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LANGUAGE OF THE FUTURE, LANGUAGE OF THE PRC – REPRESENTATIONS OF PUTONGHUA IN SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

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As the national language of the PRC, the world's growing economic power and the sovereign of Hong Kong, Putonghua is a language with multiple facets of relevance for the current Special Administrative Region. This paper seeks to explore and explain different representations of Putonghua in Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper South China Morning Post in articles published between January 2012 and February 2013. The representations are studied in the context of the different discourses in which they appear, some of which feature language(s) as a central theme and some more marginally.

An overview is first presented of the scholarly research on the most important developments in Hong Kong's complex language scene from the beginnings of the colony until present day, with the aim of detecting developments and attitudes with potential relevance or parallels to the context of Putonghua today. The paper then reflects on the media and its role in producing and perpetuating discourses in the society, before turning to more practical considerations on Hong Kong's English and Chinese language media and the role of South China Morning Post in it.

The methods used in analysing the discourses are those of discourse analysis, with textual analysis as its starting point, in which close attention is paid to linguistic forms as the concrete representations of meanings in a text. Particularly the immediate contexts of the appearances of the word “Putonghua” in the articles were studied carefully to detect vocabulary, grammar and semantical choices as signs of different discourses, potentially also revealing fundamental underlying assumptions and other “hidden meanings” in the text.

Some of the most distinctive discourses in which different representations of Putonghua appeared were the *Instrumental value for the individual* (in which Putonghua was represented as a form of social capital); *Othering of the mainlanders* (in which Putonghua served as a concrete marker of distinction); *Belonging to China* (Putonghua as a symbol of unity); and *Cultural distinctiveness of Hong Kong* (Putonghua as a threat to Hong Kong's history and culture, as embodied in Cantonese). Some of these discourses were more prominent than others, and for example the discourse of Belonging to China was relatively rarely enacted in Hongkongers' voices.

In general, the findings were not surprising in the light of the history, but showed a fair degree of consistency with what has been written earlier about the languages and attitudes towards them in Hong Kong. It has often been noted that Putonghua and its relation with Cantonese is a matter linked with the social identity of the colony and its citizens. While it appeared that there were no strict taboos in the representations of Putonghua in the societal context, the possibility of self-censorship cannot be ruled out as a factor toning down political discourses in the representations.

Keywords: Hong Kong, languages, discourse, media

Abstract

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1. Introduction

“Putonghua and simplified Chinese characters are everywhere.” “Auctions for valuable art in Hong Kong are carried out in Putonghua, and Putonghua-speaking customers enjoy better treatment in Hong Kong's many luxury shops.” “Three Putonghua-speaking robbers escaped from a house in Sai Kung with valuable artefacts and cash as loot.” “Applicants to the valuation job must be fluent in English, Cantonese and Putonghua.” “Fluency in Putonghua is generally expected in banking jobs, especially in the many jobs which increasingly include interaction with the mainland.” “Loud chatter in Putonghua in the overcrowded office of a local maternity clinic or in the lines in front of a kindergarten on school application day reveals the hundreds of mainlanders with whom Hongkongers have to share the resources of the overpopulated city.” “The plans to include a word in Putonghua pinyin in the English name of a newly built opera house in Hong Kong raise accusation of kowtowing to Beijing.” “Putonghua is being promoted at the expense of Cantonese, which contributes to Hongkongers' inclination to vent their anger on mainland visitors.”

The statements above are a few examples of randomly selected and loosely rephrased mentions of Putonghua taken from different articles published in Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper, South China Morning Post, between January 2012 and February 2013.

Languages have for decades been included in discourses concerning changing social affiliations and identities in Hong Kong, former colony of Britain and present Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Yet in addition to the important identity affiliation, languages equally appear in various other contexts with varying degrees of centrality to the discussion at hand, the most notable of which in the highly competitive society is the connection with instrumental value and future advantage in education and work life.

This thesis looks at how Putonghua has featured in different discourses in the Hong Kong-based English language newspaper South China Morning Post during the 14-month period from January 2012 to February 2013. It seeks to trace the different representations of the word “Putonghua”, which might at first seem chaotic (as the

opening paragraph shows), and make sense of them through methods of textual analysis. Despite the importance of textual analysis and discourse analysis as tools for bringing analytical rigour to the discussion, at the core of the research is an understanding of the historical and contemporary context against which the findings are mirrored. The research is partly *exploratory* and partly *explanatory* in nature – it seeks to find out what is actually being discussed, by whom, what views and arguments are being brought up, and for what reason, and it also seeks to trace the roots and causes of these discourses in order to understand where they come from.

The paper begins (Chapter 2) with a historical background section tracing developments in the language scene in Hong Kong from the beginning of the colonial times until present. Major developments and discourses surrounding all of the three languages are taken up to illustrate the history and to provide understanding of the context in which the discourses found in today's newspaper articles stem from. The third main chapter, which looks at media discourses from theoretical and practical points of view, aims to illuminate the context in which the primary data was produced from a different perspective. The fourth chapter describes the methodology of Discourse Analysis and the process of data-gathering, and makes some general remarks about the data. The fifth chapter presents the findings of the empirical analysis conducted on the newspaper representations of Putonghua, taking up examples of different representations and the discourses in which they appeared one by one. The last chapter concludes the discussion by linking the findings of the analysis more closely with the discussion in chapters two and three, evaluating the limitations of the study, and suggesting areas for further research on the topic.

Most of the findings of the empirical analysis were not surprising in the light of the history of Hong Kong: most discourses have their origins or counterparts already in pre-Handover history, and the representations of Putonghua were found to have some features which reoccurred over different discourses and representations in different combinations, creating webs of consistency and connections, and on the other hand of contrasts and opposition. For example, a discourse of “utility”, or instrumental value, of Putonghua is strong – this resembles similar values attached to English ever since the colonial times, and the instrumental values have in fact been the ones leading the acceptance of Putonghua ever since 1980s. Despite the fairly predictable lines of argumentation concerning the roles of different languages in articles which treat it as

their central topic, mentions of Putonghua in seemingly marginal positions in a large body of other articles are interesting in how they perpetuate certain discourses over others and thereby contribute to the representations through hidden meanings rather than explicit argumentation.

1.1. Preface: origins of Putonghua – national language of the PRC

Chinese language is notorious for the difficulty in determining whether the wide variety of mutually unintelligible variants spoken in and outside of the borders of the mainland ought to be described as dialects of the same language or whether they should be seen as separate languages. In practice, distinctions are usually based on political grounds rather than linguistic ones (Rajagopalan, 2001: 23). Regardless of the way the issue of dialects versus separate languages is framed, the fact remains that while variation creates diversity and local identity, it at the same time imposes constraints on communication and social interaction. A tension always exists between diversification and standardisation of the language (Gu, 2006: 344).

Many campaigns have been launched in the long history of China to standardise Chinese both in its spoken and written form. In the modern era, a National Language Movement was launched in the late Qing dynasty to revitalise the shattered country (Gu, 2006: 345), but the first viable alternative proved to be the New Guoyu ('new national language') which was based on the Beijing dialect, and was promoted in the People's Republic soon after the establishment of the PRC in 1949 (*ibid.*), by which time it had become to be called Putonghua, or the common language. Similarly, in Taiwan the Kuomingtang government was quick to establish a “Mandarin Language Policy” by which Mandarin was made the national language (in Taiwan still called *guoyu*) of the ROC (Beaser, 2006: 5). In the PRC, the State Council called for the promotion of Putonghua in 1956, but the promotion has truly gathered pace in the Reform Era (Yang, 2007). In 1998 China declared as its aim to make Putonghua the standard Chinese spoken nationwide by the mid-twenty-first century. In 2000, the National People's Congress Standing Committee approved the PRC Common Language Law, which gives Putonghua and the Simplified Characters legal status as the national common language. It is officially stipulated to be the language of instruction at all levels of education, and also the language of the mass media (Gu, 2006: 345). Hong Kong, as a Special Administrative Region, has been positioned differently from the provinces in the

mainland, but it, too, is far from being outside the sphere of influence of the national language, which has only increased in the recent years.

2. Languages in Hong Kong

Because this study primarily looks at the discourses through history rather than through theories, some time will first be spend exploring scholarly literature on the linguistic history of Hong Kong. From the sociolinguistic point of view, we can classify language issues into *language behaviour*, which includes proficiency, acquisition and usage, and *behaviour towards language,* which can be divided to attitudinal and implementational (Bolton, 1985: 47). The historical background section will touch upon matters falling into all of these, but the emphasis of the research is on the latter, and more specifically, on the attitudinal part of it.

This chapter presents an overview of the different stages of Hong Kong's linguistic history, which will serve as the background for the analysis. It must be noted that this chapter is entirely based on English-language scholarly literature. It is probable that there is also an important body of relevant locally-produced scholarly research produced in Chinese[1], which is out of the reach of the current writer due to the limited language proficiency. On the other hand, it seems that the reference lists of various English-language books and articles, including those written by apparently bilingual scholars, contain very few Chinese-language sources. This suggests that research conducted in English is the standard background material in studies concerning languages in Hong Kong.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the greater part of (English-language) studies on Hong Kong languages, especially concerning the earlier history, are conducted with the framework of “English versus Chinese” in mind, rather than the issues arising from within the different “Chineses”[2]. It is necessary to lean on this body of research to

1 Research in Hong Kong's universities is generally conducted in English, but Chinese studies form an exception. Topics related to Cantonese and Mandarin are likely to fall within the scope of Chinese studies. Bolton (2002) claims that the interest of local scholars has been largely on possible tensions between Cantonese and Mandarin instead of those between Chinese and English, while the majority of English-language research clearly seems to concentrate on the latter.

2 Many studies only mention Putonghua in passing, such as “there are also some Mandarin speakers” or “the role of Mandarin is rising” without going into further details.

illuminate how languages originally came to be conceptualised in the colony, which all helps to understand the role of Putonghua, too, indirectly.

2.1. Pre-Handover

This section begins with pre-colonial times, moves on to how English became to be used in the colony, by whom and in what domains, and what was the role left for Chinese; it then turns to the developments of the decades since 1960s, when language for the first time became a subject of political nature, and looks at how the roles and usage of English and Chinese, as well as attitudes towards them, developed up until 1997. The more recent developments, those after the Handover, will be treated in section 2.2.

2.1.1. Early days

Hong Kong has had a rich linguistic culture from the beginning. The territory on the Southeast coast of China was populated by migrants, many of them from areas where Cantonese was spoken, but a part were speakers of Hakka, Fujianese and other (mostly Southern) varieties of Chinese (Kan & Adamson, 2010: 167). In the course of the centuries, especially during times of political turmoil, whether in the imperial China or in the PRC, people have fled to the region from the north and other parts of China, bringing with them their own dialects (Bolton, 2002: 33; Sivonen, 2006: 204). The general tendencies in the earlier history of languages in Hong Kong can be construed based on a few studies, despite the fact that prior to 1985, real sociolinguistic research on Hong Kong has been scarce (Bolton & Kang-Kwong 1985: 41-42)[3]. Perhaps due to the lack of solid research data on attitudes, usage, etc. the picture of the history as accounted by different scholars varies – possibly reflecting the different agendas of the different writers[4] - to the extent that it is difficult to construct any definite, unbiased

3 Bolton & Kang-Kwong (*ibid.*) contrast the lack of sociolinguistic research in Hong Kong (on topics such as language use, the spread of English as a functional variety and its importance in major societal domains, as well as the use of Cantonese and other dialects) with the abundance of research in neighbouring countries, such as Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan. They further note that most research that has been conducted has concentrated on language in education. While this is still true, the recent decades have seen the introduction of an abundance of other topics to complement the picture, from studies on relationships between language and identity (Chan 2002) to the social distinctiveness of different types of code-mixing between English and Cantonese (Hoi Ying Chen 2005) and to the use of English in the professional world in Hong Kong (Evans 2009).

4 See, notably, Sweeting & Vickers (2005) who fiercely attack the "discourse of colonialism",

history. If there is one aspect about the linguistic history of Hong Kong that is simple, it is the fact that at any given point of its history, the large majority of its inhabitants have been ethnic Chinese who spoke a form of Chinese as their mother tongue, and for the overwhelming majority, this has meant, and still means, Cantonese.

With the arrival of the British and the establishment of the colony in 1841, English was introduced as the sole official language of such high domain activities as government and law. It was the language of the ruling class and rich people, of commerce, and also a marker of upward mobility, learned only for utilitarian purposes by some wishing to get a better job as compradors or other intermediaries between the British and the local people[5], while having little relevance to the majority of the local population, who never learned to speak it and with whom the colonial settlers had little interaction (see e.g. Kan & Adamson, 2010; Poon, 2004; Simpson, 2007: 175, Tsang, 2003: 222 and Sivonen, 2006). In other words, the two languages were used in different domains, creating a situation which is in sociolinguistics called *diglossia* (Lai, 2012: 86)[6] – on the other hand, this is also where the roots lie for the separation of "instrumental" value of certain languages, which remains an important discourse in language discussion even today (as will be seen in analysis section 5.1).

