

The Cantonese Linguicide: A Study of Prospective Language Death in Hong Kong

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Abstract—When the Communist Party of China rose to power in 1949 and established the People’s Republic of China, there was a movement to unify the nation’s languages under one common dialect, Mandarin. As a result, this has led to a decrease in the speakers of the many dialects that make up the Chinese language as a whole. At this time, the city of Hong Kong was still under British rule, thus remained untouched by this movement. However, with the growth of the PRC’s power and influence in recent years, like many other provinces on the mainland, Hong Kong has received much pressure to embrace Mandarin over other dialects. In this paper, it will outline major themes regarding changing the de facto language of Hong Kong from Cantonese to Mandarin under political and economic pressure. It will also explore the socio-cultural and socio-political consequences of unifying the language and generalizing the culture of China, when historically, China was comprised of various language groups, regional cultures, and political identities.

Index Terms—Cantonese, Hong Kong, Hong Kong identity, linguicide.

I. SUMMARY

This study examines the laws of Hong Kong regarding the official languages of the city in addition to the language used to define said laws in Hong Kong. The study also examines the topic from various perspectives, as follows: 1.) How have the language laws in Hong Kong been shaped by Mainland China (People’s Republic of China)? 2.) In what ways have the citizens of Hong Kong adhered or distanced themselves from the regulations passed down by the Mainland? 3.) How have these language laws affected the people of Hong Kong socially and academically, as the two are becoming deeply intertwined with advancing education practices? While these are only a few means of which this following work explores, it also addresses similar issues in areas similar to Hong Kong, namely Macau, which lies very close to Hong Kong and follows a very similar government administration (both are Special Administrative Regions). The study draws examples from Macau in regards to how people have socially reacted to these regulations on the language in addition to their understanding and social definition of the language. Finally, the study also examines how laws and regulations that are handed down by the Mainland government may induce “linguicide” as described by one of the many authors’ works explored in this work.

Prior to the colonization by the British [1], Hong Kong was one of many cities belonging to Guangdong, a

province that is predominately comprised of those who spoke the Yue dialect.¹² Although the colonization by the British did not alter the standard tongue for those who lived there, the English language was however introduced to the area as a result of the British. As a result of the century long occupation by the British, English became a staple language to the city alongside Cantonese, sparking a treasured norm of both languages. While Hong Kong thrived as a British colony, the remainder of China experienced a civil war following the end of the Sino-Japanese War, which resulted in the victory of the Communist Party of China establishing the People’s Republic of China.³

With the PRC in power of the Mainland, China experienced an array of changes, including that of language. The CPC’s literacy agenda for the nation resulted in the development of the simplified writing system, and a push for a unified spoken language, Mandarin, rather the Beijing standard of Mandarin. Although Britain retained control of Hong Kong, it was inevitable that the Mainland would request to have Hong Kong return to the CPC’s control, and consequently their policies. After the Handover of 1997 took place, Hong Kong no longer enjoyed the *laissez faire* rule of Britain, but was subjugated to the ruling of the CPC. While the 1997 Handover stipulated a 50-yearlong plan for Hong Kong to re-accommodate itself into the Communist regime, there are some that argue that this 50-year plan is being violated by the CPC by moving their agenda forward, which is the core focus of this paper.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ESSAY THESIS

In the following work, it will explore the significance of this subject as Hong Kong holds a position as world economic center, but also as a nucleus of Chinese and Western culture that has become blended so perfectly together. With Hong Kong bearing such power in the world, both economically and culturally, any changes implemented that affect the city’s language and culture, may also significantly impact the ties Hong Kong holds. Discussed further below, changing something as simple as expanding a dialect in the city, may influence those conducting business through the city [2].

In the following outline of this exploration of intellectual

¹The Yue dialect (粵語) is one of many dialects in the Chinese language. Yue parents the Cantonese, Toisanese, Foshanese, and a variety of other Cantonese variants.

²The terms *regional dialects* and *regional languages* are used interchangeably as both Mandarin and Cantonese are argued to be separate languages while also being the same language.

