Cultural identity and language attitudes – into the second decade of postcolonial Hong Kong

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Abstract

Upon entering the second decade of the postcolonial era, Hong Kong has undergone significant socio-economic changes which have impact on students' perceptions of cultural identity and language attitudes. This study conducted in 2009 is an investigation into the related perceptions of the postcolonial generation who grew up in Hong Kong after the change of sovereignty. A total of 1265 questionnaires were analyzed and group interviews were conducted with a sample of 48 respondents. Despite the outstanding achievements of China in the past decades, results showed that the majority of the informants still demonstrated a strong local identity as 'Hongkongers' while only a small percentage of them showed identification with the nation and claimed themselves 'Chinese'. Although the different identity groups converged much on their attitudes towards Cantonese (the local language) and English (the colonizer and international language), they differed significantly on their attitudes towards Putonghua (the national language of China). Although negative sentiments towards the motherland and its language were detected, there were signs showing that multilingualism and multiple identities could be developed concurrently.

Introduction

Hong Kong is a city in southern China, 95% of its population is ethnic Chinese. In July 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to the People's Republic of China (PRC), marking an end to the 155-year long reign of the British. However, As Tse (2004:60) states, 'Hong Kong's real transition is not merely about sovereignty, but also about identity'.

Since the PRC was established in 1949 under the Communist regime, Hong Kong and China went on separate paths in their social and cultural developments. From 1950 to 1980, when Hong Kong devoted much of its energy to economic advancement, China went into a

series of political movements that put the country into a state of turmoil. When Hong Kong was transformed into a financial and international metropolis, most parts of China retained a low standard of living, which as perceived by Hong Kong people, was rural and backward. Under the British influence, Hong Kong aspired to western values such as human rights, freedom and rule of law, whereas the PRC instilled socialist values which denounced materialistic way of living and exercised tight control on individual freedom. It was due to these disparities that a unique Hong Kong identity emerged, which connotes a lifestyle which is 'modern, Western-influenced, materialistic and predominantly urban' (Simpson, 2007:173). According to Lau (1997), such a local identity was largely built on the colonial background of Hong Kong, a sense of superiority over China, and a sentiment against the Communist regime.

After the Sino-British joint declaration was signed in 1984, it had become an irrevocable fact that Hong Kong had to return to China after 1997. Upon the political handover, Hong Kong would no longer be a British colony, but a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the PRC. Under the principle of 'One country, Two systems', the socialist system and policies of the PRC would not be practised in Hong Kong, and the capitalist way of life in Hong Kong should remain unchanged for at least 50 years (Hong Kong Basic Law, Article 5). Despite this, Hong Kong people expressed anxiety and distrust to this political change through large-scale emigration, especially after the June 4th Massacre in 1989. Unlike many other former British colonies heading for independence and nation building, Hong Kong is unique in its involuntary reintegration into a huge socialist power, yet retaining a high level of autonomy (Tse, 2004). However, the change of citizenship from British to Chinese did not necessarily induce stronger identification with China. In the series of research conducted during the neo-colonial period from 1985 to 1995, it was found that the percentage of respondents claiming themselves 'Hongkongers' stood at a constantly high level, ranging from 49.3% to 63.6% (Lau, 1997:5). Nevertheless, Lau (1997) found a long-term though slow increase in the proportion of people claiming a double identity of both 'Hongkonger' and 'Chinese' (from 12.1% in 1990 to 15.4% in 1995), and he expected this trend to become stronger after Hong Kong had become part of China after 1997.

Language is an important tool for nation building (Byram, 2008). Since Hong Kong returned to China, language policy has also become an issue of public concern. Before 1997, English (the colonizer's language) and Cantonese (a Chinese dialect spoken by the local people) formed a diglossic situation in which the two languages were used for complementary functions. English was a prestigious and a working language for the formal institutions of government, law, education and international business, while Cantonese was a dominant language used by the vast majority of the Hong Kong population in family and other informal

daily-life settings. Towards the end of the British governance, Cantonese started to take over some high functions from English, as the language of politics and public administration. After 1997, although the roles and functions of Cantonese and English remained largely the same in other domains, the bilingual setting of Hong Kong was transformed into a trilingual one when Putonghua (the national language of the PRC, also known as Mandarin) was formally introduced into the sociolinguistic setting of Hong Kong through the policy of "Biliteracy and Trilingualism", which refers to the use of standard English and Chinese as the written languages; and Cantonese, Putonghua (PTH hereafter) and English as the spoken languages.

The impact of the political change on language policies was especially evident to secondary schools when the Mother Tongue Education Policy was enforced one year after the political handover in 1998, which mandated the majority of the local secondary schools to adopt standard written Chinese and Cantonese as the medium of instruction (CMI)[i]. At the same time, PTH was introduced into the primary and junior secondary school curricular as a core subject that all students must learn. Before that, 90.4% of the local secondary schools were English-medium (EMI), and PTH was taught only in some schools in the form of an extra-curricular activity.