The fact that the two communities operated in completely separated spheres has been interpreted by some as one sign that despite Hong Kong's being essentially a Chinese place, the Chinese were still "Othered" within the British colonial imagination (Fanon, 1961).[7] Kan & Adamson (2010: 167) suggest that the situation remained so for most of

especially as advanced by Pennycook, which they deem particularly simplistic, while themselves calling for a reconstruction of the history from the "bottom up". For them, British cultural and linguistic "hegemony" appears far more contested and ephemeral, and a product of collaborative negotiation rather than imposition (2005: 115).

5 See e.g. Bolton, 2002: 32; Simpson, 2007: 175; Sivonen 2006

6 *Diglossia* and *bilingualism* are sometimes used synonymously, but the distinction that is sometimes made can set more light on the linguistic situation of early Hong Kong. Wardhaugh (2002: 92) argues that these two concepts are best understood as belonging to different disciplines, so that bilingualism is used by psycholinguists to denote individual linguistic versatility, while diglossia is used by sociolinguists to mean a situation in a society with everyday "functionally different language varieties of whatever kind" - it is the characterisation of the social allocation of functions to different languages. In other words, on the societal level, diglossia is *socially-stratified (asymmetrical) bilingualism* - a situation where the languages are used in strictly different domains, while in bilingual societies each language is used in any domain more symmetrically.

7 See, however, Sweeting & Vickers (2005) for an alternative view refuting the usual "colonial discourse". On the other hand, some have noted that the separation continues until today, as expatriates have a sense of difference from the local population and continue to live in their own residential areas and have their own clubs, which is not due to a fear of social disorder in the safe Hong Kong, but rather to the perceived differences in cultural outlook and national belonging (Leonard, 2010: 519)

the history of the colony. On the other hand, when it comes to the current "Othering" of the mainland, an identity separate from that of the mainland did not even begin to develop among the Hong Kong Chinese until after 1950, when strict border controls between Hong Kong and the PRC sharply reduced the cross-border movement which had until then been abundant (Tsang, 2003: 222). English remained the only official language in the colony up until 1974, and few Chinese people were included in political decision-making (Sivonen, 2006).

2.1.2. Political movement for the promotion of Chinese 1960s-80s

A major event that had a great impact on the language policy of the colonial administration started in the late 1960s after the Cultural Revolution in China (Chen, 2001). The largely apolitical nature of the local people was shifted for a period of time amid the economic and social transformations and the unrest that resulted, and during this time, demonstrations were also held to protest for the greater use of Chinese in the government of the colony. The Chinese language served as an important symbol around which enhanced awareness of ethnicity (and pride in "mother China" built up during a surge of nationalism resulting from the changed international status of China after it took over one of the five permanent Security Council seats at the United Nations (Tsang, 2003: 226). The Chinese Language Movement, initiated by university students, demanded for higher status and wider use of Chinese in Hong Kong – essentially that Chinese be made an official language alongside English, although the intention was not to substitute English with Chinese (Chung, 2003: 28). Urged by the campaign, the Government appointed a Chinese Language Committee to make recommendations concerning the official use of Chinese language in Hong Kong, and the result was the passing of the Official Languages Ordinance in 1974 (Sweeting & Vickers, 2005: 124). Later, a second Chinese language campaign was in effect from the late 1970s till early 1980s, and was mainly triggered by perceptions of deteriorating Chinese education.

However, although there was some achievement in the use of Chinese in the Government's domestic affairs in the 1970s, English was still widely used and required in civil service (Chung, 2003: 18). Administration was turned truly bilingual only gradually. One important document on this road was the Joint Declaration of 1984, whereby the British and Chinese governments agreed on the handover of Hong Kong – Chung (2003: 27) notes that it was since the Joint Declaration that there was no longer

doubt that Chinese, as the official language of China, would come to enjoy equal (if not superior) status in Hong Kong. In 1987, amendments were proposed to the Official Languages Ordinance to lay the legal basis for bilingual legislation. In Chen's (2001, as cited in Chung 2003: 20) view, the enactment of the Official Languages (Amendment) Bill in 1987 finally marked the concrete measures to implement the official language policy stipulated in the 1974 Ordinance.[8]

It is interesting to note that he Official Languages Ordinance makes no explicit mention of what is meant by "Chinese". According to Chung (2003: 29) the Government had in fact considered whether Cantonese alone (as advocated by the vast majority of the representations received by the Chinese Language Committee) or Cantonese and Mandarin, or Mandarin alone, should be adopted. Given that Cantonese was the usual language of 79% of the population, and understood by 95%, the Government had no doubt at that time that Cantonese would have more relevance for the population as a whole. Yet it did not rule out the possibility of the increasing importance of Putonghua[9] in years to come.

2.1.3. Language-in-education policies

Language policies may be realised at a number of levels, from very formal language planning documents and pronouncements to informal statements of intent (Chung, 2003: 4). The term usually refers to governmental policies, although language planning can also refer to actions of e.g. business organisations and individuals as well (Wardhaugh, 2002: 262).

Language-in-education policies, and more specifically, the choice of medium of instruction (hereafter MOI), have been particularly tricky in Hong Kong – and they are, according to sociolinguists, indeed some of the most crucial language planning choices

8 Chen (2001, as cited in Chung 2003: 20) notes that bilingualism started later and even more hesitantly in the legal domain, where laws only began to be translated into Chinese after the 1980s policy change, and the first civil case was heard in Chinese in 1995. The gradual increase in the use of Cantonese in the court has been linked with the increasing democratisation of the legislature (Li 1999: 73).

9 In fact, the words "Putonghua" and "Mandarin" are not used interchangeably by all due to some different (but rarely explicitly defined) connotations. Usually in scholarly research, as in other texts, one term is preferred over the other, with no explanations given for the preferences. For the sake of convenience and variation, the terms "Putonghua" and "Mandarin" will in this paper be used interchangeably if not otherwise stated. By contrast, for Cantonese only the English rendition "Cantonese" is used, as the Chinese equivalent "Yueyu" is not common in English the way "Putonghua" is.

that a country can make (Wardhaugh, 2002: 293). This reflects the importance that schools have in providing the key service in the socialisation of students.

According to E. Chan (2002: 273), the British government started to subsidise schools in Hong Kong in late 1860s, before which schooling was mainly based on private tutoring. This is also when English became a school subject. By the end of 1800s, 40% of pupils in public schooling were educated in English (*ibid.*). English skills gave real political and economic advantage, and they gradually became to be associated with elite status and success.

Poon (2009) has divided the history of the medium of instruction debate in Hong Kong into three stages. She notes that the issue has been brought up since the 1960s time and again, with no resolution: first, from the late 1960s to the late 1970s the issue was politically oriented because of discourses related to colonialism; second, from the early 1980s to 1997 the issue was less politically oriented because of the subsided colonial feeling; and third, in the post-colonial period a strong political orientation emerged again due to the changed political situation.

Although Kan & Adamson (2010: 169) divide the educational history of Hong Kong into the times of "colonial elitism" and "tentative vernacularisation" (1950s-1990s), from different studies it is to be understood that English education was never really imposed on the colony.[10] In fact, the pedagogical advantages of using Chinese as the MOI have been put forward ever since the 1930s, and the British government was not opposed to it – on the contrary, in the decades leading to the Handover it was willing to introduce such a policy[11] – but English became so popular among the public that its use in secondary schools grew wider and wider (from 57.9% in 1960 to 91.7% in 1990 (in primary schools, on the other hand, the standard MOI was Chinese) (E. Chan, 2002: 273). Vernacular education was, according to Sweeting & Vickers (2005: 122) expanding, while any promotion of English was backed by its "utility" and pragmatic

10 Although occasional contradictory interpretations can be found, in which the British government is seen to have acted to "guarantee the privileged status of English" as a high language and "relegate Chinese to the status of a low language in a diglossic society (Chung, 2003: 15).

11 It has been said that the willingness of the British government to implement a mother-tongue education policy was triggered by growing concerns over the growing practice of *code-mixing*, or (in Hong Kong context) imposition of English words into Cantonese sentences, which has been traced to classroom usage where students not proficient enough in English, who were supposedly taught in English, ended up mixing languages in classrooms. This practice was deemed to be eroding language proficiencies in both languages and was thus to be weeded out. It has, however, continued and spread into different domains of use.

thinking. The history of educational policies and attitudes to them therefore paints a slightly different picture of the attitudes towards English in the colony than the view in which it is something imposed from top-down. In any case, comprehensive free education was not set up in the colony until 1970s.

An Education Commission was formed in 1984 to formulate education policy and co-ordinate the planning and development of education at all levels. Its recommendations have also covered issues such as the medium of education policy, teaching of Chinese and English as subjects, and teaching and learning of Putonghua.

The resentment among the local population towards an idea of a mother-tongue MOI policy continued, and the British government did not push it forward[12] – until it finally decided to introduce a mother-tongue MOI policy less than four months before the Handover in 1997 (Bolton, 2002: 39). The implementation of the latter policy, however, was only carried out after the Handover, which has lead many scholars to believe that the introduction of the mother-tongue MOI was originally the idea of the new Beijing-minded government (as is the assumption of e.g. E. Chan 2002).[13]

On the attitudinal level, it has been noted that studies conducted in the colonial times among secondary school students show highly instrumental orientation towards learning English and negative attitudes to its native speakers – even a feeling that English presented a threat to their ethno-linguistic identity. Closer to the Handover, similar studies showed more positive attitudes towards native speakers of English, and the sense of threatened identity had vanished. Attitudes, however, remained instrumental, which has led some to conclude that Hongkongers[14] did not aspire to embrace Western culture and values (Hyland, 1997, cited in Humpreys & Spratt, 2008: 316).

All in all, language policies under the colonial government have been seen as very

12 Although a contrasting notion has also been made of a growing "mother-tongue" campaign from the 1970s until 1990s – yet this is not really explained anywhere.

13 Sweeting & Vickers (2005) resent how some have seen the eagerness of the Hong Kong local population to turn and keep to the prestige of the English language as "colonial influences having poisoned the locals' minds"-- they remind that the people might well have their own valid reasons for their choices.

14 The word "Hongkonger" is in fact somewhat problematic due to its connotations with identity issues, as one specific identity among other possibilities such as "Hong Kong Chinese" or just "Chinese" etc. However, in this paper no such distinctions are implied, but the word is used simply to refer to people living in Hong Kong. The prototype would be a person of Chinese ethnicity who has lived their life in Hong Kong, but such rigid restrictions are not implied unless otherwise stated.

laissez-faire, almost non-existent for most part of the history (see e.g. Sun, 2002: 284.)[15] Chung (2003) suggests in his concluding chapter three reasons for this: 1. The absence in Britain, and therefore in Hong Kong, of any tradition of, or mechanism for, language planning. 2. The ambiguity regarding the definition of "Chinese" and the status of Cantonese in the future of Hong Kong SAR 3. The absence of consensus about the direction in which the society should move. He further claims that, when it comes to the second and third point, the situation remains largely unchanged today.

2.1.4. Putonghua in the colonial times

Turning our attention to Putonghua, it has featured little in Hong Kong's education policies, or, for that matter, any other policies, until recent years. As Hong Kong was a British colony, the national language of the PRC had little official relevance for Hong Kong. Simpson (2007: 180) has noted that in Hong Kong, Putonghua inspired from the beginning two differing attitudes: on the one hand, China's power was seen as positive, but on the other hand its backwardness was seen in negative light. Sun (2002: 286) notes that out of the three languages, Putonghua had the lowest social prestige, and "most SAR residents are not able to speak it at all". According to Pierson (1998: 97), Putonghua enjoyed a short revival in Hong Kong as a school subject and as the language of popular songs in the 1950s as waves of mainlanders came, but as they were assimilated this phase quickly passed. The Education Department carried out a pilot scheme in Putonghua as an extracurricular subject 1984 (*ibid*., 99). Humprey and Stratt (2008: 316) cite studies conducted in the 1980s which show that secondary students had mainly instrumental motivations to learn Putonghua: while no particular animosity was felt towards the language, students did not want to see it imposed as an official language or spread its use further in education or government.

Towards the Handover, although the greatest part of English-language research was mostly interested in how the role of English would change after the end of the colonial rule,[16] some started to speculate whether Putonghua might acquire a much more prominent role in Hong Kong. Pierson (1998: 92) noted that the vitality of Cantonese in

15 As also noted by Poon (2009: 24), who saw that the government's educational policies have progressed in these three stages: laissez-faire (most of the colonial time, until 1994), streaming (1994-97), and finally obligatory Chinese MOI in 1997.

16 More generally, as was also noted at the beginning, most English-language research on languages in Hong Kong has concentrated on English – its role, use, attitudes etc., and the question of English vs. Cantonese (Lai, 2012), whereas similar studies especially on Putonghua are still very rare.

Hong Kong “has not gone unchallenged” (by Putonghua) – some of the reasons according to him were the PRC open-door policy and increasing economic and political links between Hong Kong and the mainland since 1978, which has provided an incentive for Hong Kong people to learn Mandarin, and the establishment of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in the late 1970s, which brought a large Mandarin-speaking community, with origins in every part of the country, right to the northern border of Hong Kong. Furthermore, as the language in which Singaporeans, Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese discuss about business, Pierson remarks that it is reasonable to think that Putonghua would emerge as the language of business in Asia. Yet Pierson (*ibid*., 100) also notes that, based on a 1993 report, the status of Putonghua education was rather low, as only around 52% of primary schools and 37% of secondary schools offered Putonghua in some form, and even then, the conditions “did not encourage learning”. Since the 1990s, however, the promotion of Putonghua has been placed on the government's agenda. Education Commission report number 6 (published in 1996) proposed that in the long run, Putonghua should be part of the core curriculum for all primary and secondary students. It was first introduced into the formal school curriculum in 1997 as a core subject for Primary 1 to Secondary 3 (Lai, 2012: 85).