³The terms *CPC* (*Communist Party of China*) and *Mainland [China]* are used interchangeably.

analysis, there consist of two major the portions: the literature review, and the essay. Beginning with the literature review, it covers three different, but connected themes that provide basis and context of Hong Kong laws pertaining to language, as well as the societal global responses to the matter. In the essay, it connects the three themes, outlining sources that support the essay thesis, providing a counter argument, as well a conclusion by the author, all with the goal of answering the previous three questions of: 1.) How have the language laws in Hong Kong been shaped by Mainland China (People's Republic of China)? 2.) In what ways have the citizens of Hong Kong adhered or distanced themselves from the regulations passed down by the Mainland? 3.) How have these language laws affected the people of Hong Kong socially and academically, as the two are becoming deeply intertwined with advancing education practices?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following literature review, the sources are separated into the three thematic categories related to the research questions described above. The three categories are: A.) articles that discuss the relations of Hong Kong government and the Mainland government, B.) articles that discuss the reactions of the Hong Kongnese people to the state legislation passed down by the Mainland government, and C.) articles that discuss or explore the consequences and results of said legislation by the Mainland. While the sources in the literature review do not necessarily answer the questions, they are a means of exploring the themes present in the overall thesis of linguicide in Hong Kong initiated by the Mainland government.

IV. THEME I: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HONG KONG AND MAINLAND GOVERNMENT

In the first category, the central focus is on the theme of understanding and examining the relation between the Hong Kong government and the Mainland Government. It is important to explore and understand the differences between the two despite Hong Kong belonging to the Mainland. The city of Hong Kong had been ruled by the Great Britain following the end of both the First and Second Opium War (Hong Kong Island was colonized by the British after the first war, and the district of Kowloon after the second war). As a result of British control since the late 19th century, Hong Kong avoided the changes the Mainland experienced, including the change of hands from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China, the Great Leap Forward Movement, and the Cultural Revolution, both lead by the PRC. With all of these events happening on the Mainland during the mid-20th century, simultaneous to the colonization of Hong Kong by Britain, Hong Kong became shielded from these changes for a new half century. When Hong Kong was to be returned to the Mainland in 1997, there became an issue of two conflicting governmental ideology as there was the one party ruling by the PRC on the Mainland, and the rather openly democratic government of Hong Kong left by Britain [1].

The first article that this study explores is by Lo, called

"Political Distrust, Governability and Institutional Deadlock in Hong Kong." It discusses the political tension between the Hong Kong SAR (HKSAR) independent rulings, while working with the CPC, which is currently reaching a deadlock, as reflected by the recent protests in Hong Kong [3]. While this article covers a broad spectrum of details and information, its function in the role of a source in this paper has been rather supportive in the sense that it is to emphasize the dissent between Hong Kong and the Mainland, which advertently would affect the outcome of future laws in Hong Kong in the case that the Mainland succeeds in ruling in its own favor [3].

An interesting article that reinforces the hypothesis that the CPC is allegedly committing linguicide as described by Dwyer is Nelson's article, "Language Policies and Minority Resistance in China." In Nelson's article, she discusses the effects of the CPC's education system on minority groups in China, focusing on how the language policies can become a source of resistance for minority groups [4]. This resistance by minority groups can be attributed to the pressure the PRC has been addressing in schools to increase Mandarin comprehension across all of China. Because of this pressure by the PRC, it has come at the cost of dwindling numbers of various dialects throughout China. Even in areas where the dialects are similar to Mandarin, are being squelched as the movement to increase Mandarin comprehension is being based off the Beijing dialect. Nelson's article becomes beneficial in the sense that in comparison to the majority of China, Hong Kong only amasses a small number of Cantonese speakers in relation to the ever-increasing Mandarin population. As language policies become restrictive in a hypothetical sense, these policies will become a source of resistance amongst the Hong Kongnese and Cantonese speakers to promote the Cantonese language.