It has now been more than a decade after the change of sovereignty, and China has become much more liberal and affluent, and its influence has become increasingly significant both in Hong Kong[ii] and in the world. It was therefore logical to assume that a stronger national identity may have developed among Hong Kong people towards China, which in the end, may impact on their attitudes towards the local language, the national language, and the ex-colonizer's language. Among the different groups of Hong Kong people, the postcolonial generation is of particular interest for this study, which grew up during the transitional period of Hong Kong and was undertaking secondary education under the mandatory Mother Tongue Education Policy. This group of students (aged 15-17) was born a few years before 1997 and was in the middle of their Secondary Four education at the time of this research in 2009. This study explores their perceptions of identity and thus their attitudes towards the three spoken languages advocated by the Hong Kong SAR government, in the second decade of the postcolonial era.

Previous empirical research on cultural identity and language attitudes in Hong Kong

Before the national language and identity became issues of concern, empirical studies in the 1980s and early 1990s mainly focused on students' attitudes towards the English and Chinese language (i.e. standard written Chinese and spoken Cantonese), and whether English constituted a threat to the Chinese cultural identity. Pierson et al (1980) was the first research

of this kind, which surveyed 466 Hong Kong secondary school students. The results suggested that the subjects clearly realized the pragmatic functions of English in Hong Kong while they demonstrated strong in-group loyalty to Chinese cultural identity. Many of the subjects claimed that they felt unpatriotic when using English.

Pennington & Yue (1993) replicated the study of Pierson et al (1980), and compared their findings with those of the original study. Similar to Pierson et al (1980), Pennington & Yue (1993) found the respondents displaying a highly positive attitude towards English. However, they did not agree that using English would have negative effects on their identity. It was therefore concluded that the old antagonism between Chinese and English observed in the early 1980s had become outdated.

Upon the advent of the political handover, scholars started to turn their attention from a bilingual dichotomy of English and Chinese to a trilingual setting of Cantonese, English and PTH. Concern about cultural identity was more about examining how Hong Kong people defined their relation to Hong Kong and to the long-separated motherland, China. Lau (1997) suggested four main options of identity namely 'Hongkonger', 'Chinese', both or neither. In the series of surveys he conducted before the political handover, people were found displaying a strong sense of Hong Kong identity [iii]. Apart from this, a positive association was also found between cultural identity and language attitudes, showing that people who were born in Hong Kong tended to see themselves more as 'Hongkongers' and those who identified themselves as 'Chinese' were more willing to replace Cantonese with PTH as the official language of Hong Kong. Lau also pointed out that the local language used in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's contemporary culture had helped in crystallizing the Hong Kong identity:

> Since 1949, Hong Kong has become secluded from the social and cultural changes in China. The dominance of vernacular Cantonese among the Hong Kong people and the gradual emergence of a distinctive popular culture based on that dialect played a significant role in moulding the Hongkongese identity (p.3).

With an interest to explore the relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes, I conducted a qualitative study four years after the change of sovereignty in 2001. A total of 40 students participated in focus-group interviews. All interviewees were Secondary 4 students from four different schools. Among the interviewees, 17 identified themselves as 'Hongkongers', 7 'Chinese' and 16 claimed a double identity as both 'Hongkonger' and 'Chinese'. This group of students started secondary education one year after the political handover when the mandatory Mother Tongue Education Policy was just implemented. Analysis of the interview data showed that students still held a sense of superiority over China

and a strong local identity, which led them to regard the mainland Chinese as an out-group which competed with them for either internal resources or job opportunities. They showed strong emotional attachment to Cantonese as the mother tongue and a proficiency in English being a feature of the younger Hong Kong generation, while PTH was learnt mainly for instrumental reasons (Lai, 2003).

Studies of identity continued to attract scholars' attention in the second millennium. Following Lau's identity framework, the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies conducted similar studies on Hong Kong people's identity in the postcolonial context of Hong Kong. Regardless of China's outstanding achievements in the cultural, economic and technological domains in the past decade, respondents of the 2006 survey still showed stronger identification to Hong Kong. As reported in Wong & Wan (2007), out of 848 adult respondents aged over 18 interviewed, 52.8% identified themselves as 'Hongkongers', 36.3% claimed themselves 'Chinese' and 9.4% both. Such results were highly comparable to those gathered in 1997 (i.e. 55.8%, 32.5% and 9.4% respectively), showing that the cultural identification of Hong Kong people had been rather stable. Wong & Wan (2007) also pointed out that those who identified themselves as 'Hongkongers' were more strongly inclined to liberalism and were apathetic to national affairs while those who claimed Chinese identity displayed a stronger orientation of nationalism and positive attitude towards the PRC government. Apart from these, similar surveys on adults' perceptions of identity were also conducted by the University of Hong Kong. In addition to choosing an identity label for themselves, respondents were also asked to express how much they identified themselves as 'Hongkonger' and 'Chinese' on a 10 point scale, with '0' indicating the least and '10' the highest sense of identification. From 2002 to 2006, respondents were found showing stronger local than national identity, yet the gap between the two identities was found narrowing over the years (HKU POP site 2010). However, such a trend seemed to reverse in 2008 when the respondents, for the first time in history of similar surveys, were found identifying themselves more as Chinese (Hong Kong Wen Wei Po 30/06/2008)[iv]. Yet, critics warned that this might only be a temporary effect of the Beijing Olympics and the Sichuan earthquake that happened in 2008 (Hong Kong Commercial News, 17/06/2008).