2.2. Post-Handover

The future role of Mandarin relative to English and Cantonese in the SAR is still shaping. This section continues from the previous one, recounting the major developments in the linguistic arena of Hong Kong since the 1997 Handover, with special focus on Putonghua.

Johnston (1994) raised questions about the future of different languages in Hong Kong. He asked: “Will Cantonese or Putonghua hold sway in the corridors of power, in education, and in the media in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region? Or will they co-exist and, if so, on what terms?” (Johnston, 1994, as cited in Chung, 2003). He argued that the extent to which Putonghua replaces Cantonese as the language of power and prestige, as well as the media, will indicate how far “lifestyle” is being indicated in broad socio-political terms or narrowly in terms only of capitalist economic system.

China has, to a great extent, kept its promise of non-intervention and has not (at least directly) interfered with language matters in Hong Kong (Simpson, 2007: 183). Other challenges have, however, appeared. One of these is the financial crisis of 1997, which affected Hong Kong's national identity based on economic advancement – although Hong Kong survived the crisis, its future international status is a question mark due to the increasing trade with Mainland China and the increasing importance of Chinese cities such as Shanghai, among other issues. The next section briefly describes the SAR Government's responses to the changing context, i.e. the most important official language policies since 1997; after that, the current roles of the three main languages in Hong Kong will be discussed each in turn.

2.2.1. Official language policies since 1997

As Rajagopalan (2001) has argued, language policies are not only determined by language definitives, but are largely a matter of politics. The practices of the colonial government, as seen in the previous section, were so largely laissez-faire that it led Poon (2004) to claim that prior to 1997, Hong Kong had no language policies at all.

After the Handover, however, the SAR administration has taken a considerably more active role in language planning. Evans (2010: 347), comparing the tactics adopted by different decolonising countries,[17] found that in many of them English prevailed as the language of high-domain communication, in e.g. law and education, because of practical and elitist reasons. Hong Kong does not seem to be an exception, even though it was a special case in that it did not become independent after the end of colonial rule. Evans also sees the status of English in Hong Kong as a special case, because Hong Kong was a centre of international trade, where the use of English was crucial for that reason also.

From the attitudinal point of view, it is interesting to note that before there was serious thought of Hong Kong's reincorporation into China, the use of English was a linguistic symbol of the dominating foreign power, the local ruling Other (see e.g. Poon, 2009; Simpson, 2007: 178)[18]. On the contrary, as the reincorporation into China approached,

17 E.g. Singapore, which decided to promote the use of English as a neutral maintainer of social harmony in the multicultural society, and Malaysia, which chose the promotion of indigenous Malay as an integral part of the identity and nation-building.

18 Its use was therefore consciously avoided; in everyday situations its use was seen as pretentious

English became to be seen less as the "Other" and it acquired a more neutral, and then markedly positive image (Simpson, 2007: 181; Poon 2009: 13; Sullivan, 2012: 44). While Cantonese acquired new ground in domains it had not been used in before (Lai, 2012: 86), English continued to enjoy high status as an official language and as the perceived means to maintain Hong Kong's international status and connection with the outside world (*ibid*.). Therefore, an interesting contrast is created by the addition of Putonghua, which is in itself the official language of the world's rising political and economic power (Evans, 2010: 348).

The most important language policies in post-Handover Hong Kong have been those of the *Chinese medium of instruction policy* (which was already mentioned in section 2.1.3., as it was initiated slightly before the Handover) and the *biliterate trilingual policy* (see e.g. Poon (2004) and Sun (2002: 285)). Both of these have been in effect since 1997[19], yet Poon (2004: 62) states that the latter one initially had no implementation or framework, before an "Action Plan" was put forward in 2003 to raise language standards. The policy also spread from the language-in-education context to the wider societal level (*ibid.*, 58). Both Poon (2004) and Lee and Leung (2012) have noted that the whole biliterate trilingual policy and the Action Plan have concentrated resources on the promotion of Putonghua and – especially – English standards, whereas Cantonese has received little attention save for some relatively ephemeral campaigns in 2007.[20] Lee and Leung (2012: 9) note that in this respect, the general public agrees with the government – teaching English and Putonghua is regarded as more important.[21] Even where Cantonese is made the MOI, it is confined to the role of the medium of teaching and learning, but is not a learning objective in itself (Lee & Leung, 2012). On the other hand, Poon notes (2004: 67-68) that while the post-Handover policies have been rather balanced between English and Chinese, perhaps more inclined towards

(Simpson, 2007: 175, 178)

19 The first Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa laid down the basis of these policies in his first public policy address in 1997 (" […] goal for secondary school graduates to be able to be proficient in writing English and Chinese and be able to communicate in confidently in Cantonese, English and Putonghua […] Greater use of mother tongue teaching will help raise the standard of teaching in non-language subjects.") (p. 29, as quoted in Sun (2002: 285). Note the pedagogical grounds with which the mother tongue MOI policy is being advocated (for further discussion on this, see section 2.2.1.1. below and also section 5.4. for the current context concerning the case of Putonghua)

20 SCOLAR started the promotion of proper Cantonese pronunciation in 2007 with a series of TV and radio programmes as well as school activities to encourage people to pronounce words in Cantonese properly without "lazy articulation" for better communication with other people (Lee & Leung, 2012).

21 In a survey conducted by Lee & Leung (2012: 9), over 50% replied that if they had the resources, they desired to improve their language proficiency in English or Putonghua, whereas for Cantonese, an ability to conduct the daily conversations was seen to be enough.

Chinese, the fact is that especially the mother-tongue MOI policy has resulted in a weakening in English-language learning as students' exposure to English has diminished (*ibid.*, 65-66).[22] Due to the high unpopularity of this policy among the public (see e.g. Sun, 2002: 288), it has been gradually reversed in the recent years, so that most secondary schools can now again choose their MOI relatively freely.[23]

As can be seen, the policies mentioned in research are largely policies related to language-in-education, which is also the practical means through which language proficiencies are gained to achieve the desired language standards. Llewellyn *et al*. neatly summed up the dilemma faced by the Hong Kong government as a classic public policy dilemma of

> whether to jeopardize the educational progress of the majority (and perhaps endanger the culture itself) in order to guarantee a sufficient number of competent English speakers; or to value the whole (and in so doing conserve the culture) but accept the loss in capacity to deal with the international environment and hence a possible decline in the economic prosperity. (Llewellyn *et al.*, 1982: 30, as cited in Poon, 2009: 23-24).

The above quotation captures well what was also noted in section 2.1.3.: language-in-education policies have an especially important place among language planning decisions (Wardhaugh, 2002: 293), notably due to the effects they have on the language socialisation of young students. They have also been treated with particular passion in Hong Kong's public discussion, as will become evident from the discussion below detailing some responses to the post-Handover language-in-education (and especially MOI) policies.

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22 The "falling standards" debate started already in the 1980s, and has been noted by researchers, teachers and public figures in politics, business and the judiciary alike (Poon, 2009: 21). It has gained ground since 1997 for several reasons – some reasons for Hong Kong's obsession with English standards are discussed in further sections. At different times, the Hong Kong government has been involved in perpetuating these discourses, and it has been seen in negative terms by some as the government taking "every demand of foreign business interests as their mandate" (Lin, 1997: 431).
In fact, research on the actual MOI used in schools has found that a common feature under all the different MOI policies (laissez-faire, steaming and obligatory Chinese) is that in practice, teaching in the classroom is bilingual – i.e. codemixing has persisted. The same goes for universities, especially outside of the immediate context of a lecture, but Chinese was also found to be used in presumably English-language lectures (Poon, 2009: 19; Pennington, 1997; Evans & Green, 2007; Flowerdew, Li & Miller, 1998). Reason for this was found to be the insufficient English standards of the students (Poon, 2009: 20).

23 Kan & Adamson, 2010: 167. The government announced in 2009 that starting from the academic year 2010-11, schools would be allowed to teach a class in English as long as 85 per cent of students in a class are in the top 40 per cent of their age group academically. (Yeung, L. (2013, February 3). Hong Kong trails rival Singapore in students' English skills. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1142100/hong-kong-trails-rival-singapore-students-english-skills)

2.2.1.1. Effects and public responses

Language policies are not limited to the governmental official policies. These are what could be called the overt policies, while in a society there can simultaneously be at work covert language policies, i.e. the unofficial concerns of the citizens. These can sometimes differ considerably from each other.

Poon (2008) found in her review of 108 studies on language-in-education issues in Hong Kong five ongoing debates or controversial issues. These are 1) the English standards of Hong Kong students, 2) the use of code-mixing and code-switching in classroom, 3) the Hong Kong government's MOI policy; 4) students' motivation and attitudes towards English learning, and 5) the quality of English teachers in Hong Kong (Poon, 2008: 20). It is strikingly clear that English, not Chinese, is what has occupied the minds of most scholars.

The division of secondary schools into the few English-language ones and the majority of Chinese-language ones was feared to turn into a matter of social class, where middle- or upper-middle class families would have better means for preparing their children for the highly competitive admission into the prestigious English-MOI schools (see e.g. Bolton 2002a for more discussion on this).

From E. Chan's (2002) study it becomes evident that choosing the MOI is not just a pedagogical choice, but its effects are far wider, because language is fundamentally embedded in the individual and collective identity.[24] Chan looked at what discourses emerged from the 1997 MOI policy, and found three main ones, which she then analysed in terms of the concept of *cultural capital* developed by P. Bourdieu in 1973. The first discourse, that advanced by the Government, centred around the *pedagogical advantages* of receiving education in one's mother tongue. While these pedagogical advantages were known to the public, that is, parents and schoolchildren themselves (Chan 2002: 279), this discourse did not find much echo among the public because two other concerns were more important for them, namely individual and collective level discourses, which can be seen as complimentary to each other. In the *individual level*

24 The same problematique, of how government has to take into account several issues, both cultural and political, when deciding on a MOI, are considered by others in a similar vein; see e.g. Kan & Adamson (2010: 168).

discourse, language was seen as symbolic and *cultural capital* (defined as non-economic capital which can be converted into economic capital later) – it followed that denying the possibility of the students to study in English was seen as depriving them of the possibility to cumulate the social capital which could be used for finding good employment (*ibid.*, 276-277). The other discourse advanced by the public was one on the collective level: in this, the English language was seen as a *habitus* for Hong Kong community (*ibid.* 275). With English an important international language, it is the market demand which makes it that knowledge of English can give an individual the hope of a better job – and falling standards of English would destroy Hong Kong's position as an international city, and, importantly, lessen the SAR's distinctive identity as an entity apart from Mainland China (see sections 5.1. and 5.3.1/5.3.3. for how these same considerations work in terms of Putonghua in discourses of today).

It is difficult to make a clear distinction between the second and the third discourses, and indeed they are highly interrelated and reinforce each other, as Chan also notes. But when looking at the MOI issue from the point of view of how the Government might have more successfully persuaded the community to accept it, as Chan does in her conclusions (*ibid.*, 282), some distinctions can be made: for changing the individual level discourse, the right thing to do might have been to alter the internal conditions in Hong Kong so that Chinese language would be given more weight in university entrance examinations and in employment, while this would not have sufficed to reverse the collective-level discourse, which is about Hong Kong's identity relative to the international markets and to the mainland.

In addition to the “English vs. Chinese” debate, which is what has been the level of scholarly discussion for a long time, there are, however, a few words to be said about Putonghua as well on the level of language-in-education policies, before we turn to the realities of the role and usage of the languages in the society. As has been noted, Putonghua has been promoted recently with the effect that over a hundred of Hong Kong's primary schools have turned to teaching Chinese literacy in Putonghua rather than Cantonese. Some initial studies have marked several practical problems with the implementation of this policy and its outcomes, due to a lack of clarity in the objectives and guidelines (e.g. Tam, 2012: abstract). The switch has also sparked fears over Putonghua replacing Cantonese, as students who are taught in Mandarin have been found to switch to Mandarin on the playground as well. On the other hand, as Chan's

(2002) research and many other studies have found, in the competitive society of Hong Kong, parents want the best for their children in terms of what will ensure them a good life. English has been the key to this – therefore Hong Kong parents have put their children into English-language kindergartens, hired English-speaking Filipino maids, and even spoken broken English to their children by themselves in order to make sure they pick up the precious language as early as possible. Now, due to the global and local level political and economic changes, parents have started to realise that their children are going to live in a different Hong Kong than where they themselves lived. Despite any distaste that a significant part of the population of Hong Kong might feel towards using the language of the PRC, parents have other things to consider as well, and in the competitive environment many have started to understand the value that a Putonghua education can bring to their children.[25]

The next sections will look at the current position of each of the three languages in turn. Cantonese and English will be discussed in a more general fashion, trying to find the perspectives that might be relevant for understanding their relative role with Putonghua. Putonghua, which is discussed last, is opened up more extensively.