In this article published by Time, it borders this theme and the theme of the Hong Kongnese Reaction, as it reports on the Cantonese protests in Guangzhou regarding the push for more Mandarin TV channels in the Guangdong region. The article pushes for a neutral feeling, and rather, states mere facts from both sides rather than siding with one. Placing Time's neutral appeal aside, the article shares similarity to Nelson's article in seeing resistance in minority language speakers. In both articles, there are signs of dissatisfaction with the government for pushing more Mandarin programs, whether in public media or in academic lessons, in these areas where Mandarin is not the primary language. Apart from this, the article provides more background information than an argument regarding the situation with the language [5].

V. THEME II: THE HONG KONGNESE REACTION

The second theme explored is the reaction by the people of Hong Kong, whether it is positive or negative, towards matters regarding the 1997 Return, as well as laws implemented by the PRC following the Handover. This section will also explore the reaction of the people towards the increasing influence and spread of the Mandarin dialect in Hong Kong, a predominately Cantonese-speaking city. With Hong Kong being a Cantonese speaking area, where its people are proud of the Cantonese culture, such a change

in legislation is a strike to the pride of the Hong Kongese people. By exploring articles that discuss these reactions, it betters the understanding of why there is such a resistance in Hong Kong towards the PRC and the influence the PRC has been upholding in the city, one of which is notably the language.

One of the rather fascinating articles exploring the Hong Kongese people's reaction to the changes implemented by the CPC is Chang's "The Hong Kong Moment." In Chang's article, he examines the effects of the recent protests in Hong Kong sparked by a united interest among the majority of Hong Kong citizens for universal suffrage in Hong Kong, without the interference of Beijing's rule. While the topic discussed in the article does not have an immediate effect to how it may affect the laws of language in Hong Kong, however, based on the patterns of the Communist Party of China (CPC), it can be predicted that the concept of universal suffrage and democratic protests are not favored. While the CPC may not favor democratic protests in Hong Kong, the CPC has made recent efforts to unify the Chinese language under one dialect, Mandarin. When the CPC began its reign in Mainland China, it promised to allow local schools to teach in their native dialects/languages as long as they taught Mandarin alongside the predominant one, however this is no longer the case as more and more schools are requiring the teaching language to be Mandarin, which by doing so, forcefully pushes out the various dialects from the school system all across China [6].

One article that was found to be quite beneficial in this review is by Ling titled "Tracking Language Attitudes in Postcolonial Hong Kong: An Interplay of Localization, Mainlandization, and Internationalization." In Ling's article, she argues that there is an increasing trend amongst Hong Kongese students to be accepting of the Mandarin dialect as it develops roots into everyday Hong Kong life. Contrary to the other articles that were explored, this one provides evidence that the Hong Kongese may be opening up to the language of the Mainland. Nonetheless, this article discusses the attitudes of the youth and students of Hong Kong, rather than the older generations that lived through both British and Chinese rule [7].

In a rather discerning story told by Parry, the academic success of a 10-year-old girl is also the reason she cannot communicate clearly with her grandmother, because the result of her academic success has hindered her ability to understand Cantonese. This was also in part to her parents limiting their daughter's exposure to Cantonese to strengthen her understanding of Mandarin. Through this story, it is evident that although there may not exist a ruling law in Hong Kong on the languages used in the primary and secondary education of students, the economic and social pressures brought on by the CPC, has influenced the decline in Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong [8].

Law's blog article, "Cantonese in Hong Kong: Not the official language?" discusses a recent backlash that the Hong Kong Education Bureau brought upon themselves regarding defining the language "Chinese" in accordance to their law. With the definition of Chinese as one of the many questions that spawned this study, it is clear that the people of Hong Kong are not content with the definition of Chinese as Mandarin. In addition to these claims, Law also backs

these claims with statistics that he found, some of which clash with that of Ling's argument that more people are becoming educated in Mandarin in Hong Kong [7]. Although there is the possibility that the two may be arguing two different stances on the issue of language in Hong Kong, it is not evident enough at the moment to make a decisive separation [9].