Purpose of the present study

Building on the previous studies, the present research continues to trace the development of students' perceptions of identity and their attitudes towards English, Cantonese and PTH in 2009 when Hong Kong moves into the second decade of its

postcolonial era. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used for a more thorough study of the topic. Up till the time of the present research, Hong Kong's sovereignty had been returned to China for 12 years. During this time, national education had taken deeper roots in Hong Kong, the cultural and economic ties between Hong Kong and China had become increasingly close, and the international status of China had also been greatly elevated because of its success in organising the Beijing Olympics and the leading role it played in stabling the world's economy during the Financial Tsunami in 2008. Apart from these, the mandatory Mother Tongue Education Policy had also been implemented for 11 years at the time of this research. For these reasons, students of the present study were expected to display stronger identification with China and thus more positive attitudes towards its national language. However, this would not weaken their attitudes towards Cantonese and English since the two languages are important markers of the Hong Kong identity (Lai, 2003). In brief, the aims of the 2009 survey are to find out 1) the respondents' self identification in the second decade of the postcolonial era; and 2) the significant differences among the three identity groups in terms of their attitudes towards Cantonese, English and PTH.

The Research Design

This study adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods through a questionnaire survey and group interviews. Respondents were all Secondary 4 students who had undergone the socio-economic and cultural changes in postcolonial Hong Kong for 12 years at the time of this research. Unlike the respondents of my research in 2001 who experienced the political handover only when they started secondary education, those of the present study better represent the postcolonial generation, who grew up and received education in Hong Kong after the political handover with little conscious experience of the pre-1997 social environment. This particular group of students was chosen also because they were mature enough to give meaningful responses to questions, yet remaining relatively less affected by pressures of high-stake examinations and work than the older respondents.

The questionnaire survey

In this study, a questionnaire was devised to collect responses from the target respondents. In order to remove language barriers, the questionnaire was written in Chinese, the respondents' familiar language. More than 60 schools were invited to participate in the research and the questionnaire was administered in 36 schools which accepted the invitation.

Part One of the questionnaire gathers information about the respondents' personal information including place of birth, home language and their self-ascribed identity. Following the framework of Lau (1997) and Wong & Wan (2007), respondents were mainly

asked to identify themselves either as 'Hongkongers' or 'Chinese'. Apart from this, a third option 'Hongkong-Chinese' was used to replace the term 'both' that better spelt out the essence of the double identity. In addition, respondents were also allowed to state their own cultural identity if they did not find any of the given labels appropriate.

Part Two of the questionnaire consists of a total of 36 statements. All items were devised on a four-point Likert scale with '4' representing the most positive response and '1' the most negative. Question items were then collapsed into six factors in two domains according to Gardner's socio-cultural model (1985). The first three factors are: integrative orientation towards 1) Cantonese (Caninteg), 2) English (Enginteg) and 3) PTH (Pthinteg); the next three factors are: instrumental orientation towards 4) Cantonese (Caninstru), 5) English (Enginstru) and 6) PTH (Pthinstru) (see Appendix 1).

According to Gardner & Lambert (1972), 'Instrumental orientation' refers to a positive inclination towards a language for pragmatic reasons, such as obtaining a job or higher education opportunity. 'Integrative orientation' refers to a favorable inclination towards a language in order to become a valued member of a given community. 'Integrativeness' thus implies not only an interest in a language, but also an open attitude towards another cultural group; in the extreme, it suggests emotional identification with the community of the target language (Gardner 2001). Composite means were calculated for each factor, any values greater than 2.5 indicate a positive orientation while those less than 2.5 show a negative inclination.

Profile of the survey respondents

A total of 1265 questionnaires from 36schools were analyzed, 75.3% of the respondents were born in Hong Kong and 21.6% were born in mainland China. 92.8% of them speak Cantonese as their home language while only 0.8% use PTH, 3.1% speak other China dialects and 1% use English[v]. 32.6% of the sample were attending EMI schools while nearly two-third of the sample (67.4%) were attending CMI schools, which is very close to the proportion in reality[vi] (see detailed breakdown Appendix 2).

Group interviews

While the quantitative part of this study helped to find out the attitudes of different identity groups, the aim of the interviews was to provide an in-depth picture of the informants' perceptions behind their discrete responses to the questionnaire items. Through convenience sampling, a total of 48 students from six different schools (3 CMI and 3 EMI) were interviewed in groups of eight. Among the interviewees, 20 identified themselves as 'Hongkongers', 16 'Hongkong-Chinese' and 12 'Chinese'. The interviews were carried out

by the researcher in students' mother tongue (i.e. Cantonese). The conversations were audio-recorded, and then transcribed and translated into English for reporting.

Findings:

In this section, findings on the perceptions of identity and the language attitudes of different identity groups will be described first with the statistical results from the questionnaire survey. After that, students' views will be illustrated through related interview extracts, in which 'I' stands for the interviewer, and the interviewees are represented first with a letter (A-F) that indicates which school they came from, then their interviewee number, which was arbitrarily assigned to them according to the sequence of their questionnaires. Next to each interviewee number, their self-ascribed cultural identity is marked, with 'HK' stands for Hong Kong identity; 'C' refers to Chinese identity and 'HKC' representing Hongkong-Chinese.