2.2.2. Cantonese

Cantonese is the mother tongue of around 89,5% of Hong Kong's population – this figure has changed little in the past ten years (cf. 89,2% in 2001, 90,8% in 2006; source: 2011 Population Census).

According to Simpson (2007), opinion polls suggest that the Hong Kong public feels that Cantonese should be the primary official language permitted for use in government, parts of education, and everyday life, whereas English and Mandarin would best remain additional languages in high-level domains and commerce. As for the actual use, different language surveys present in some respects differing interpretations of the domains in which each language is used – some studies have interpreted Cantonese to be the default language only in "low-domain" communication, that is, inside family and with friends, or other such less prestigious contexts. On the other hand, while all will admit that Cantonese is indeed the default language of intraethnic communication in

25 As a quick look at newspaper discourses will show; these will be properly treated in the analysis section.

these domains, other studies (see e.g. Bolton, 2002: 36; Lee & Leung, 2012) argue that this narrow view of the usage of Cantonese grossly overlooks its continuing and in some cases even increasing prominence as the primary language in a variety of other domains in the SAR – from government communication and legislative debates to the TV and the workplace (even though the share of English rises as we move towards higher-domain activities) (see e.g. Sun, 2002: 286).

2.2.3. English

Despite their fundamental differences, English and Putonghua also have much in common in the Hong Kong context: the number of native speakers of each in Hong Kong is small – 3.5% for English and 1.4% for Putonghua (according to 2011 Population Census). The latest Population Census data from year 2011 shows that for the first time in Hong Kong's history, slightly more people claim an ability to speak Putonghua than English either as the usual language or as another language (47,8% vs. 46,1%)[26].

English has for long been *the* language of international commerce, and Hong Kong has been proud of its status as a hub of trade in Asia, which is routinely attributed largely to the convenience and competitive edge that are brought by the high standards of English of its labour force as compared to the rest of Asia (excluding Singapore) (see e.g. Evans, 2010). The common view among scholars seems to be that the role of English has not changed as remarkably as it could have after the Handover.[27] English is still prestigious, "value-added". Parents are keen to provide an English-language education for their children to ensure their advantage in the future job market, as the fierce opposition to the 1997 MOI policy shows. A long-standing discourse of "falling standards" has lamented the alleged fall in English-language proficiencies and its effects both for the individual and for the society. On the other hand, studies on "new Englishes" shows that

26 The censuses, which are conducted by the Census and Statistics Department every 10 years (and by-censuses in the middle of the intercensal period), are by far the largest-scale surveys conducted in Hong Kong, but they do not measure in detail specific aspects of language use (Lee & Leung 2012: 10-11). On the other hand, surveys conducted by various scholars, which are of more specific or focused nature, are both much smaller-scale and of narrow scope, and it is thus hard to either make any far-reaching generalisations based on them or to build a whole picture of language use in Hong Kong (*ibid.*), as no study sufficiently involves the functions of Cantonese, English and Putonghua in different circumstances separately.

27 See e.g. Schneider (2003: 259): "After one and a half centuries of presence, the role of English could have been expected to change drastically upon the crown colony's return to China in 1997, but actually that does not seem to be the case".

Hong Kong English has undergone nativisation in a way that suggests it is indispensable and inalienable in Hong Kong on a level not only of a language of high-classes.

Even if English is regarded as an indispensable language in many high-domain activities, in real use this is more likely to materialise in the *written* than spoken medium: studies have showed that Cantonese is the language of intraethnic spoken communication also in high-domain sectors (see e.g. Evans (2010)). As for low-domain communication, such as conversations between family and friends, the role of English is far shakier. Studies on *code-mixing* in Hong Kong show a side of English largely overlooked in other studies: they consistently show that for a local person, speaking in English in social situations is not straightforwardly good – in fact, these studies point to "strong social norms disapproving the use of English for intraethnic communication (Li, 2002: 79). Among others, Chen's (2005) study of university students shows that while a certain type and degree of code-mixing can be the social norm in some circles, using "too much" English (including the use of English only) is almost invariably seen as negative. Different patterns of language use are clearly associated with different social categories. Some (see e.g. Li (2002) and Chen (2005: 538)) interpret the opposition towards code-mixing as ideological: a desire to protect the purity, or ethnolinguistic identity, of Chinese language and culture. On the other hand, Li (2002: 79) states that the distaste of English penetrating the low-domain usage, such as conversations with friends and family, stems from a fear that this is where it could threaten Cantonese.[28] In fact, sociolinguistic studies on code-mixing point to striking similarities between speech communities around the world in that the "low" language (in Hong Kong's case, Cantonese) serves as a metaphor for the friendship, whereas the use of "high" language is associated with different values such as making a statement authoritative (Wardhaugh 2002: 203) – this could well be the reason why less Cantonese is seen as less friendly, and it might not be necessary to draw upon the cultural defence argument.

All in all, even though Hong Kong cannot be described as a straightforwardly diglossic society because of the wide and overlapping role that Cantonese has in high-domain communication besides English, English clearly portrays several features associated with the "high" languages of such societies, notably the prestige associated with it, while its use in intraethnic communication is governed by social norms, generally

28 See Chen (2005) and Li (2002) for some interesting, detailed descriptions of the norms governing the accepted and the unaccepted patterns of code-mixing in Hong Kong, as well as motivations for their use.

discouraging its use in low-domain interaction.

2.2.4. Putonghua

Many studies have noted that, despite the emerging developments in Putonghua's presence in Hong Kong before the Handover as discussed in section 2.1.4., by and large Mandarin has, until recently, had very little space in Hong Kong. The problematique concerning Putonghua fully emerged only in the post-Handover era, which can also be seen in the increase of Putonghua-related scholarly articles in recent years.[29]

Already in 2000, many studies argued that Hong Kong people differentiate themselves from the Mainland Chinese through their language choices (Chen, 2012: 4; Bolton, 2000). Although relations with the mainland have certain relevance for the role of all languages in Hong Kong (notably, as English and Cantonese can be conceived as "countering forces", or parts of a separate identity distinguishing Hong Kong from the mainland), it is in the role of the national language Putonghua versus the two languages of the former colony where the debate over the identity link with Mainland China is most obvious (Simpson, 2007: 180). This is why this section first recaps some features of the promotion of Putonghua in the mainland, and then takes up a few prominent issues in recent Hong Kong-China relations (as understood on the level of what is being talked about, not as a political agenda) before a deeper look at the role and usage of Putonghua in Hong Kong.

2.2.4.1. National language vs. dialects/minority languages in the PRC

As in many countries, language has been and continues to be a key aspect of nation-building in China. The promotion of Putonghua (Mandarin) as the lingua franca for all of China has stimulated considerable discussion about language, the politics of national integration, and national identity among the Chinese (Yang, 2007: 161) - and not least in the SAR of Hong Kong.

As noted in section 1.1., the promotion of Putonghua as the national language began in the PRC in 1949. According to Zhou (2006: 442-444), language education policies in

29 As e.g. Lai (2012) has noted, Putonghua-related research was scarce before the Handover, as it was not seen as a topic of a social concern yet.

China have developed in three stages: pluralistic (1949–1958; involving the development of independent language education policies for Chinese and minority languages, first with focus on minority languages, then with increasing spread of Putonghua beginning with a State Council decree in 1955), integrationist (1958–1977; aggressive promotion of Putonghua and suppression of minority languages), and bilingual/multilingual (1978–present). The current laws specify Putonghua as the primary medium of instruction, limiting the constitutional freedom to use minority languages to 'when conditions permit' (2006: 444). In reality, news of repression of minority languages have been frequent in recent years, and challenges are also encountered on the Putonghua vs. other Chinese dialects axel (*ibid.*).

Apart from the education sector, Putonghua Promotion Weeks have taken place in the PRC since 1998. On the local level, some municipal governments (especially those of Shanghai and Chengdu) have taken measures to promote Putonghua by, for example, decreeing that professions providing public services (broadcasters, civil servants, railways, teachers, etc.) have to use Putonghua and pass Putonghua tests, or limiting heavily the amount of local dialect shown on TV or in newspapers (Yang 2007: 164). In 2005, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) directive further limited the use of non-standard language in films and dramas, which all have to be approved by the SARFT. Audiences have been unhappy with these measures (*ibid*., 165-166) – particularly well-published in Hong Kong have been the demonstrations in Guangdong province against suggestions for restrictions to the use of Cantonese in TV, radio and online footage in 2010, and finally an order by the local government in late 2011, which made the use of Cantonese in media dependent on a permission by the central or provincial administration.[30]

2.2.4.2. Hong Kong's relations with the mainland

Pierson pointed in his 1998 article to some early studies that had, according to him, detected “very positive feelings” towards Putonghua in Hong Kong. He interprets this as a willingness of Hong Kong to belong to the mother country from which it was at that time still separated – in his theory, Mandarin had the capacity of symbolising notions of Chineseness and “Mother China” (although Cantonese, according to him,

30 E.g. Wang, S. (2011, December 18). Cantonese broadcasts restricted in Guangdong. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/988103/cantonese-broadcasts-restricted-guangdong

might become the symbol of the "good old British rule", but only "in the unlikely event that Beijing authorities grievously misgoverned Hong Kong and were therefore perceived as outsiders and oppressors" (1998: 105). Although this might be said to have become true to a degree, the resonance his views have in the current reality of Hong Kong is of limited nature, as the more recent studies cited below will show.

15 years after the Handover, there is little evidence for claiming that China has "grievously misgoverned" Hong Kong – as Simpson (2007) notes, Beijing has largely kept its promise of not interfering with matters within Hong Kong's autonomy, including language policies, at least directly. On the other hand, the fact remains that the future prospect of Hong Kong is to be more tightly integrated into China in 2047 after the end of the 50-year grace period, which is within the lifetime of many now living. The details of the future remain unclear, but Hong Kong can hardly expect to retain the current level of autonomy in many areas, which might well include its language policies. After all, the ultimate stance of Beijing in language matters seems clear: the use of Mandarin is encouraged because it is the national language. In the absence of direct coercion, various subtler forms of influence from Beijing keep Hong Kong on tiptoes[31], and due to this, a sense of distrust towards Beijing is constantly observed in polls. This surfaces, for example, in how both the general "Beijing-mindedness" of the Chief Executive and any actions by him seen as kowtowing to Beijing are often loudly criticised.[32]

The uncertain political future is accompanied by questions over Hong Kong's current and future *identity.* For about three decades, from the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 to the late 1970s, travel and other forms of communication between Hong Kong and China were difficult and extremely limited (Flowerdew et al., 2002: 320). At the prospect of the reunification, the PRC began to take the place of the British government as Hong Kong's cultural "Other", in relation to which Hong Kong now had to assert its

31 See, for example, the Lamma ferry disaster of 2012 and the prominent newspaper space given for the discussion over whether Beijing's responses were to be interpreted as meddling with Hong Kong's internal affairs.

32 Flowerdew (2004: 1556) noted that the first Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa was both in the local and international media seen as a conservative whose policies were first and foremost directed towards pleasing Beijing – it is no coincidence that he suffered from very low popularity. Similarly, the current Chief Executive is constantly presented in newspapers with the epithet "Beijing-minded" in less favourable connections. Some recent opinion polls show that the trust in local government has reached an all-time low (see e.g. Tuohinen. (2012, September 9). "Hong Kong pelkää Kiinan aivopesua" ("Hong Kong is afraid of China's brainwashing") *Helsingin Sanomat.* Retrieved from http://www.hs.fi/paivanlehti/ulkomaat/Hongkong+pelk%C3%A4%C3%A4+Kiinan+aivopesua/a1347072576507.

separate identity (as mentioned in section 2.1.). Flowerdew (2004: 1554) notes that Hong Kong people have traditionally seen themselves as sophisticated and Westernised, in contrast to the “less civilised” mainlanders.

Some scholars talk of nuanced and complex relationships of Hong Kong with both Mainland China and Britain, and especially the relations with China are described as “paradoxical” and as a “simultaneous combination of attachment, detachment, patriotism and political dissidence (Vines, 2000, as cited in Leonard, 2010: 511). Vines argued that this is due to the fact that, until twenty years ago, the majority of the Hong Kong population was born in China, but chose to leave for political and economic motives. Thus while their roots in China are still strong, and many are proud of its past as a powerful and imperial nation, many have no wish to return to live there (*ibid.*).

That attitudes of Hongkongers towards the mainlanders affect their attitudes towards Putonghua has been detected or speculated in several studies (see e.g. Humprey & Spratt, 2008: 316). The next section will turn to the current role of Putonghua in Hong Kong, and it will also present some ideas of how the Hong Kong-mainland relations described in this section are reflected in it.

2.2.4.3. Role and usage of Putonghua in Hong Kong

Unlike English, which has largely retained and regained a positive image despite its colonial history, Hong Kong's relationship with Putonghua is more complicated. Perhaps this has got to do with the diglossic situation where English has not threatened to replace Chinese (Cantonese) in Hong Kong, but has for most part lived alongside it. Since 1978, the equality of the two has been explicitly written in the Basic Law. On the other hand, the relationship between Cantonese and Mandarin is less clearly distinguished. Five years after the Handover, Sun (2002: 286) suggested that the use of Putonghua was still limited to the public occasions attended by officials representing the central government in Beijing, noting also that Putonghua TV and radio programs were not commonly watched by the SAR residents. In recent years, the situation has shifted, at least to some extent – with the result that some see Mandarin to take space directly from Cantonese. The Basic Law leaves open the relationship between these two, treating them as one entity; and on the practical level, it has been found that increasing use of Mandarin as the MOI has had adverse influence on students' willingness to speak

Cantonese outside the classroom – even though Humprey & Spratt's (2008: 316) study, conducted in 2003, still found that studying compulsory Putonghua was perceived by students somewhat positively only in instrumental terms, whereas in affective terms it scored low, which is consistent with the attitudes observed in the decades leading to the Handover. Without a clear official status, and with the importance of the mainland and Mandarin growing in the world, the survival of Cantonese has started to worry part of the Hongkongers.