In Chen's article, he makes a bold statement of numbers that Mandarin speakers in Hong Kong have surpassed the number of English speakers. In a city that boasts Cantonese as the primary language of government, business, education, and personal matters, and with English as the language to fall back upon, stating that Mandarin speakers have surpassed the English-speaking population is treading into deep waters. In addition to this, Hong Kong had been colonized by Britain for over a hundred years, which adds to the favor of English as the language to fall back upon, but with the spread of Mandarin only taking place eighteen years after being returned to China, the sentiment towards Mandarin becoming wide spread is not strong. However, this does not go without criticism from some figures mentioned in the article that doubt the accuracy of the Hong Kong government's census [10].

In Tam's article, he and Lau discusses the public outcry against the Education Bureau, as according to the official website of the Bureau, a bold statement that claimed Cantonese is not an official language of Hong Kong. Although the Bureau quickly retracted this statement, this article exemplifies the agile remonstrance of the Hong Kongese residents, as such a statement by the Bureau could be considered as an attempt by the CPC to squander the Cantonese speaking community. Though the article addresses that the Bureau retracts the statement from their website, the article continues to discuss the out-of-bound jurisdiction the Bureau crossed in making a statement defining the term "Chinese" in the Hong Kong Basic Law [11].

VI. THEME III: CONSEQUENCES

With Hong Kong being one of many hubs in the global economy, conducting business in Hong Kong may require knowledge of the Cantonese language, but with the Mainland advocating the use of Mandarin as the standard medium of Chinese, this may conflict with business transactions. As Hong Kong boasts its pride in the Cantonese language, speaking Mandarin may be considered an attack on their pride, which coincides with the theory that foreign business speakers that speak Mandarin in a Hong Kong business transaction may come off as offensive, or ignorant of the Hong Kong environment.

In Dwyer's article, "China's Language Policy Goes Global," she discusses the aggressive manner in which the CPC has been recently carrying out its language policies across China, which inadvertently affects the world and how it views China. Dwyer assertively analyses and criticizes the rulings by the CPC regarding language policies in China and its policies for abroad, namely teaching Chinese as a second language. She addresses the many dialects, or rather languages in her view, which exists in China, but are being ignored and oppressed by the CPC's

language policies in China, which is resulting in the glorification of Mandarin abroad, and the linguicide of the many languages domestically [2]. This article is extremely beneficial as it provides a glimpse of the possible future Hong Kong may experience if the language policies in Hong Kong are changed through the workings of the CPC. Although Hong Kong is currently independently governed, away from the CPC, its due return to the CPC is inevitable, which consequently may mean that the linguicide, as described by Dwyer, would occur in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, adding to Dwyer's article, are the statistics found on Hong Kong government's official website. From the statistics provided on the language spoken in Hong Kong, it is evident that Hong Kong is a central hub to Cantonese culture as the Cantonese language is the most widely spoken language. Because of this strong use of Cantonese in Hong Kong, in addition to the prevalent push for Mandarin by the CPC, it is clear that upon the CPC's full control of Hong Kong, there will be conflict regarding the language spoken, taught, and used by the people, in accordance to the definition of "Chinese." The last available census coming from 2011, the Cantonese speaking population has been 6,095,213 strong, Mandarin at 94,399, and English at 238,288. However, looking back at the previous census in 2001, Cantonese speakers were at 5,726,972, Mandarin at 55,410, and English at 203,598. With the 2011 population at 6,808,433 and the 2001 population at 6,708,389, the percentage of Cantonese speakers was around 89.5% of the census population. The Mandarin percentage that year was at 1.3% in comparison. Looking at 2001, the Cantonese percentage was at 85.3% while the Mandarin percentage was at .8%. With consideration to the rise in population, Cantonese speakers rose around 4.3% while Mandarin speakers rose around .5%. While not significantly higher to raise a flag, as Mandarin grew around .5% in a decade's time, however given the parameters the census was conducted in, the rise is not as significant as Chen argues. However, given that the census was in 2011 and Chen's article was in 2012, the numbers might have changed, will continue to change until the next census in 2021, in which whether there is a rise in Mandarin speakers in Hong Kong will be clear [12].