Perceptions of identity

Out of 1265 respondents, 52.4% identified themselves as 'Hongkongers'; 15.3% 'Chinese' while 18.8% adopted a double identity as 'Hongkong-Chinese'. Results of the present study are highly comparable to those found in previous surveys. As compared to Lau (1997) and Wong & Wan (2007) cited in earlier sections, the percentage of students identifying themselves 'Hongkongers' remained rather constant, showing little change over the past years. However, that of those identifying with the Chinese identity has dropped drastically, whereas that claiming both 'Hongkonger' and 'Chinese' is obviously higher. This validates Lau's (1997) prediction for an increase in the appeal of a double identity after the change of sovereignty. A weaker identification with China was found in this study possibly because the effects of the Beijing Olympics had subsided. In addition, the fact that all respondents of this study are teenagers may also be a reason since young people are often found displaying a weaker sense of national identity and pride than the older respondents (Wong and Shum, 1998; Policy 21, 2004).

In the interviews, respondents were invited to explain their choice of identity. As illustrated in the following extract, respondents identified themselves as 'Hongkongers' mainly because of their strong emotional tie with their birthplace and their pride on the achievements of Hong Kong:

A/260/HK: I was born here and I live in Hong Kong. I seldom go back to
China…I have a strong sense of belonging to this place.
B/39/HK: We are an international financial centre.

F/194/HK: I am a Hongkonger because I think Hong Kong is better than China as Hong Kong seems to be more civilized. We are a place where East meets West.

For the Hongkong-Chinese group, students adopted a double identity mainly due to their recognition of the change of sovereignty:

F/182/HKC: My Mom said she is a Hongkonger and my Dad said he is a Chinese. I think I am a Chinese living in Hong Kong because Hong Kong has been returned to China and we cannot deny that Hong Kong is part of China.

For respondents who claimed themselves Chinese, they revealed a comparatively stronger sense of nationalism mainly because of their ethnicity, their admiration of the ancient Chinese culture and the achievements of modern China:

F/182/HKC- China has a very long history and culture.

C/684/C - China has the four great inventions.

D/816/C- China has many great achievements like the Beijing Olympics and its advanced technology in aerospace etc.

However, this group of respondents often detached themselves from the label 'mainland'. To most of them, 'mainland' was a derogatory term that connoted low education and bad social manners:

A/270/C - I am a Chinese. Chinese refers to all Chinese people with yellow skin and it doesn't carry any negative meanings. But I am NOT a mainlander…. 'Mainlanders' means those people who live on the mainland, especially those who speak loudly and behave rudely.

It was also the negative news and image of China that undermined their identification with the nation:

I: Are you proud of being a Chinese?

F/201/M/HK: Yes, because I think China is great in many aspects. For example, it has successfully organized the Olympic Games.

I: But why do you claim yourself a Hongkonger, but not Chinese?

F/201/M/HK: Perhaps I would if there was no corruption, no poisonous milk and no fake products in China.

Language attitudes of the three identity groups

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After perceptions of identity, the relationship between cultural identity and language attitudes will be examined in this section. In the following, the language attitudes of different identity groups, as revealed in the questionnaire results, will be first described, then illustrated by related extracts from the interviews.

Results of the survey

Polarized language attitude patterns

As shown in Table 1 below, the Hongkong and the Chinese group show consistently polarized positions in nearly all factors whereas the Hongkong-Chinese is always in the middle except for Factor 6, of which, the Hongkong-Chinese group rated the instrumental values of PTH the most highly among the three groups. However, such an outlying result can be seen as an isolated case which does not refute the polarized pattern, especially when the mean of the Hongkong-Chinese group is only 0.04 higher than that of the Chinese group in this factor.

As revealed in the statistical results, 'Hongkongers' is the group that shows the strongest integrative inclination towards Cantonese and English, while that towards PTH is comparatively the least positive. On the contrary, the Chinese group is the one among the three groups which shows the weakest integrative orientation towards Cantonese and English yet the strongest positive inclination towards PTH. The consistent patterns found in the statistical results therefore warrant support to a correlation between cultural identity and language attitudes. Hong Kong identity is positively correlated with the attitudes towards Cantonese and English, whereas it plays a weaker role in relation to PTH. Similarly, respondents who claimed Chinese identity wholly or partly as Hongkong-Chinese are more positive towards PTH.

Table 1: Language attitude patterns of the 2009 sample

Cultural ID	Hongkongers		Chinese		HK-Chinese	
Factors	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. CanInteg	↑3.50	0.40	↓3.27	0.47	3.38	0.44
2. EngInteg	↑3.25	0.46	↓3.16	0.49	3.21	0.47
3. PthInteg	↓2.66	0.51	↑3.01	0.45	2.92	0.49
4. CanInstru	↑3.16	0.54	↓3.06	0.66	3.11	0.57
5. EngInstru	↑3.51	0.42	↓3.46	0.50	3.50	0.42
6. PthInstru	↓2.79	0.52	3.02	0.48	↑3.06	0.50

↑ = the highest mean among groups; ↓ = the lowest mean among groups; SD = standard deviation

However, it must be emphasized that such a conclusion is drawn only through comparisons among the three groups within each factor. When results are examined across

factors, the three identity groups in fact display the same attitude patterns, marked by the strongest integrative orientation towards Cantonese and the strongest instrumental orientation towards English. In both domains, PTH ranks last.

Significant differences among identity groups

One-way ANOVA was applied to test the differences between groups. Following the statistical convention, any t-test values smaller than 0.05 will indicate a significant difference. However, since a large sample size can easily produce statistical significance at 0.05 even with a slight difference in the means (Mertens, 1998), effect-size values were also calculated to verify the differences between groups. According to Fitz-Gibbon & Morris (1987), any values smaller or near 0.2 indicate very small and insignificant differences; those between 0.5-0.8 indicate medium differences; and those larger than 0.8 indicate large and significant differences.