Despite the suspicions over what an increased use of Mandarin might mean to Hong Kong in terms of its separate identity, due to the rise of China's economic and political importance in the world, Putonghua has increasingly become to be seen as a language of the future as well, and its prominence in the SAR has increased, whether due to official policies or outside economic realities. It has been promoted in Hong Kong by the SCOLAR (Standing Committee on Language Education and Research) since 2002, although perhaps not as vigorously as compared with the continuing promotion of English standards[33]. The presence of Mandarin has increased especially through the changes in the MOI policy, which has turned over hundred of Hong Kong's schools into using Mandarin as their MOI for Chinese language classes instead of Cantonese. In the senior secondary curriculum it is only an elective subject, but an increasing number of schools is using it to replace Cantonese as the instructional language for the Chinese subjects (Lai, 2012: 86). A study conducted by Lai (2012) in 2009, remarkably, showed a clear increase in positive attitudes towards Putonghua among students, which he interprets to be a sign and a result of the language taking root in Hong Kong society along with the huge economic and demographic power of China (p. 83). Poon (2004: 66-67) noted that the spread of Putonghua in Hong Kong during the previous few years had not been necessarily due to official language policies, but more to the increasing demand at work due to the economic integration between Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta.

In the official administrative domain, Putonghua has not featured prominently – at least until recently. Pierson speculated already in 1998 on the possibility that Mandarin could become the language of administration in Hong Kong (although he admitted that no signs had pointed to this at the time of writing), whereas English continues to be the

33 Putonghua promotion stepped up. *Hong Kong Government website.* (25 March 2006) See Lee & Leung (2012) for discussion on the vigour with which each language has actually been promoted.

language of technology and international commerce, and Cantonese the intimate language used inside families. 15 years later, it seems that he was at least partly right. Mandarin has not yet replaced Cantonese in the administration, but it is gaining ground, if still primarily limited to interaction with mainland officials. Flowerdew (2004: 1553) noted that the speeches of the first Chief Executive were in Cantonese: in line with the promotion of Hong Kong as an international city, some speeches were given in English, while press conferences were always bilingual. Mandarin could be used when important mainland officials were among the audience. The slowly increasing use of Mandarin, however occasional, has provoked resentment – one example is the new Chief Executive C.Y. Leung's delivering his inauguration speech in July 2012 in Mandarin instead of Cantonese, which drew accusations of kowtowing to Beijing[34].

That Cantonese/Putonghua debate acts as a projection or extension of Hong Kong's relations with the mainland can be seen in the way language is in newspaper discussion spontaneously brought up even in issues as such unrelated to language – a good example is the dogs/locusts debate that emerged in the early 2012[35]. Some of these will be touched upon in the analysis section to explore their contribution to the representations of Putonghua.

34 See e.g. Chen, T. (2012, July 1). New Hong Kong leader opts for Mandarin. *The Wallstreet Journal - China Realtime Report.* Of course, such accusations are not new and are not tied to matters concerning language use – Flowerdew (2002: 321) found that Chief Executives are often seen in public discourse to be too eager to accommodate Beijing's interests.

35 This highly published debate began from an incident which occurred in January 2012, where a girl from the mainland was eating in the Hong Kong metro against the metro regulations. A Hong Kong passenger started to instruct the girl's mother, which lead to a dispute between the two, and several other people in the carriage soon took part in it. Some of the insults thrown on each side were about language (a mainland person commenting on the less than perfect level of Mandarin of the Hong Kong man; other Hongkongers shooting back that while they are in Hong Kong there is no need to speak Mandarin etc.). A video shot on the spot was posted on the internet by a Hongkonger, and sparked heated discussion for and against the behaviour of both sides. The dispute spread even wider when a Beijing professor commented on China's national TV calling Hongkongers "dogs", and expressing his view that Chinese do not need to know other dialects besides their own (hence there is no need for Mainlanders visiting Hong Kong to know Cantonese), whereas all Chinese have a responsibility to know Mandarin, which is what they ought to speak when speaking with other Chinese from other different dialect areas. He further asserted that Hong Kong is a part of China, and Hongkongers should not think too highly of themselves as something special. This curious dispute was also noticed by the Western media. The Beijing Government denounced the professor's words, but the official media was felt to have ignored or downplayed the incident. (See e.g. He, H.F. (2012, January 20). Tempers flare over snacking tourist on MTR. *SCMP;* Higgins, A. (2012, January 22). Beijing professor and descendant of Confucius provokes anger by insulting Hong Kongers protest Beijing. (*Washington Post).*

2.2.4.4. Parallel developments in the written medium: the case of traditional versus simplified characters

It is interesting to note that while the official policy supports "trilingualism", in the written medium this is matched by only "biliteracy" - in other words, while in the spoken medium the importance of both varieties of Chinese is acknowledged, in the written medium Chinese is treated as being only one: variation is encouraged neither in terms of the characters to be used, nor in grammar, even though the existence of such variation in the actual reality would make this possible. Standard Written Chinese, which is based on Mandarin grammar, being the *de facto* official version of Chinese, is what students are taught in Hong Kong (Lee & Leung, 2012), while the use of "Written Cantonese" is discouraged – it is non-existent in official contexts, and it can mainly only be found in informal texts, mostly in entertainment (e.g. advertisements and in the popular tabloid newspaper Apple Daily).

In contrast, when it comes to characters, Hong Kong has chosen to retain in use the traditional Chinese characters instead of the simplified ones, which the mainland has used since 1950s. The choice between these two standards has been a topic of constant debate in the Chinese-speaking world. The issue is highly politicised: amidst the tensions of the PRC with both Hong Kong and Taiwan, the main supporters of the traditional characters, sympathy for the use of simplified characters in the latter two is often dismissed as a sign of kowtowing to the PRC – although the opposition towards the use of the simplified characters includes several less political arguments as well, including those based on aesthetic, historical and linguistic reasons. All in all, the issue of characters could be seen to parallel that of the Cantonese/Mandarin in many respects – with the National Language and the simplified characters being more or less seen as the invention of the Communists in the PRC[36], while Cantonese and the traditional characters safeguard the "original" culture. However, there are also differences. Whereas the Cantonese/Mandarin issue is mostly local, even though it clearly has some more or less obvious parallels in other parts of Asia and the world (such as the protection of Taiwanese language in Taiwan), the issue of characters is shared to a greater extent by other Chinese communities. What the possible link between the

36 Simplified characters began to be promoted in schools in the PRC at the same time as the Modern National Language (Putonghua) by a 1956 State Council decree; soon after, in 1958 the pinyin romanisation system based on the standard MNL pronunciation was formally promulgated (Zhou, 2006: 443).

characters and Putonghua is in the actual everyday newspaper discussion is an empirical question which will be explored in the analysis section.

2.3. Summary: languages and Hong Kong – extracting the most important themes

This long historical background section has reviewed most important processes in the history of languages in Hong Kong from the early days until the present time, taking up both official language policies and the practical roles of the three different languages in the SAR. Furthermore, it has briefly presented some features of the official promotion of Putonghua in the PRC versus minority languages and Chinese dialects, and considered Hong Kong's relations with the mainland, which are a factor in the role of all languages, but have particular relevance for Putonghua. All in all, Hong Kong's linguistic history has been presented in a rather extensive fashion. While not all of what has been told is equally directly linked to the exact research questions i.e. the current representations of Putonghua in the media, the author believes that an understanding of the different currents of historical developments and the public responses to them is essential if one is to understand the different discourses, to which the different representations are linked, in the real historical context and how they link to Hong Kong's history. The themes that have come up in this section are manifold, to the extent that the developments may seem chaotic. Therefore, this brief section will sum up the most important things that should be extracted from the previous section for building the background understanding, and these will be kept in mind for the analysis section.

As was noted at the beginning of the historical background section, the emphasis of this research is on the attitudinal level of behaviour towards language. This is evident given that the focus when looking at media discussion is on written representations which serve as evidence of the thoughts behind the words, rather than plain facts about actual behaviour. Therefore we can limit our most keen interest to the *themes that have guided language attitudes in Hong Kong*. In other words, this study does not try to look at language proficiencies of individual people or even the society, but what are some of the dominant themes occupying the minds of the Hong Kong public.

One definite conclusion that can be drawn from the historical background is that

language in Hong Kong has been a matter that has sparked a lot of emotions – from the first language riots in the 1960s to the heated discussion that has surrounded changes in MOI policies to the recent incidental use of simplified characters in shops and restaurants that has outraged Hongkongers. What has spurred this emotional approach is what interests us here.

One dominant "super" or "meta" theme that comes up in much research on Hong Kong's languages is that of *identity* (see e.g. Simpson, 2007). The importance of this can be explained by the changing political affiliations of Hong Kong, which have required redefinition of identities relative to changing sovereigns. On the other hand, countering this theme of identity is the *instrumentality* of language. While some languages are primarily building blocks of one's individual or collective identity, others (or those same languages to a different extent to different people) can be primarily learned and used for instrumental purposes, i.e. because through that something else good can be gained. Historically, for example, English was learned by local population for instrumental purposes only as it secured a better career (as was seen in section 2.1.1.).

Sullivan *et al*.'s recent study of the interface between Hong Kong university students' social identification and language attitudes also further backs up the prominence of the double-edged sword that is the considerations of identity on the one hand and and instrumental matters on the other. Basing on a social identity theory, they assumed that language signifies and expresses group membership, and therefore people tend to favour in-group language over languages linked with out-groups. The particular relationships depend on the intergroup context: this, for example, explains the shift in the attitudes towards English around the Handover (as Hong Kong identity became less defined by differentiation from the British/ the West and more by differentiation from mainland China). Sullivan *et al*. found that, as predicted by the social identification theory, the choice between Cantonese and Putonghua was mostly based on the social identification with Hong Kong and the mainland respectively; on the other hand, attitudes towards English were mostly based on instrumental considerations, particularly of educational and economic success (Sullivan *et al.*, 2012: 47).

The prediction in this current study was that the motivations behind much of what is being discussed in the newspaper might also essentially come down to these two fundamental themes, even though the operational level concepts used in different

studies are varied, and it was predicted that the exclusion of instrumental considerations in relations to Putonghua in Sullivan *et al.*'s study might be an oversimplification, and that newspaper discourses might reveal more nuanced discussion about the instrumental dimension of Putonghua. Another basic distinction, although not explicitly mentioned in all studies, is that between the individual and societal level (as seen in e.g. E. Chan's (2002) study; as a factor, for example, in the rationale behind attitudes towards the use of certain languages in certain contexts). A third dimension that seems worth bringing up is that between top-down (official) and bottom-up (popular) discourses. These have often been at odds especially in the domain of MOI policies in 1997, where pedagogical issues were advanced by the government while the public cared about them less than some other, notably the identity-related and instrumental, factors (also most clearly presented in E. Chan's (2002) study).

These frameworks are not so much meant to limit what is being looked for in the primary material as to offer guidance in what could be interesting. It is with these frameworks in mind that we will later to look at the primary material, seeking to extract the prominent discourses and explain them with what has been discussed here.

3. Power of the media

Seeing that the aim of the paper is to look at newspaper discourses, some basic considerations are in place in order to locate the discourses in the field of media research. This chapter first presents some theoretical considerations regarding media power, before moving to the Hong Kong context. An overall picture will be presented of the English-language media environment in Hong Kong, followed by some considerations of what the position of South China Morning Post is in the media environment of Hong Kong.

3.1. Theoretical considerations

In modern societies, media constitutes an important, if not the most important, public space (Chan & Lee, 2007: 158). The access to it is not equally accessible to everyone, but is regulated by journalists, who serve as gatekeepers of information and thereby mediators of public opinion (Chan & Lee, 2007: 158). The capacity to influence or control processes of mediation is an important aspect of power in modern societies (Fairclough, 2003: 31), as this means being able to influence the production of public discourses, and thereby influence people's minds. This, in turn, is linked to the fact that people tend to accept beliefs, knowledge and opinions from what they see as authoritative, credible or trustworthy sources – in which reliable media is one important player among other such as scholars, experts and professionals (van Dijk, 2001: 357).[37]

Part of the power of the media stems from the fact that, as expressed by van Dijk (2001: 355), people have only passive control over media usage. He means that even though people can choose not to read a certain newspaper, they are affected by the media, whether consciously or unconsciously. On the level of discourse itself, *hidden meanings,* or beliefs communicated implicitly rather than explicitly, are especially influential, as they are harder to recognise as coming from certain values and viewpoints and are therefore less likely to be challenged (*ibid.*, 357).[38] In other words, the text does

37 See, however, critique for such conceptualisations which assume that it is possible to know who are the powerful ones and who are not in e.g. Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999.