Another article examined in this review is, "Language and Society in Macao: A Review of Sociolinguistic Studies on Macao in the Past Three Decades" by Yan Xi and Andrew Moody. In their article, they discuss four main points, focusing on the on the use of language in Macau. Because of the nature of Macau and its similarity to Hong Kong, this article provides some insight as to how language is taught in the two SARs. As the nature of the article is analytical and research heavy, it contains very dense information relating to the hierarchy of languages in Macau, with Cantonese being the forerunner and Portuguese coming second [13]. It should also be noted that while both Macau and Hong Kong share similar language populations, a difference lies upon the people. The Hong Kongnese, in comparison, are more vocal about issues than those in Macau; an example of this would be the "Umbrella Movement" that recently took place as the people feared the encroaching police would spark another Tiananmen Massacre in Hong Kong by some. It is this reason that

because the Hong Kong people are more vocal about these issues that Macau may serve as a similarity, but not a direct comparison. Lastly, the economy of Macau is mainly sustained through tourism and casinos, while Hong Kong serves as an economic center in part with Shanghai and other economically crucial cities.

With continuous research, an online article by McLean-Dreyfus adds to the argument that locals of Hong Kong are fighting back against the legislative movements of the CPC by embracing the native languages present in the area. Although the article explores the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, these ideas pushed by the group is not lost in translation for Hong Kong as both areas either have and are affected by a larger political entity, threatening to unify the national language at the cost of the native languages [14].

Following the offshoot of Taiwan's search for its personal identity lost to the early authoritative rule of the Republic, Sonmez's article in *Business Insider's* on the topic of the Guangdong Province in China, is a major example of the loss of cultural identity through the hands of the CPC. One of the most memorable quotes in the article is by Victor Mair, whom stated: "If it weren't for Hong Kong, Cantonese would soon cease to exist as a significant linguistic force." It is evident through this statement that without the autonomy of the Hong Kong, the Cantonese would have been easily a language of the past [15].

Transcribed from a radio interview, the topic at hand discusses the 2010 controversy [16] of the Guangdong TV station making a lean towards Mandarin broadcasts over Cantonese broadcasts. While this was not the entirety of the article, it does expand on the topic of bilingualism between Mandarin and Cantonese in the Guangdong region. This article, in ways, bears similarity to that of Time's article on the same issue. However, unlike Time's neutral stance on the matter, Bell's article rather sides with one of the two arguing parties [17].

While the articles presented here may be separated into certain categories, some of the articles overlap in their themes. With the nature of the articles, and especially with the new online articles, their content spans across more than one of the thematic categories. In fact, they may span all three categories, as they expand upon the dissenting relations between an autonomous region and the CPC in Beijing, explore the reactions of the Hong Kongnese people, and reflect the reactions of others in different regions (an example of which was Macau in [13], Taiwan in [14], and Guangdong in [15]). Regardless of whether these articles adhere to one category or another, the most essential role of every article is the ability to provide and support the overlying thesis presented in the abstract.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE LANGUAGE LAWS OF HONG KONG POST-1997

Beginning with a condense and comprehensive background of Hong Kong, expanding from the colonization of the city by Britain to its return to China a century later, this information provides historical context regarding understanding the language laws in Hong Kong. Following establishing the historical context of Hong Kong,

from there the essay will explore the situation in Hong Kong regarding its current, but rather strained relation with the Mainland government, much of which relates to the Handover and the stipulations instated and agreed upon by both sides. Through exploring the strained relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the work focus on the subject and language and the contrasting views held by those in Hong Kong and those on the Mainland. It will also present the arguments against siding with the Mainland's motives and counterarguments for accepting the legislation and regulations set by the CPC. Cumulating and analyzing both sides of the situation, a comparison of the two will be presented in addition to the author's personal thought on the matter.