As shown in Table 2 below, only medium differences of effect size values ranging from 0.45 to 0.7 are found in three factors (i.e. Factors 1, 3 & 6), of which, one is related to Cantonese and two to PTH. This shows that PTH is the center of disparity as its role and status are still undergoing transition in Hong Kong society. The attitudes of all identity groups converge much on English, and respondents share similar judgment about the instrumental value of Cantonese, as there are no large effect size values found in these factors. However, the Hongkong group is significantly more positive than the Chinese group as regards their integrative inclination towards Cantonese while their attitudes towards PTH are significantly less positive than the other two groups in both the integrative and instrumental domains.

Table 2: Significant differences between identity groups

Factors	Contrasting identity groups		T-test sig.	Effect size
1. CanInteg	Hongkonger	Chinese	0.0001	0.55
	Chinese	HK-Chinese		
2. EngInteg	Hongkonger	Chinese		
3. PthInteg	Hongkonger	Chinese	0.0001	0.70
	Hongkonger	HK-Chinese	0.0001	0.52
	Chinese	HK-Chinese		
5. EngInstru	Hongkonger	Chinese		
6. PthInstru	Hongkonger	Chinese	0.0001	0.45
	Hongkonger	HK-Chinese	0.0001	0.53
	Chinese	HK-Chinese		

Significant differences through interviews

Since major disparities among the three identity groups were found in Factor 1: integrative orientation towards Cantonese, Factor 3: integrative orientation towards PTH, and Factor 6: instrumental orientation towards PTH, students' perceptions in these aspects were further examined through group interviews. However, unlike the statistical analysis that revealed clear attitude patterns from a large number of respondents, no distinct polarized views were heard from different groups in the interviews. In fact, it was not uncommon to find a 'Hongkonger' expressing strong national pride and support for more intensive national language education in schools while a 'Chinese' expressed admiration for western culture and English. This is especially true when stronger identification with one group does not necessarily mean to exclude the others. In addition, the attitude patterns of the three groups were in fact similar when comparison was made within each group, which showed the strongest emotional attachment to Cantonese and the highest evaluation of English for its instrumental values and status. In the following section, representative views expressed in interviews will be extracted to illustrate the reasons that might have contributed to the significant disparities revealed in the statistical analysis, shown in Table 3.

Factor 1: Integrative orientation towards Cantonese

From the statistical analysis, although a significant difference was found between the Hong Kong group (mean=3.5) and the Chinese group (mean=3.27) as regards their integrative orientation towards Cantonese, no negative views were expressed about Cantonese in the interviews. This shows that the disparity among groups does not necessarily imply opposite views about Cantonese, but only a difference in the intensity of their positive attitude towards the language. Aligned with the statistical results, interviewees of all groups expressed integrative inclination towards Cantonese, mainly because of their strong emotional tie with their mother tongue, and the importance of the language as a symbol of the local Hong Kong identity and culture:

I: Which language do you like most?

E/413/HK: I like Cantonese most because it is my mother tongue and it's the language that I have been using to communicate with my family members, friends, and teachers since I was young… and I am familiar with it.

I: Do you think Cantonese should be eliminated because it is only a dialect with little national and international status?

A/254/HK: Eliminating Cantonese means eliminating our culture.

I: Is this Cantonese culture important?

A/260/HK: Very important. Our Hong Kong culture is mostly expressed through our language, like the names of food and the trendy colloquial expressions etc,

On the discussion of collective identities, Jenkins (1996:80) points out that 'similarities cannot be recognized without delineating differences', and one of the things that a particular group has in common is their difference from others. For this reason, Cantonese was highly valued as an identity marker and a tool in demarcating a cultural boundary that made Hong Kong unique.

I: Do you think Cantonese should be replaced by English or PTH in Hong Kong?

A/283/HK: Cantonese is special because not many places speak Cantonese. If we change to English or PTH, one of our essential characteristics will disappear, and we shall become westerners' Hong Kong or China's Hong Kong instead of being ourselves.

B/49/C: Hong Kong is now under the policy of 'One country, Two systems', so Hong Kong is different from the other parts of China. If Hong Kong is not a special administrative region, then it is a must for Hongkongers to speak PTH. But now, Cantonese seems to make Hong Kong special and different.

Factor 3: Integrative attitude towards Puotnghua

As revealed from the statistical analysis, the disparities between the Hong Kong group (mean=2.66) and the other two groups (HKC=2.92; C=3.01) were significant as regards their attitudes towards PTH. Although the attitudes of all groups in this factor were positive, the Hong Kong group tended to subscribe to biases against mainland China while the other two groups showed relatively stronger emotional ties with the nation and its language. For the Chinese group, PTH was a significant marker of their national identity and a tool to build up solidarity with the country:

C/684/C: Being a Chinese, I would feel shameful if I don't know PTH. It's like an American or British who cannot speak English.

D/133/C: Most of the mainlanders speak PTH. As a Chinese, we should at least be able to speak some PTH. If we speak PTH, we can better communicate with the mainlanders and they would feel that we are from the same country but not from a colony.

F/799/C: In the eyes of foreigners, 'Chinese' are the people who speak PTH. I am a Chinese, so I should be able to speak PTH.