38 These "hidden meanings" include in Fairclough's terms different types of assumptions and also unattributed or vaguely attributed voices drawn upon in texts – as, for example, when a politician simulates a dialogue in his speech, where he contrasts negatively evaluated views "by some" with his own views, marked in different ways to be desirable.

not assert the belief explicitly, but certain interpretations need to (perhaps unconsciously) be drawn upon in order to make sense of the text. These "manipulations" arising from the fact that communicative events and social practices may be recontextualised differently depending on the goals, values and priorities of the communication in which they are recontextualised, is a major preoccupation in media analysis (Fairclough, 1995: 41).

In the analysis of texts, such explicit and implicit differences of representation can be conceptualised as different 'discourses', by which Fairclough means "a type of language associated with a particular representation, from a specific point of view, of some social practice" (Fairclough, 1995: 41, 56). This definition of discourses by Fairclough is the basis for the analytical framework applied in this paper. (See section 4.1. for further discussion on discourse and other concepts to be operationalised on the level of textual analysis).

Van Dijk (2001: 359) offers a concise overview of how media discourse has been studied over the past decade in different disciplines. One interesting approach to discourses, which has gained some prominence within political science is to look at practices of *framing*, i.e. the application of different conceptual structures that organise political thought and discourses. The definition of problems in a society is a competition of whose definition will become the widely accepted one, of who are the reliable producers of information, and who can define the problem. Media have influence on what problems are taken up in the public and how much they are discussed, and who gets to define the problems and from what point of view. Framing refers to how (for example) journalists organise the influx of information by applying different alternative frames to it, which shapes how the nature of the issue is understood. So by choosing a certain frame, an issue can be made to look a certain way either consciously or unconsciously (Karvonen, 2000: 1). But it is not only the producers of the information that do the framing, but also the consumers themselves.

One could think of the various articles written on a given topic, (more or less narrowly defined as those articles related to each other) as links in "*chains"* or *"networks" of communicative events.* Following Fairclough's (2003: 30) examples, this could mean a story in a newspaper (which in itself may be written based on different sources, e.g. reports or interviews, which are also links in the chain), which then draws responses,

perhaps opinion writings or further news stories. In the production of media texts, there are several people involved at different stages besides the one who is identified as the writer. Moreover, guidelines and practices of the particular newspaper guide what is said – but so do social practices in the society at large as well (see Hallin's *spheres* in section 3.2.3.). This is something an analysis should be aware of when attributing views or representation to the particular writer and their ideological position. Similarly, reception of media texts varies according to different conditions. The extended chain of communicative events, furthermore, links communicative events in the public domain (e.g. articles in newspapers) to communicative events in the private domain of media reception and consumption, but this is outside the scope of the current paper (Fairclough, 1995: 41).

3.1.1. Contextual factors shaping what is represented in the media

What is presented in the media and in what ways is shaped by various factors. An important factor is the context in which the media works in, including the economic, political and sociocultural context. In terms of the economics, for example, present media practices are in part shaped by the intensely competitive commercial environment that the media operate in (Fairclough, 1995: 42). Patterns of ownership are also important, if indirect (*ibid*., 43).

In terms of the politics of the media, according to Fairclough, media has a role as a political public sphere – informationally oriented aspects of media output are ideologically shaped. Fairclough distinguishes between ideological and persuasive aspects of discourse, which both are political aspects of discourse (problematising the view of media as simply giving information) (1995: 45). Persuasive aspects, according to him, are devices used for convincing the reader of a particular point of view, while ideological aspects are taken for granted as common ground without recourse to rhetorical devices (*ibid.*). Yet it should not be assumed even of the mainstream media that they are only tools of dominant social classes' and groups' interests (government, capital), but relationships ought to be assessed case by case where media analysis focuses upon ideological effects of media discourse (*ibid.*).

As for the socio-cultural context, it is also important in shaping media texts – but media texts likewise can contribute to shaping them (Fairclough, 1995: 50). The possibilities

for creative reconfiguration of discourses (and genres), although in principle unlimited, are in practice constrained by the sociocultural practices the discourse is embedded in, and in particular by relations of power. In order to connect the availability of discourses to the relations of power limiting it, Fairclough works with the Gramscian theory of hegemony. (Fairclough, 1995: 78). Hegemony here can be seen as control by a dominant class or group over the internal and external economies of discourse types within the order of discourse.

3.2. Media in Hong Kong and South China Morning Post

The data for this current research, as mentioned, was gathered exclusively from the internet archives of the Hong Kong-based English-language newspaper South China Morning Post (hereafter SCMP). The fact that the material is gathered from one single newspaper, and especially the fact that it is an English-language one, have some important implications on the representativeness of the study. Hong Kong is currently served by around 15 local daily newspapers (Chan & Lee, 2007), the majority of which are published in Chinese. The Post has a circulation of around 104,000[39], or 1,5% of the total population of 7,07 million (2011 Census) – this contrasts with the circulation of over 600,000 of Oriental Daily News and over 350,000 of Apple Daily (Chan 2002: 104). In order to understand the context in which the discussion analysed in this research took place, and in order to evaluate the prominence of this discussion in the society, an overview of media in Hong Kong is in place. This section will therefore first give an brief overview of the Chinese-language vs. English-language media in Hong Kong, complemented by some notions on the possible effects of the PRC government (whose control over the media in the mainland is rather extensive[40]) on the media. Lastly, attention will be turned more specifically to the features of South China Morning Post itself.

3.2.1. Chinese and English-language media in Hong Kong

Hong Kong media scene is among the most vibrant in Asia: over 35 international

39 Hong Kong SAR. In *Asia-NZ Online*.

40 The watchdog group Reporters without Borders ranked China 173 out of 178 countries in its 2013 worldwide index of press freedom, while Hong Kong is on place 58 (Press Freedom Index 2013, Retrieved from http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html).

newspapers are being published in addition to the 15 local ones, together with around 700 periodicals, two commercial television companies, a subscription television service, a regional satellite television service, one governmental television station, and two commercial radio stations (Ching, 2003: 339). Most of Hong Kong's media are commercial organisations, having to compete for audiences. In accordance with many democracies, the role of the press and the media is seen by the public to be functioning as watchdogs monitoring power holders (Lee, 2007: 439), but scholars have mentioned the uncertainty over how much there is external influence, such as whether media personnel might downplay negative news about their owners and mother corporations (Chan & Lee, 2007: 160). As for political stance, many newspapers in Hong Kong are known to follow a particular political line, with most being either Pro-Beijing or Pro-Democracy. Some newspapers are completely neutral, or are oriented towards finance or religion.

The English-language news media have always been a minority in Hong Kong in both circulation and audience (Y.Y. Chan, 2002: 101). Currently, only 3 of the around 15 locally-based daily newspapers are published in English – these are South China Morning Post (owned privately by a foreign business tycoon), Standard (SCMP's main local competitor, whose daily circulation after turning into a freely distributed paper in 2007 has risen to be twice that of the SCMP), and China Daily (owned by the Chinese government[41]). In broadcast media, the English-language media plays an even more marginal role (*ibid.*, 106-7). Due to the special power relations between English and Cantonese and their speakers in the colonial times, however, English-language media has for long had disproportionate influence in Hong Kong (*ibid*.). The initial idea for the current paper was to look at either two or all three of Hong Kong's English-language newspapers, but this plan had to be abandoned due to the fact that retrieving the relevant articles from the online archives of the latter two was found to be impossible.

South China Morning Post, especially, has enjoyed a position of prestige as a status symbol, as the newspaper that all the "important people" read – yet despite this prestige, Y.Y. Chan (2002: 103) argues that due to the generally weak editorial line, which has not adequately represented the concerns of the local population, it has not been the English-language media that has framed the debate on major issues in Hong Kong, but

41 China Daily Hong Kong Edition (中國日報香港版) has been published since 1997, and it is the only official English-language newspaper published by the PRC government in Hong Kong and Macau. At least in 2002, according to Y.Y. Chan, its readership was negligible.

that this role has been played by the Chinese-language media ever since the early 1980s, which is when the largely apolitical Hong Kong population began to demand a voice in the Sino-British negotiations and Chinese-language newspapers were the ones that started to report intensely on the talks between London and Beijing.

In the more current vein, and turning our attention more specifically to the concern of this current thesis, i.e. language matters, a look through some blog postings[42] on the internet aimed at opening up Chinese-language media discussion for non-Chinese speaking people interested in Hong Kong, is enough to confirm the assumption that there are matters and viewpoints in the language debate that do not necessarily enter the English-language media discussion with equal vigour[43].

Still, while the discussion in English and in Chinese undoubtedly differs in its vigour and immediacy, it does not seem evident that there would be a total lack of some issues or viewpoints in the English-language media either. Even bearing in mind the limitations that the exclusion of Chinese-language sources bring to this current thesis, I argue that a study of the South China Morning Post can have relevance in its own scope. Out of the three main English-language newspapers currently published in Hong Kong, the Post remains an especially influential newspaper. It has been described as Hong Kong's most credible newspaper, and at any rate, for non-Chinese readers it remains the primary source of information concerning Hong Kong, which perhaps explains why so many studies on media in Hong Kong have chosen to look at the Post as their primary material (see e.g. Flowerdew *et al*., 2002)).

Furthermore, it seems that in terms of the perceived credibility of different newspapers, English-language papers, and especially SCMP, are generally regarded more favourably in Hong Kong than Chinese-language ones. Political affiliations also seem to have a clear influence on the perceived credibility: it is perhaps no wonder that a survey of Hongkongers should yield results according to which papers perceived as pro-Beijing

42 Especially useful in this respect is the blog Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese, which translates into English news and comments on a variety of issues, largely those linked to conflicts between Hong Kong and the mainland. Of course it must be noted that, being a blog maintained by a private person, it reflects the interests of that individual in terms of what is worth being presented to the non-Chinese reading people, and must therefore be assessed with caution. Yet it does serve as a good reminder of the possible differences between what is discussed and how in the English-language and Chinese-language traditional and social media.

43 See Dictionary of Politically Incorrect Hong Kong Cantonese, for example, for stories about enraged Hongkongers painting over advertisements written in simplified characters, or the heated discussion in the social media following these incidents.

are regarded as less credible, although the pro-democracy Apple Daily also scores low in credibility evaluations. The most credible Chinese-language paper is the Ming Pao Daily, which is described as neutral in its political affiliations.

3.2.2. Press freedom and self-censorship in Hong Kong media

Self-censorship can be defined as a slant, omission, etc. which is performed in order to curry favour or avoid punishment from the power structure. In the words of Lee, it is:

> a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and change of emphasis to a choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organizations, and even the entire media community in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishments from the power structure. (Lee, 1998: 57, quoted in Lee, 2007: 438)

In Hong Kong, freedom of press is in principle protected by the Bill of Rights. The largely free (e.g. Ching, 2003: 339) media environment in the SAR contrasts with the Mainland China, where government control over media is pervasive.[44] Reporters Without Borders has evaluated Hong Kong as enjoying "real press freedom", and Press Freedom Index has ranked Hong Kong media as the second freest in Asia after Japan. Many topics banned in the mainland media are discussed in Hong Kong, and many books banned in the mainland are published in Hong Kong – yet studies point out that the media is far from being outside the scope of governmental influence.[45] On the local level, concerns have been raised especially about the increasing business ties between the mainland and the media owners, and their effects on the neutrality. At the launch of a joint report published by the Hong Kong Journalists' Association and Article 19 in

44 Shambaugh (2007: 28) notes that practically all media in the PRC fall under the bureaucratic purview of the CCP Propaganda Department (CCPPD). Although the ability of the CCPPD to control the information flowing into and throughout China has eroded over time, notably due to the spread of internet and globalisation which has opened up China's television markets to satellite and cable broadcasts, it retains the capacity to censor and crack down when and where it sees fit – and this power is often used (*ibid.*, 29). Affecting what is covered in the media is not only these active measures by the CCCPPD to control the media, but also self-censorship that the media (and other, private actors) have learned to practice, knowing the limits of what can be said. On the other hand, in addition to censorship, media content is created by "proactive propaganda", writing and disseminating information that the audience *should* hear. As such, propaganda is not seen as negative by the CCP or by the Chinese citizens, but as a form of education and building the society (Shambaugh, 2007: 29).

45 In addition to political pressures coming from Beijing, Lau & To (2002: 329) have noted that the HKSAR government, too, has demanded cooperation by the media in order to reverse its low popularity, for which it blames the press and its extensive coverage of negative matters concerning the SAR. Chan & Lee (2007: 168) also point out the relationship that the government has with the media, claiming that the government has its ways of dealing with the media and by so doing influencing the framing of public discourse (which is mediated by the media) but they conclude that the media is still free to follow up news in ways they deem fit.

July 2001, the chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists' Association said: “More and more newspapers self-censor themselves because they are controlled by either a businessman with close ties to Beijing, or part of a large enterprise, which has financial interests over the border.”[46]

In essence, for the current research it remains an empirical question (although one generally very difficult to detect, as Lee (2007) notes[47]) whether issues related to Putonghua might be something politically sensitive enough to be subjected to any degree of self-censorship in the media.