Throughout the duration of when Hong Kong was a British colony, the city had the luxury of being bilingual with Cantonese Chinese and British English. While Cantonese Chinese was not the official language of the British colony until much later in the city's history, it has enjoyed the duality of the two languages since its colonization. Conversely, everything changed when the People's Republic of China regained control of the city in 1997 following the handover ceremony. With the communist push for unifying China that lingered from the Civil War, Hong Kong was in no way exempt from the changes envisioned by the PRC [1].

Apart from first emperor of China's attempt to unify the written Chinese system in early 200 BCE, there are theories that the modern unification of language stems from the Cultural Revolution. However, others have also argued that the Chinese state's push for unification of language may have rather begun in its Republic era instead [15]. Regardless of when such a push first occurred in China, the effects of language unification in China are apparent, as there are noticeable attitude changes in provinces that do not have Mandarin as their first language towards the central government following language unification attempts. For example, [14] draws upon the similarities between Hong Kong and Taiwan as both are in a situation where they are subjugated to language reforms by the central government [14]. An example she draws from Taiwan is that in the early stages of the Kuomintang (KMT)'s administration, they tried to execute a similar education policy to the one that the CPC is utilizing, by unifying the dialects in China [14]. While this method was unsuccessful, this plan was later abandoned following three decades after the Civil War and the KMT's relocation to Taiwan [14].

Despite the acknowledgement that McLean-Dreyfus gives to the KMT regarding their language policies to unite the language under one dialect, and their abandoned efforts for it, the CPC has continually reassured the Chinese people that there is no movement to unify the spoken Chinese language, however further actions and proposals seem to reason otherwise.⁴ A prime example of the CPC's resolute push for unifying the language is the recent events of 2010/2011, when the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee proposed to introduce more Mandarin programming into the Guangzhou Television

network [5]. While this proposal was retracted following heavy protests in the area, it is arguably one of the many ways that the CPC is utilizing media to increase the Mandarin speaking population, yet is argued by the CPC as a means of educating the people rather than addressing it as an issue of speech.

While these various examples draw upon regions other than Hong Kong, they highlight the various means that the central government has attempted to use to limit regional dialects, and promote a national language, which is arguably taking place in Hong Kong. Despite the agreement during the 1997 handover that Hong Kong will have fifty years to adapt to the changes, the CPC seems to be implanting their agenda only eighteen years after the handover. Although there are polarizing arguments about whether these moves enacted by the CPC are adhering to the fifty-year transition policy established by the handover, it is evident that the residents of Hong Kong are not keen to these changes so early on. An example of such dissatisfaction of the CPC's actions in Hong Kong can be seen in the recent protests regarding the voting procedures and permissible candidate pool campaigned by the CPC. In the September of 2014, the residents of Hong Kong broke out in protest of CPC's reform on the how the chief executive is to be elected in 2017 for the city of Hong Kong. With the new reform by the CPC, only those candidates approved by a committee in Beijing are permitted to run for office. While some may see this as a beneficial cause for Hong Kong, as it may fall in line with the 1997 handover, those who oppose such a call fear that it is the CPC's means of encroaching on the liberties of the Hong Kongese people (Chang, 2011). Among these liberties, may include the matter of the official language of the city.

With Beijing's firm stance on limiting the eligibility of those running for office in Hong Kong, as those running needs to be approved by the CPC, this may be considered a blow to those content with Cantonese as the de facto language of the city. Citing the incident in Guangzhou with the CPC suggesting broadcasting more Mandarin-based programming in the city [1], the reaction by the citizens was tremendous, as many believe it to be a means of eradicating Cantonese, and replacing it with Mandarin. With Hong Kong situated under a hundred miles from Guangzhou, such a call by the central government may be taken as a warning shot to the independent city of Hong Kong as Guangzhou is often considered to be the home of Cantonese⁵.