As PTH has been taught in schools as part of the core curriculum since 1997, it has been 'neutralized' as a school subject and a tool of communication rather than a symbol of the mainland that carries derogatory meanings:

I: Are you afraid that others will think you are a new immigrant from mainland if you speak fluent PTH?

D/110/HKC: No! Being able to speak fluent PTH only shows that I have worked hard to learn this language. All students learn PTH as a core subject in school.

Contrarily, some interviewees of the Hong Kong group considered PTH a tool for communication of no special symbolic meaning of nationalism Therefore they felt no obligation to learn the language:

C/601/HK: Many foreigners speak fluent PTH too. Even if I speak PTH, I won't feel more Chinese and I don't think I should feel obliged to learn it because I am a Chinese. Similarly, I won't feel I am British when I speak English. It is only a language for communication.

In addition, some students associated PTH with a lower social group and expressed biases against the mainland people and thus their language:

I: which language do you associate most with education, intelligence and wealth?

E/413/C: Many new immigrants are PTH speakers, and many of them are from the village…I don't think speaking PTH means being educated, intelligent, and well-off.

B/53/HK: I like English most, then Cantonese, PTH is last. English sounds polite and elegant…. PTH-speakers always speak very loudly and rudely, so I don't like them.

A/46/HK: My teacher was unable to reserve a table in a restaurant using Cantonese but was able to do so in English.

I: Really? Did he try PTH?

A/46/HK: No, it's not possible! I don't believe he can get a table by using PTH! Speaking English is more high-class.

Factor 6: Instrumental orientation towards Putonghua

Although the attitudes of all groups were positive in this factor, and the composite means were higher than those in the integrative domain, yet significant disparities were found between groups regarding their attitudes towards PTH from the instrumental perspective. When compared among groups, the Hong Kong group (mean=2.79) tended to see less value

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in the language than the other two groups (HKC=3.06; C=3.02) mainly because they perceived little need to use it:

> C/71/HK: If I need to give up one language, I would choose to give up PTH
> because Cantonese is important for me since I am a Hongkonger. Everybody uses
> Cantonese in Hong Kong. English is important because nearly all countries in the
> world need to know English. But for PTH, I seldom need to use it.

In addition, because of the lower importance of PTH in education, students tended to see less instrumental values in the language:

> A/275/HK: Although PTH is more highly regarded in society now, it is not really
> important. In school, we don't have a lesson that requires us to talk or have group
> discussion in PTH, but we are required to do so in Cantonese and English. By now,
> except in PTH lessons, it is not used as a medium of instruction in any other
> subjects. But for English, it is used as a medium of instruction in many subjects,
> like Geography. English is a must for university entrance and a good job.

Despite the negative views, some students tended to perceive PTH as linguistic capital that could bring advantages to them in the future. They reckoned that PTH had become more important because of the rising power of China in the world:

> A/270/C: Many foreigners are learning PTH…we should also learn PTH in order
> to communicate better and do business with the mainland people.
> B/38/HK-C: China has become more developed and its status in the world a lot
> higher. Many countries rely on China's resources for production and China's
> market to earn profit. So, knowing PTH is important.

Summary of findings

In brief, the majority of the respondents identified themselves as 'Hongkongers' mainly because of the strong emotional tie with their birthplace, its culture and achievements. Although they also felt proud of China, their national identity was much weakened by the negative news about the country. Regarding language attitudes, all groups were positive about the three languages in both the integrative and instrumental domains. Although the three identity groups converged much on Cantonese and English, significant disparities arose on PTH. The Hongkong-Chinese and the Chinese group tended to display more positive integrative orientation towards PTH mainly because of its role as the national language and a marker of ethnicity. They also tended to see greater instrumental values of the language as linguistic capital when China's power is increasing. Although the attitude of the Hong Kong group towards PTH was also positive, some tended to associate the language with a lower

social group. To them, PTH was only a language for communication, which did not carry any special symbolic meaning. It was not as important as Cantonese and English since it was not a requirement for studies and they did not feel the immediate need to use it.

Discussion

Cultural identity of the postcolonial generation

As shown in the data, the post-generation of Hong Kong still demonstrates a strong sense of belonging to Hong Kong. As mentioned before, this group of students was brought up after the change of sovereignty when China was growing into a super power in the world and its influence in Hong Kong has become increasingly significant in both the economic and cultural aspects. Despite this, national identity among the younger generation did not turn out to be stronger as expected. As expressed in the interviews, many students still possessed a sense of superiority over China and distrust to the social system of the PRC, which was overshadowed by corruption, fake products and disorderly behaviours of people.

Mathews et al (2008) described Hong Kong people's love for the country as 'Sunshine patriotism', which refers to a conditional identification with the country only in good times, like when China wins medals in the Olympics. This seems to match with what was found in this study. Respondents expressed admiration for the great achievements made by both ancient and modern China, yet they distanced themselves from the country and its people and asserted their Hong Kong ego when facing negative news about the country. Respondents of this study labeled the bright side of China as 'Chinese' and the dark side 'mainland'. Although they identified with the former, they showed antagonism towards 'mainland' as a derogatory term, which connotes backwardness, lawlessness and low education. As revealed in this study, the love and hate sentiments towards China often coexist and offset each other. This may explain why the Chinese identity did not flourish significantly among the postcolonial generation even a decade after the change of sovereignty.