Y.Y. Chan (2002: 110) warns of a myopia in Western perceptions of Hong Kong's press freedom, which he argues have unduly looked at the change in 1997 in Hong Kong in a negative light (overstating both the freedom in the colonial times and the repression by the Chinese government nowadays). Chan noted in 2002 that the factual evidence did not convincingly prove any worsening of the problem in recent years, and Lau & To (2002: 323) claimed that economic pressures have been much stronger than political forces in shaping media developments in post-Handover Hong Kong. Nevertheless, even though a “romanticised image” of press (as well as political) freedom in Hong Kong in the colonial times and the contrast with current repression that complements this perception is something to be avoided[48], newer studies on the matter do provide some evidence of a perceived increase in self-censorship in the media among the Hong Kong public and journalists (see e.g. Chan & Lee, 2007: 170; some, such as Lam (2003: 170) even speak of an “alarming increase of self-censorship”).

While China has not directly suppressed media freedom in Hong Kong (Lee 2007), less direct forms of impact from the Central Government do take place[49]. Some scholars

46 Freedoms eroded to please Beijing: report. (2001, July 2). *The Standard*. Retrieved from http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=11891&sid=&con_type=1&d_str=20010702&sear_year=2001

47 Lee (2007: 437) notes that it is difficult to estimate from a journalist's writing whether they have expressed self-sensorship (shift of emphasis, rhetorical devices etc.) or whether they represent their real judgement, however poor.

48 For most of the colonial history, before a program of legal reforms in the 1990s, although the media was allowed to be ruled by laws, the Government was above them and could for example prosecute the news media for publishing “false information” (Lau & To, 2002: 324).

49 As Lau & To (2002: 327) describe it: “[w]hile Beijing takes no action to intervene to (sic) the internal affairs of Hong Kong, there is no lack of expressed concern by senior Chinese officials over how press freedom should be properly exercised or restrained in the Special Administrative Region”. More specifically, they (*ibid.*) note that the Beijing government was quick to draw the line of press freedom promised by the Basic Law to exclude media perceived to be advocating the independence of Taiwan, Tibet, or Hong Kong, but that Beijing's political sensitivity and grievances are not limited to these issues of independence.

have studied what impact possible media self-censorship might have in Hong Kong, whose journalists are well aware of the fact that China is watching. Lee (2007) notes that the CCP's ambiguous criticisms have become unofficial guidelines in Hong Kong's media despite the fact that they never simply succumbed to them (*ibid.*, 437) – there is a real underlying threat of coercion, although no journalist working for a Hong Kong media organisation has been tried and jailed by the Chinese government since 1994[50].

According to Lee (2007: 436), instead of direct repression, the central government has "resorted to indirect and subtle methods to domesticate the media" in Hong Kong. He mentions the continuing infiltration of "pro-China capital" in the local media system: many media outlets are owned by tycoons with connections to China (which is also the case with SCMP). The ownership can influence the hiring and firing of staff, as well as their "newsroom socialisation", all of which has led to claims that mainland views could be gaining ground. Chan and Lee (2007: 173) also note that the tension between Beijing and Hong Kong serves as a key parameter enabling and limiting the expression of public opinion in Hong Kong.

Yet Lee reminds that Hong Kong's journalists are also professional, and they have developed ways to balance the political pressures and freedom of speech.[51] Looking at the politically sensitive topic of Taiwan, he lists some different tactics employed, notably "objectivity by reporting just *what was written in the West*" (2007: 439). Yet he mentions that over-emphasis on objectivity and detachment can lead to a failure of the media to play the role of a watchdog satisfactorily (*ibid.*, 440), which requires speaking on behalf of public interests and monitoring power holders. At any rate, notions of media self-censorship are widespread both among journalists and the public. In a 2006 survey, 47,2% of journalists thought that self-censorship existed but was "not very serious", while 26,6% thought it was "very serious" (Lee, 2007: 438). Between 1997 and 2006, various university polls have yielded results according to which around 40% of the public believe that some level of self-censorship was being practised (*ibid.*). Political stances of those being asked play a role in the replies: people who supported democracy were more likely to feel that press freedom has diminished, and people who

50 *Ming Pao* reporter Xi Yan faced this in 1994. More recently, Singaporean journalist working for *Straits Times*, Ching Cheong, was sentenced to five years in jail by the PRC in 2006 over his journalism; see Lee (2007: 437) for more information on this.

51 He also emphasises the importance of market considerations, noting that one reason why Hong Kong newspapers have resisted to succumb to the Government pressure was their concern with market competition and credibility (Lee, 2007: 453).

identified with the mainland felt that there is no self-censorship and press freedom has not diminished. (Lee 2007: 450-451).

3.2.3. *Spheres* in the media

According to Lee (2007: 442), the interesting question about media neutrality is whether it is in readers' minds "absolute," or whether people would regard neutrality as unimportant in certain situations. While the different political stances of different newspapers seem to have direct effects on perceptions of their credibility (the neutral Ming Pao and SCMP being regarded as the most credible ones, as noted above), it has been noted that too much neutrality or emphasis on objectivity can result in a failure to criticise sharply the power holders, which in turn can be seen as a form of self-censorship even if it has been adopted for reasons of professional objectivity (Lee & Lin 2006). In other words, neutrality is directly tied to the question of whether the media are willing to *take sides when the public believes they should* (Lee, 2007: 442). When objectivity and balanced reporting is the preferred option and when not could also be defined in terms of *spheres* of public discussion as defined by Hallin.

The three different spheres of public discussion, as theorised by Hallin (1986: 116-118), are governed by different journalistic standards. The sphere of consensus refers to those social objects not regarded by the journalists and the majority of the society as controversial; in sphere of legitimate controversy – whose parameters of debate depend on the society – contains those views that need to be presented with objectivity and balance, while the sphere of deviance refers to those views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard (Hallin, 1986: 117). In other words, as summarised by Lee (2007: 442), *balancing viewpoints* is relevant practice only when an issue falls within the sphere of legitimate controversy in a society – when an issue falls within the sphere of consensus or deviance, journalists will tend to *reflect the consensus* and/or *condemn the deviant*.

As a proof of the empirical applicability of the concept in the Hong Kong context, the study by Lee (2007) revealed that the majority of people asked did not think media neutrality was important in all cases, as, for example, in news about the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Indeed, the media's sticking to a neutral stance even when not required in certain issues was taken by some Hong Kong citizens as a sign of self-

censorship and political submissiveness (*ibid*., 450-451; the same has also been discussed in Chan & Lee, 2007: 159). For the current research, it is of particular interest that one of the matters asked about was "conflicts of interest between HK and the mainland", and here, a large part of those who did not see the neutrality as applicable (41.8% in 2004 vs. 43.8 % in 2006), saw that the media should be on Hong Kong's side in those issues (44.1% vs. 44.3%; only 7.5% vs. 5.3% felt media should take mainland's side). Local-national debates is also where Lee found self-censorship was believed to be more widespread than in other domains. Given the nature of the issue of Putonghua and its connections with social identities, it is to be expected that some of its representations might fall under the category of "local-national debate".

3.2.4. South China Morning Post: characteristics and editorial line

South China Morning Post is often described as the leading English newspaper in Hong Kong (see e.g. Flowerdew *et al.,* 2002). As noted earlier, the Post can also be regarded as the most credible of Hong Kong's newspapers (Lee, 2007). It is traditionally regarded as a prestigious paper, even a status symbol, appealing to an elite and mostly liberal readership (Y.Y. Chan, 2002: 101-102; Flowerdew *et al.*, 2002: 321). Yet it has not avoided accusations of undue affiliations or of insufficient guarding of local interests at different times. This section will present a brief history and analysis of the current perceptions of the affiliations and credibility of the Post.

SCMP was founded in 1903 by an Australian-born Chinese and a British journalist, with funding mostly from non-Chinese business people. Its manifest goal was to support the reform movement in China, where revolutionaries sought to overthrow the Qing dynasty (Y.Y. Chan, 2002: 101).

In 1986 it was acquired by Australian media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. It was then jointly owned by HSBC, Huchison Whampoa and Dow Jones. In 1992, SCMP was bought by Malaysian business tycoon Robert Kuok, who is the current owner of the newspaper. The Kuok family is known to be pro-Beijing, which has raised concerns over the editorial independence of the paper. Such concerns have been voiced for over a time – Lam (2003: 183), referring to the experiences of a British journalist who edited the SCMP in the late 1990s, says that the management of the paper tried to tone down coverage to please China, and describes self-censorship in SCMP as "rife". Such

accusations gained prominence again in June 2012 when the current editor-in-chief, mainland-born Wang Xiangwei, surprised his staff with his sudden decision to reduce the coverage of the politically sensitive story of the suspicious death of Tiananmen dissident Li Wangyuan[52].

In effect, accusations of lack of vigour in reporting about the Government of the day are not new or confined to the post-1997 situation. According to Y.Y. Chan, in the colonial times the Post largely represented the interests of the British government and the local Establishment (2002: 101) – Chan cites both anecdotal evidence and surveys conducted on the Post editorials from 1950s and 1960s which support this view (2002: 102).

Chan also claims that the Post has "never succeeded in becoming a voice of Hong Kong or of Asia, speaking authoritatively to the world about the concerns of the local population". He further notes that in his opinion, it has not produced definitive reports or analysis on major issues, despite its position "at the crossroads of China and the larger world with a staff of bilingual writers", which, in Chan's opinion, poses it in a position to produce coverage that could compete with leading newspapers around the world (2002: 103). He claims that before the Handover the coverage of several stories by the Post followed the lead of Western-based news agencies, effectively reflecting the views of Washington DC (2002: 103). Here, he notes that the competitor Standard adopted a slightly more critical stance towards the Government. Chan attributes this all to the editorial line of the Post, and while he may or may not be correct in his evaluation of the editorial line of the Post in the colonial times, one must notice that especially today, the possible lack of vigour with which especially political matters may be treated – perhaps more so today than in the colonial times because of the different approaches to free media in the two different national governments[53] - might possibly be affected by less deliberate choices of editorial line and more by journalists' perceptions of need for self-censorship in front of a fear of consequences from the Beijing government, however indirect such threat might be, as was discussed in the previous section.

Despite its circulation of only around 100,000 – which has remained relatively stable

52 Here is the news - or maybe not. (2012, June 20). *The Standard.* Retrieved *from* http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asppp_cat=21&art_id=123612&sid=36775620&con_type=1&d_str=20120620&isSearch=1&sear_year=2012

53 However, see Y.Y. Chan (2002) for criticism over the Western "romanticised" views of media freedom in the colony.

for the past decade despite some observations ten years ago according to which the affluent English readers in Asia were increasingly turning to international media[54] - the Post has remained one of the world's most profitable newspapers (Y.Y. Chan 2002: 102). Its competitors, the Standard and China Daily, remained far behind (although the decision by which the Standard turned into a free newspaper in 2007 later boosted its circulation considerably).

3.3. Relevance for the current paper

As a summary of what the relevance of the matters presented in this chapter is to the current research, one might note that the data used in this research is of limited nature in two ways. Firstly, the fact that it is taken from English-language media instead of Chinese-language media means that the views represented are the views of those who are not only proficient enough in English to read a newspaper in that language, but also positioned towards English in such a way that they choose to read an English-language paper and express their views there instead of a Chinese-language one (see also Chan & Lee (2007: 164) for considerations over how views of the people affect the choice of newspaper they read). Bearing in mind that 89% of Hong Kong's population speaks Cantonese as their mother tongue, and that only around 41% claim knowledge of English, this is a real restriction. It seems plausible to suspect that discussion about the role of languages is in itself language-sensitive in the sense that a person's linguistic background and abilities affect their attitude towards languages in general – for example, Sullivan *et al*. (2012) found evidence of this in the Hong Kong context in their study where respondents' attitudes towards English correlated with their self-proclaimed proficiency in the language, although in the case of identification with Cantonese/Putonghua the effect of proficiencies was less important. Both evidence and common sense suggests that at least expatriates (a fair share of SCMP's readers) have a less passionate and identity-based relationship with Putonghua, and one might think that higher level of connaissance of foreign languages and thereby perhaps foreign ideas would contribute to a more tolerant attitude towards Putonghua as well, but this has not been confirmed in scholarly studies and one cannot make any far-reaching conclusions here.

54 In 2012 the Post has a circulation of around 104,000, or 1,5% of the total population of 7,07 million.

The second limitation is that within the already narrow scope of the English-language media in Hong Kong, the material is gathered from one single newspaper, which has its own characteristics in its political affiliations and editorial line. The readership of SCMP covers only around 1% of the whole population of Hong Kong, and about 6% of readership figures. However, although the decision to concentrate on English-language media over Chinese-language one was made due to the insufficient Chinese language abilities of the current author, it is some of the particular characteristics of the Post that speak for using it as the base for the analysis over some other newspapers. It has for long been a prestigious paper, and it is regarded as the most credible newspaper in Hong Kong. It is also the primary means through which non-Chinese speakers get information about Hong Kong outside the SAR.

In contrast, for evaluating the possibility of self-censorship and the effects that it might have on the discussion found on SCMP's pages, the essential question is how sensitive the topic of Putonghua and Cantonese is for the Beijing government. While the presence and extent of of self-censorship is impossible to establish by looking at the articles alone, the essence for this current paper is to understand the possibility of its presence as a factor potentially shaping the relation of what is being discussed and the “real” views of people which are not the primary focus of the current paper. The historical background section has provided some grounds to evaluate the discussion on SCMP's pages against what has been said about language attitudes elsewhere.