Following the previous actions of the CPC and recent issues occurring in China with language restrictions in the education system, one may conclude or theorize that if Beijing succeeds in implementing CPC approved candidates for the Hong Kong government, slowly but surely the CPC's influence on government will enshroud the city, including that of language policies. With majority of Hong Kong unable to elect an executive officer that favors the independence of Cantonese in the given scenario, those who favor implementing Mandarin requirements wholly in the

⁴ The term *KMT* (*Kuomintang*) is used interchangeably with the terms *Taiwan* and *ROC* (*Republic of China*).

⁵ In Chinese, Cantonese is known as 廣州話, while sometimes known as 廣東話 or 粵語, nonetheless the transliteration in English is "the language of Guangzhou," signifying the origin of the Cantonese language to be from Guangzhou.

Hong Kong education system would then forcibly reduce the number of Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong through each generation raised in Hong Kong.

Despite all of these instances to be hypothetical outcomes if further restrictions are applied by the PRC, however pre-emptive actions by the general population are not always calculated into the larger picture, as there are cases of newer generations of Hong Kongese residents already preparing for the language change. This is well shown in Parry's article about a young Hong Kongese girl whose Mandarin and English abilities surpasses her Cantonese ability because her parents fear that she may fall behind academically and socially as the PRC begins to press into Hong Kong. For those in support of spreading Mandarin education in Hong Kong, this case has its drawbacks as the young girl now lacks the ability to communicate with her grandparents' generation [8].

There are two major reasons why preserving Cantonese as a primary language in Hong Kong is important. First the generations of Hong Kong residents that were raised in Hong Kong prior to the 1997 return to the PRC, lack experience and contact with Mandarin because their circumstances did not require them to so interact with the language. As a result, many older generations of Hong Kongese residents are dependent on the usage of Cantonese for everyday communication, however with the younger generations of speaking only in Mandarin, it creates a lingual barrier between the older and younger generations, leading to a dwindling population of Cantonese speakers, but also a new generation of residents that lack the ability to speak the language native to their area.

Second, as with most cultures, language is a heavy component in keeping cultural practices alive, however in the instance of many Hong Kongese residents that are taking measures in having their child prepared for the shift in languages, is also deteriorating the Cantonese culture. By having newer generations that lack the ability to speak Cantonese, various oral traditions could be lost. Although this theory would take a generation or two to see the devastating effects, pressure from the Mainland and impeding politics in Hong Kong may accelerate this outcome.

With language being one of the many striking features of Hong Kong's identity, it is peculiar to note that although the residents of Hong Kong have openly voiced their opinions and frustration with the PRC for limiting the candidate pool for the 2017 elections, one issue that has not been addressed, as adamantly has been the language policy. Despite a public outrage at universal suffrage regulations and procedures in Hong Kong, public outrage with claims against Cantonese has been minimal in comparison. Examining Tam's article discussing public dismay regarding the Education Bureau's claim that Cantonese is not an official language of Hong Kong [11], the magnitude of disapproval has been small compared to that of universal suffrage.

Although the various articles and papers presented discuss the underlying motive by the CPC to increase the Mandarin speaking population in Hong Kong, the CPC has been denying such accusations as they believe it is a matter of education of the people [17]. With both sides adamant

that the other is resisting the path for greater good, it becomes rather difficult in diffusing the situation and understanding which path would be most beneficial. The CPC has been obstinate that they are not resolved on eliminating the regional languages from the local areas and the education systems within those areas, however those who argue against the CPC believe that although the CPC's statement is that contradictory to their actions. Proponents for keeping regional languages thriving in China have argued that although the CPC claims to not be eliminating regional dialects, the CPC has however limited the use of regional languages in public education, allowing only Mandarin as a means of teaching and communicating. As a result, proponents against the CPC believe that although the CPC has been publicly steadfast that they are not eliminating regional languages, they are however, coercively limiting the languages' ability to thrive by reducing the generations that can speak it.