In fact, 'Sunshine patriotism' is not at all a fair description of the relationship between Hong Kong and its motherland. In the past years, Hong Kong people have shown great sympathy to their fellow compatriots on the mainland and were generous to offer help in times of natural disasters, for example during the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. Very often, Hong Kong people were found displaying a stronger sense of patriotism during difficult times of China. This shows two sides of the relation between Hong Kong and China: one being a harmonious convergence of the local and the national identity on the common grounds of history, traditional culture and humanitarianism, and the other being an assertion of the differences, especially when the core elements of the Hong Kong ego (i.e. human rights, freedom, law and order, modern, western-influenced, urban) are disturbed. Given the

ideological gap between Hong Kong and China, it is not likely to see any drastic changes in the identity patterns of the postcolonial generation in the foreseeable future.

Such a strong local identity of the postcolonial generation also owes to the principle of 'One country, two systems' that protects Hong Kong from high-handed intervention from the PRC. While people of the nationalist camp reckon the importance of 'One country' and criticize the HKSAR government for being half-hearted in enforcing patriotic education, people inclining to democratic thinking are more concerned about 'Two systems' and resist any movements that would suppress local identity. In addition, as pointed out by Tse (2004), the idea of unconditional patriotism is often contested by the emphasis on 'critical thinking' that underpins all education curricular in Hong Kong.

Language development in postcolonial Hong Kong

Over the past decades, Cantonese has been playing the role of a dominant language in Hong Kong which acculturates immigrants speaking different Chinese dialects within the territory. According to the 2006 census, Cantonese is spoken by 90.8% of the population (Hong Kong Census and Statistics department, 2006). Through the success of Cantonese movies and popular songs, and the fact that Cantonese has been transformed from a vernacular into a local language serving high social functions, the role of Cantonese being a marker of the Hong Kong identity, culture and success has been further consolidated (Tse, 2004). As suggested by Leung & Lee (2006:43), Cantonese is not a pragmatic need but a cultural choice, and it is the power of this cultural choice that has 'overshadowed the coloniser's language in the colonial period and the motherland's language after the change of sovereignty'.

Edwards (1985:18) pointed out that there are 'two separable aspects of language – the communicative and symbolic', and it is possible for either one of the aspects to retain importance in the absence of the other. Under such a strong Cantonese-based culture of Hong Kong, other languages tend to thrive better in the instrumental paradigm. Throughout the past decades, English has been successfully promoted as an instrument for upward and outward mobility, being detached from its symbolic meaning as a colonial language. Similarly, in order to avoid contesting the local identity and triggering the fear of 'recolonization', PTH is also promoted as a tool for wider communication and better life opportunities rather than a symbol of nationalism. As revealed from the slogan of a recent TV advertisement, which could be literally translated as 'Speaking better Putonghua; Creating a new world', PTH is portrayed as a tool to widen one's horizon and create a brighter future. In fact, such a pragmatic positioning of PTH has won appeal among the public and enables the national language to land softly in Hong Kong, through which, the principle of 'One country' can be realized. As the economy of Hong Kong continues to shift towards China, PTH will continue

to thrive in the instrumental domain and be well-accepted as a language for wider communication.

Conclusion - Towards a model of multilingualism and multiple identities

Despite the outstanding achievements of China in the past decade, the postcolonial generation of Hong Kong is still found showing a stronger local than national identity. Although students' positive inclination towards PTH is generally positive, the national language is rated the lowest both in the integrative and instrumental domains by all groups. Reading these findings, one would feel much tempted to seek stronger intervention from the government to strengthen patriotic education and national language education to the postcolonial generation, in order to speed up the pace of cultural reintegration. However, the recent uproar in Canton (a Cantonese-speaking city in southern China) in reaction to a proposal for turning a local Cantonese TV channel into PTH (Mingpao Daily News, 02/08/2010), has sent a clear warning signal against any rash attempts in imposing conformity on languages and culture[vii].

As pointed out by Pavlenko (2002), identity can be multiple, complex and sometimes a site of struggle. Learning one language does not mean simple replacement of another one or establishment of a new monolingual identity as speaker of another language. In the complex sociolinguistic reality, multidimensional identities and pluralism are the norm (cited in Ushioda & Dornyei, 2009:5). Similarly, in the case of postcolonial Hong Kong, it is best to allow identity and languages to develop in the same direction, aiming at additive trilingualism and multiple identities which operate at three levels: local, national and international. Given the narrowing gap between Hong Kong and China in the economic aspects and the convergence of the Hong Kong and Chinese identity in areas of historical and traditional cultural backgrounds, it should not be difficult to seek equilibrium between different identities and languages.

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END

Appendix 1

Factor 1: Integrative orientation toward Cantonese
- I like Cantonese because it is my mother tongue.
- Cantonese is the language which best represents Hong Kong.
- Cantonese should be replaced by Putonghua since it is only a dialect with little value.
- I like Cantonese.
- I like Cantonese speakers.
- As a Hongkonger, I should be able to speak fluent Cantonese.

Factor 2: Integrative orientation toward English
- I would like to speak fluent English because it makes me feel modern and westernized.
- A person who speaks fluent English is usually arrogant, snobbish and show-off.
- I like English.
- I like English speakers.
- As a Hongkonger, I should be able to speak fluent English.
- A person who speaks fluent English is usually educated, intelligent and well-off.

