual or generally multilingual upbringing has the potential to instill in children a greater degree of intellectual and communicative ability (Marian & Shook, 2012). However, it must also be borne in mind that Putonghua education

in Hong Kong is not the same as the promotion of Putonghua in Mainland China. The objective underpinning the promotion of Putonghua in Mainland China is to make Putonghua the dominant language of communication. The goal in Hong Kong, on the other hand, is to maintain a “biliterate and trilingual” linguistic ecological balance in such a way that those in Hong Kong who speak Cantonese can use Putonghua in certain situations (instead of making Putonghua the dominant language or even replacing Cantonese (He, 2005). This approach will support the healthy development of bilingualism, allowing Putonghua teaching in Hong Kong to develop uniquely and beneficially.

Influencing Positive Traditional Culture and Promoting Productive Cultural Identity

Positive traditional culture refers to the essential elements of the Chinese nation that have been accumulated and passed down over time. It is the crystallization of the wisdom from the Chinese nation’s about five thousand years of civilization. As a cultural medium, Putonghua carries the essence of traditional Chinese culture. In Hong Kong’s Putonghua education, there is a need to incorporate more elements of traditional culture, such as increasing the proportion of classical literature and promoting poetry recitation. Additionally, enhancing the cultural proficiency of Putonghua teachers, fostering communication with Mainland Chinese, and creating diverse Putonghua teaching environments can help tap into the essence of Chinese culture expressed through Putonghua.

Schools are at the forefront of Putonghua teaching and learning, especially for young children who acquire language through interest and are most likely to develop a sense of language, affection for it, and even cross-cultural identity (Li, 2018). Surveys of home environments and schooling show a social basis for strengthening Putonghua teaching from the primary school level onwards. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to expand the proportion of PMIC classes in primary schools, allowing students to be exposed to and appreciate Chinese culture earlier and more broadly, thus maximizing the potential benefits of cultural exposure. It will also ensure that students adopt an open and tolerant stance, accepting their identities as multicultural individuals (Adler, 1998). Moreover, students in both PMIC and CMIC classes will be well-positioned to benefit from a 1+1>2 effect in their future endeavors, promoting economic and cultural exchanges, cooperation, and synergistic development between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese cities.

Establishing a Positive Cultural Perspective and Enhancing the Integrative Tendencies of Language Learning

Notwithstanding the benefits highlighted above, an excessive positive identity with Cantonese culture can lead students to reject intercultural communication. This rejection can hinder their understanding of the cultural essence contained in Putonghua, causing language development to become stagnant. Conversely, overemphasis on Putonghua culture might result in students becoming culturally disoriented, losing their connection to Cantonese culture. This could negatively impact their cultural roots and hinder the preservation and transmission of Cantonese culture.

Given these two perspectives and the cross-cultural dynamics in Putonghua education in Hong Kong, it is essential for teachers, schools, and society to cultivate an atmosphere that values both Cantonese and Putonghua. Both cultures have unique strengths, and there are significant advantages to students being exposed to and learning from both. At present, Cantonese and the culture associated with it are overwhelmingly dominant in the Hong Kong region. Given the need to expand the influence of Putonghua and to promote the integrative development of the language, there is also a need for space to be made for Putonghua communication outside the classroom on campuses from primary to secondary schools. This may be achieved by implementing, for example, regular Putonghua competitions and additional Putonghua training institutions, and particular social forces should be encouraged to conduct Putonghua training. Through a variety of channels, students can implicitly form a positive cultural outlook, thereby enabling them to better understand the differences between different cultures and form a more objective view of the development and intermingling of these.

Tapping the Social Value of Putonghua and Enhancing the Instrumental Tendency of Language Learning

Since the handover of Hong Kong, ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland have become increasingly close in various areas. The construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, a strategic initiative by China to enhance its global openness and economic development, has intensified the demand for advanced proficiency in Putonghua among Hong Kong residents.

Survey data indicate that, by secondary school, students in both PMIC and CMIC classes recognize the

instrumental value of learning Putonghua. They understand that mastering Putonghua in addition to Cantonese gives them a competitive edge, especially in employment. This underscores the need to explore the social value of Putonghua in detail. For instance, providing opportunities for Putonghua speakers to participate in current affairs interviews, general news, personal stories, children's programs, entertainment shows, and other Putonghua versions of media could be beneficial. Public venues like the MTR and the airport in Hong Kong already offer Putonghua services, and expanding these services to the medical and judicial fields could create a social environment that encourages the use of Putonghua and increases employment opportunities for speakers. Such initiatives would help students see that learning Putonghua is not only a reflection of cultural quality but also a valuable skill for expanding communication, promoting exchanges, and pursuing personal development. These aspects are politically, economically, and culturally significant in a world of new opportunities and challenges within the context of "One Belt, One Road."

Conclusion

This study demonstrates a significant link between Putonghua education and cultural identity among primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong. The findings reveal that longer exposure to Putonghua instruction positively influences students' acceptance of Chinese culture and enhances their sense of national identity. The study identifies several factors that impact cultural identity, including family environment, interpersonal interactions, school education, social development, social values, and cultural context. By understanding the mechanisms behind cultural identity, this research sheds light on the complex relationship between language education and cultural integration in a multilingual society like Hong Kong. Moreover, this study suggests several practical approaches for Putonghua teaching in Hong Kong. First, maintain cultural balance by ensuring Putonghua complements rather than replaces Cantonese. Second, promote cultural identity by integrating Chinese cultural elements to connect students with Mainland culture while valuing local roots. Third, encourage integrative learning by providing more opportunities to use both languages in diverse settings. Lastly, highlight Putonghua's social value by emphasizing its practical benefits, such as job prospects and regional development.

Previous studies have mainly relied on census data to examine Hong Kong's "daily language" and "work language" use, but this approach fails to fully capture the development of Putonghua education in primary and secondary schools. Schools are crucial fronts for promoting language, and neglecting this area could hinder Putonghua's spread in Hong Kong, thereby affecting the ecological balance of "bilingualism and trilingualism". This study supplements recent data on Putonghua's development across various sectors in Hong Kong. Additionally, considering that both Macau and Hong Kong share the Cantonese-speaking region and became Special Administrative Regions after returning to China, there are valuable shared experiences in promoting Putonghua. Beyond examining Putonghua's development in Hong Kong, this research also sheds light on a comparative analysis of Putonghua education in both Hong Kong and Macau.

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