While both sides stand firm on their regards towards these matters, there remains tension as to which way the public may lean, however due to the lack of annual statistical data recording specific language speakers in Hong Kong, as well as other cities across China where regional dialects may dominate in relation to Mandarin. As a result, to clearly state that the CPC has been markedly advancing in dwindling regional dialects in favor of Mandarin is rather inconclusive. While knowing the answer to this question may assist in understanding this matter, however due to the lack of hard facts from both sides that statistically prove either sides' statements to be true, a conclusive statement is rather difficult to affirm.

As a result of inconclusive evidence provided by both sides, it is however evident that immediate further research in this area will be crucial as the remaining years of Hong Kongese autonomy are dwindling. From within those dwindling years, there may exist further conflict between the CPC and the Hong Kongese government and people, citing the recent protests in 2014 regarding universal suffrage. Although most studies conducted about the Chinese language have been fruitful regarding the number of learners learning the Chinese language, however these examples are based on the Mandarin dialect and not the Cantonese, which in comparison between the two, is decreasing. Nonetheless, as expressed above, these statements are rather assumptions rather than statements of statistic as further research and study are needed in this field, as those fighting for Cantonese may need the information.

Although the matters in comparison may be of different levels and scale, whether in Macau, Taiwan, or in Hong Kong's neighbor city, Guangzhou, a unifying factor that connects these four areas, is the matter of emphasizing a national language, or retaining the regional languages of the various areas. While the extreme end of the spectrum for pro-national language is that by having a unified language, the regional dialects that exist across the nation would cease to exist, thus losing the very small, but essential parts that make up the culture of China. However, at the other extreme end of the spectrum, is that without a national language, all the various regions would have their own dialect, consequently limiting the national identity of China.

VIII. SUGGESTED READINGS

In addition to the core sources that were referenced for this study, there were also a plethora of sources that were deliberated in terms of their importance in exploring this subject matter. In the following section, it will briefly overview the underlying substance of each paper. While their importance did not go unnoted, it is implored that future academics value and ponder upon these papers to further understand the relationship between the Cantonese language and Hong Kong.

While the following readings are related to the principal topic, these readings can be further divided into two categories, supplemental to this study; the first of which touches upon the relation between Cantonese and Hong Kong society, and the second category discusses the pertinence of the future of Hong Kong's education system and the medium of which instruction is conducted in.

The relationship between Hong Kong and Cantonese is a deep and entwined one, with a long history, thus to further understand how the relation of the two has evolved, two readings are highly recommended. The first is a book discussing in various details about Hong Kong's language perception at the turn of the century, notably around 1997 during the handover [18]. The second reading, by Bolton and Yang [19], while inaccessible to the author at the time of this study, is also of value for consideration as it covers a similar perspective.

With regards to the second category on the future of Hong Kong's education system, there are various articles that may be of interest. One regarding citizenship education in Hong Kong, while drawing up on similarities in Taiwan, may further discussion how Hong Kongese identity may be viewed [20].

On discussing the future of Hong Kong's education system and the medium in which it is to be carried out, there are plenty of articles worth examining, including ones by Lai [21], [22], Johnson [23], Hopkins [24], Bray and Koo [25], and Pennington and Yue [26]. All these readings cover various aspects and viewpoints on this matter, post-1997.

Lastly, two more interesting readings that may clarify why this study often referred to Cantonese as a language, can be further elaborated by Bauer's article on written Cantonese [27].

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Since the time when this work was first drafted, Hong Kong has seen multiple incidents of political conflict regarding its relationship with communist ruled China. Three notable examples include the recent Basic Law interpretation by the CPC which was sparked by controversial oath taking ceremonies in the Legislative Council [28], the disappearances of five Hong Kong booksellers [29] which lead to discussions on whether Hong Kong's autonomy has been violated, and the 2014 Occupy Protests, protesting the CPC's intrusion into Hong Kong's electoral procedures [30]. With the political environment in Hong Kong becoming tenser, the author highly suggests that further studies should be conducted to account for the socio-political transformations that have transpired in Hong Kong.

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