Factor 3: Integrative orientation towards Putonghua

- Putonghua should be more widely used in Hong Kong so that Hong Kong will quickly integrate with the PRC
- I'm afraid that if I speak fluent Putonghua, others will think I am a new immigrant from the mainland.
- I like Putonghua.
- I like Putonghua speakers.
- As a Hongkonger, I should be able to speak fluent Putonghua.
- A person who speaks fluent Putonghua is usually educated, intelligent and well-off.

Factor 4: Instrumental orientation towards Cantonese

- Cantonese will help me much in getting better opportunities for further studies
- Cantonese will help me much in better career opportunities in the 21st Century
- Cantonese is highly regarded in Hong Kong society.
- I wish to master a high proficiency of Cantonese.

Factor 5: Instrumental orientation towards English

- English is less important in Hong Kong after the change of sovereignty.
- The use of English is one of the crucial factors which has contributed to the success of Hong Kong's prosperity and development today.
- To increase the competitive edge of Hong Kong, the English standard of Hong Kong people must be enhanced.
- English will help me much in getting better opportunities for further studies.
- English will help me much in getting better career opportunities in the 21st Century.

- English is highly regarded in Hong Kong society.
- I wish to master a high proficiency of English.

Factor 6: Instrumental orientation towards Putonghua

- If Putonghua is widely used in Hong Kong, Hong Kong will become more prosperous.
- Putonghua is an important language in Hong Kong.
- The importance and status of Putonghua will soon be higher than that of English in Hong Kong
- Putonghua will help me much in getting better opportunities for further studies.
- Putonghua will help me much in getting better career opportunities in the 21st Century.
- Putonghua is highly regarded in Hong Kong society.
- I wish to master a high proficiency of Putonghua.

Appendix 2 : Traits of the respondents Part 1

Identity			Place of birth			Home language		
Identity	N	%	Birth place	N	%	Language	N	%
Hongkonger	663	52.4	Hong Kong	952	75.3	Cantonese	1174	92.8
Chinese	193	15.3	China	273	21.6	PTH	10	0.8
HK-Chinese	238	18.8	Others	23	1.8	English	13	1.0
No idea	128	10.1				Other Chinese dialects	39	3.1
Others	35	2.8				Others	25	2.0
Missing cases	8	0.6	Missing cases	17	1.3	Missing cases	3	0.2
Total	1265	100	Total	1265	100	Total	1265	100

Appendix 2 : Traits of the respondents Part 2

Medium of Instruction			Banding of schools		
MoI	N	%	Band	N	%
CMI	853	67.4	1	515	40.7
EMI	417	32.6	2	312	24.7
			3	438	34.6
Missing cases	0			0	
Total	1265	100		1265	100

[i] The mandatory mother tongue education policy was implemented in 1998. Before that, 90.8% of the secondary schools used English as the medium of instruction. Under the mandatory mother tongue education policy, only those schools which could prove the abilities of both staff and students in teaching and learning through English could continue to use English as a medium of instruction (EMI) while other schools would need to use Chinese (standard written Chinese and spoken Cantonese) as the instructional language (CMI). This turned around 70% of the local secondary schools into CMI while only 30% retained the status of EMI (Li, 2009). This policy applied to Secondary 1-3 only and schools would have the liberty to choose their instructional language for senior levels.

However, the government proposed to 'fine-tune' the policy in order to allow more extensive use of English in all schools. Starting from September 2010, all schools can use either English or Chinese as the medium of instruction as deemed appropriate.

[ii] Soon after the political handover, the economy of Hong Kong was severely struck by a series of crisis, namely the Asia Financial Crisis in 1997-2002; SARS (the lethal epidemic) in 2003 and the Financial Tsunami in 2008. During the most difficult times of Hong Kong, the PRC introduced special policies (e.g. CEPA, which stands for 'The Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement') to stabilize the market and save the fragile economy of Hong Kong.

[iii] As cited from Lau (1997:5), figures showing the identities of Hong Kong Chinese before 1997 were as follows:

Year	Hongkonger	Chinese	both
1991	56.6	25.4	14.2
1993	53.3	32.7	10.1
1995	50.2	30.9	15.4

[iv] The surveys were conducted annually on the phone through random sampling by the University of Hong Kong. The target respondents were Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong citizens over 18 years of age. The sample size was over 1000. Results yielded in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 are as follows:

	Identification to Hong Kong	Identification to China
2002	7.97	7.82
2004	7.54	7.48
2006	7.98	7.82
2008	7.8	8.02

[v] According to the 2006 by-census, 90.8% of the population speak Cantonese as a usual language, 0.9% speak PTH, 4.4% use other Chinese dialects and 2.8% use English. This is comparable to the composition of the present research sample.

[vi] The Mother Tongue Education Policy has turned about 70% of the 400 secondary schools into CMI while 30% remained EMI. The sample of the present study is very close to the proportion in reality.

[vii] On July 5, 2010, a Chinese government official suggested to change a popular TV channel in Canton city from Cantonese into Putonghua. This started the 'Protect Cantonese' movement. In the following two weeks, more than 2000 Canton citizens, largely youngsters born after 1980, took to the street to express their anger against linguistic imposition. Slogans like 'protect local culture', 'Cantonese up, Putonghua down', 'Go home if you don't know Cantonese' were hoisted in the protest, showing strong in-group identity as against outsiders from other regions.