4. Methodology and data-gathering

This section presents the methodology used in the thesis and the data-gathering process, and gives a general idea of the data found.

4.1. From textual analysis to (Critical) Discourse Analysis

This study employs *discourse analysis* as a hermeneutic tool. Discourse analysis encompasses a wide field of transdisciplinary research, and some of its concepts are used in slightly differing ways by different scholars adopting different focuses. The approach here is influenced mostly by the works of one of the most prominent scholars in the field, Norman Fairclough.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one type of discourse analytical research with especially close ties with social research. According to Fairclough, CDA is not just analysis of discourse (or more concretely texts), but is a part of some form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process (Fairclough 2010: 10). Despite this ultimate aim at transcending a mere linguistic analysis, Fairclough points out that CDA first requires some form of systematic analysis of the text, not just general commentary on the discourse. This study will make extensive use of the concepts and resources for textual analysis elaborated in Fairclough's 2003 book *Analysing Discourse*.

However, the ultimate aim of the current research differs in some important respects from the definition of Critical Discourse Analysis given by both Fairclough and another important scholar who has developed the field, Theo van Dijk. It does not adopt the normative agenda of “attempt[ing] to address social wrongs in the discursive aspects and think of ways to right or mitigate them” (see Fairclough, 2010: 11 and his ”manifesto” for CDA in 2003: 202); for the details of van Dijk's definition, see 2001: 353). This normative agenda has led some to criticise CDA for being based more on opinions and interpretations than analysis; that “description is provided to support preconceived interpretation” (Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999: 1085). The emphasis of the current research could be said to be, in Fairclough and van Dijk's terms, on the non-critical aspects of the analysis, which is why it is perhaps better to call this only discourse

analysis. Yet it does share some important tenets with the critical tradition, notably the aim of *explaining* discourse structures in terms of properties of social interaction and social structure, rather than just *describing* the discourse structures (cf. Van Dijk, 2001: 353). It aims to explore the hidden connections and causes in texts, which is often cited as an important characteristic of the "critical" tradition.

A few central concepts drawn upon in the textual analysis are explained below – more detailed presentation of the tools will be given in the analysis section whenever they first appear.

Fairclough (2003: 223) established a link between texts and the social world in an interesting way. He understands languages, texts, and orders of discourse respectively as elements of s*ocial structures*, *social events* and *social practices.* Social structures (including language) define what is *possible*, social events (including texts) constitute what is *actual*, and social practices (including orders of discourse) mediate the relationship between these two. In the analysis of texts, the level of discourse is the intermediate level at which relations between the text itself and its social context are mediated (*ibid*., 37). Yet social events, such as texts, are not only determined by the social structures and social practices, but are also on the other hand shaped by the causal powers of social actors (Fairclough, 2003: 38).

In terms of an analysis of media texts, Fairclough speaks of two complementary takes on the analysis: analysis of individual texts, and analysis of orders of discourse (such as "the order of discourse of the media"). In this study, the focus is on neither of these as such, but rather on the body of texts whose (possibly only) common feature is that they include *representations* of Putonghua in them, or, in other words, discourses in which Putonghua appears.

One of the most central concepts for this current study is indeed that of *representations*. Here one can focus on what is included in the representation of social events in the texts, what is excluded, and which elements are given the greatest prominence. The constructivist approach adopted in CDA supposes that it is impossible to establish a "truth" outside particular representations, but what one can do is to compare different representations. With regard to representations, one can consider what *voices* are represented and how they are framed. This can also be called the *intertextuality* of a text

(Fairclough, 1995: 61; see also analysis section 5.1.1.). This takes us back to the other central concept in this research, the concept of *discourses*, which can be defined as *representations of a particular part of the world, from a particular point of view.* We can distinguish discourses on different levels of abstraction – they differ in their degree of repetition, commonality, stability over time, and on their "scale", or how much of the world they include (Fairclough, 2003: 124).

One text may draw upon several different discourses, and it can include different voices. These voices may be mediated in different ways. Some may be *attributed* (their origin is stated) and some unattributed, and they may be presented on a variety of different levels of distinguishing them from each other (direct quotation, indirect speech, summary etc.) and also *framed* in different ways, which can contribute to how they are interpreted – some voices, some discourses, may be *legitimised* by the writer's own voice and some distanced through use of direct quotations (see Fairclough, 2003: 53; Fairclough, 1995: 81). Similarly, what is said in the text may be *asserted* (in which case it is stated explicitly that this is the view taken here) or *assumed* (in which case the utterance is passed as a "truth"). Attribution and assertion contribute to the level of *dialogicality* in the text, or the extent to which the text opens up its views for discussion – assertions and clearly attributed voices increase the level of dialogicality, whereas if the text rather passes its views as assumptions, and different voices are excluded or suppressed, there is little dialogicality (Fairclough, 2003: 214). *Hegemony* relates to this as well: Hegemony can be seen as the attempted universalisation of particulars, which entails a reduction in the level of dialogicality (*ibid.*, 61).[55]

Further concepts which will be of use include those of *communicative vs. strategic action* and *evaluations*. Communicative action is action whose primary objective is to understand and exchange information, whereas strategic action is oriented at producing effects (e.g. advertisements). It is also possible that an action which on the surface is masked as communicative actually has a covert strategic orientation (*ibid.*, 214). Evaluations are the aspect of text meaning that has to do with values. As other forms of sentences, they may be either explicitly stated or passed as assumptions – in the case of evaluation, the latter is often the case (*ibid*., 215).

55 On the other hand, the critics of CDA have accused the approach itself for adopting some of the practices it identifies as being manipulative (such as the use of evaluative words in the description of discourses and the aim to "right the social wrongs"), with which it attempts to establish its own hegemony (Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999: 1081).

All of the dimensions of texts discussed above, which contribute to the textual analysis, which in turn aims to link the texts to the social events and processes, are on the level of individual texts realised in concrete linguistic features. The operationalised level of the concepts and their linguistic realisations will be left for the analysis section, where they are explained in connection with examples found in the data.

4.2. Data-gathering process

To recap the basic question that this research seeks to answer, we could put it the following way: How does all that has been discussed above (the history) translate into how Putonghua is represented in recent media discussion?

This being a qualitative research, it was decided that the set of data ought not to be predetermined strictly at the initial stage, but that a wider approach to defining a data set would allow for a meaningful strategy for limiting the data set to develop naturally. Therefore, initial searches were aimed at finding all kinds of articles dealing with languages to establish a feel of what types of topics have been talked about over the years. A snowballing technique was found to be the most useful one, as the search-word based search in the SCMP archive yielded results of very variable quality. At this stage, articles with various topics were found from years ranging from 1993 (which is the year from which the internet archive of SCMP starts) to present, although only 33 out of the close to 300 articles skimmed through at this stage were published before the year 2002. This is probably due to the fact that the linking and tagging systems, on which the snowballing technique relied, have been developed further in recent years and recent articles are therefore more tightly connected to others. All in all, while what was found and read during this initial phase cannot be regarded as representative in any way, it allowed for some general impressions to be formed which would later help to set the more specific data set in context. These include, among all, the constantly high number of education-related articles over the years, especially related with English-language education and standards. In recent years, the number of articles dealing with Putonghua seemed to have grown.

After the research question of the study was fixed at finding the representations of

Putonghua, a more rigorous method for finding the relevant set of articles was needed. This turned out to be one of the biggest problems in the whole research, because due to the somewhat counter-intuitive functioning of the search engine of the SCMP archive, creating a clearly and meaningfully defined set of data out of the vast but scattered pool of articles, which clearly contained a vast amount of relevant material, but which was not easily accessible, was a difficult task.

After several unsuccessful attempts at different tactics (including snowballing methods and the use of "topic" tags[56]), it was decided that a keyword search in the archive using a year-based limit, followed by manual screening of the search results to include only relevant articles, would provide an adequate compromise between objective rigorousness (inclusion criteria based on a clear time boundary and the appearance of the key word, as opposed to entirely subjective evaluations of what articles might be deemed "relevant") and the necessity, nevertheless, for a subjective evaluation of the relevance of the articles in order to create a data set that would be as illuminating as possible.

Thus, in February 2013, a search was conducted in the SCMP archive for the word "Putonghua" for the time span between January 2012 and February 2013. This time span was chosen because it was decided that the data should be as current as possible, but that the time span should be long enough to allow for sufficiently many articles to be found and some general trends to be observed in the themes and discourses. This search yielded a total of 498 hits in the archive. At first, a similar search was conducted for the word "Mandarin" – 954 hits – but this search turned out a very high portion of irrelevant results, mostly relating to the hotel chain "Mandarin Oriental", and this search was at last abandoned for practical reasons. Based on the earlier observations, it was felt that articles which called the language "Mandarin" did not seem to diverge in any meaningful respect from those calling it "Putonghua", so it was decided that concentrating on "Putonghua" would suffice for the purposes of this research. Yet it must be admitted that in general, words always carry connotations, and it is perfectly possible that a closer analysis might have showed some differences deeper than mere

56 Tags which the archive variably employed in a meaningful way to group a number of articles with the same topic together, for example the topic "Mandarin Chinese" or "Chinese dialects", but which just as often seemed to be chosen randomly, as when an article dealing with Cantonese in Hong Kong was tagged under "New Zealand languages". There were several overlapping topics (e.g. "Mandarin Chinese" and "Standard Mandarin") and the number of articles under each topic ranged from only a few to a few dozens.

personal preferences of each author in which word to use. The possible difference between discourses about “Mandarin” to those about “Putonghua” might, indeed, be an interesting topic for further textual research.

The 498 search results of the keyword search for “Putonghua” were screened manually in order to determine which ones ought to be included in the data set. Almost four fifths of the articles were immediately excluded, as it was clear that Putonghua was only mentioned in an irrelevant manner. Among the entries that were excluded were articles whose mention of the keyword was limited to introducing a word in Putonghua, as in “XX, known in Putonghua as XX”, or movie reviews which mentioned Putonghua as one of the languages spoken in the movie, or the introduction of people in feature articles of the type “XX is a Putonghua-teacher” or “XX speaks fluent Putonghua”.

When the mention of Putonghua did not belong to any of the above types, instances of the appearance of the word Putonghua were searched inside each article using the crtl+F search function of the internet navigator in order to be sure to detect all mentions of the word. In evaluating whether the article should be included in the analysis, most vigorous attention was naturally paid to the immediate context of the occurrence of the word, but the wider context (including the topic of the article etc.) was not neglected either. At this stage, most types of mentions of Putonghua were generally speaking deemed to have potential to contribute to answering the research questions. This means that included in the data set were not only articles where Putonghua was the subject matter or a central focus, but also a great number of articles where it was a more or less marginal passing mention. Of course, the selection method was inevitably subjective as it was based on the author's view of what would be relevant, but in order to reduce the subjective element, as few articles as possible were excluded unless the mentions of Putonghua were clearly outside of the Hong Kong context (e.g. training of Putonghua-speaking staff in London to cater for the Chinese tourists). This stage of the data-gathering process yielded a total of 106 articles.

The 106 articles were divided into three categories according to whether Putonghua was the subject matter of the article, or whether it was one central theme e.g. in a section of an article whose subject matter was not directly related, or whether the mention of Putonghua was only a marginal one – marginal in the sense of not being central to the topic or arguments of the article. The latter ones were deemed relevant in bringing their

own dimension to the representations of Putonghua, as will be explained later – and given their large number, 71 of the total of 106 articles, one cannot but conclude that they certainly have their own role in shaping the overall representation of Putonghua in the newspaper (as in the media more largely). An example of what I call "a marginal mention" could be a case where an article reports that a thief has been caught in Hong Kong, and it is said in the article that he was a Putonghua-speaker. This, of course, would raise the question of what is the reason for mentioning the language in this context.

4.3. General remarks on the data: topics and temporal distribution

A few general remarks to introduce the data are in place before moving on to the analysis. Table 1. below presents for reference the temporal distribution of articles over the 14-month period. The left column pictures those articles where Putonghua was an important topic/theme as such, while the central column lists those where Putonghua was featured with some importance (e.g. as one subtopic treated in one paragraph) although it was not the central topic of the article. In the right column are included all those articles where mention of Putonghua was a marginal one. The decision over which category each article belongs to was not always a clear-cut one. Such cases were distributed according to the discretion of the author of the current paper. However, this issue is not of crucial concern here, as due to the partly subjective selection process of the articles to be included in the first place, the numbers given cannot claim to be of any real statistical value, but are only presented for reference.

Table 1. Temporal distribution of SCMP articles mentioning Putonghua

	Putonghua as the only or as a clearly central topic (contributing to the topic)	Putonghua featured with some importance although topic something else	Putonghua in a marginal mention (not treated in the article as such)
January 2012	1	2	4
February 2012	1	2	10
March 2012	3	1	8
April 2012	1	1	5
May 2012	4		6
June 2012	4	4	7
July 2012	1	1	4
August 2012			4
September 2012		1	6
October 2012	1		8
November 2012	1		3
December 2012			2
January 2013	3	2	4
February 2013		1	
TOTAL	**20 (18%)**	**15 (14%)**	**71 (67%)**

As can be seen from Table 1., those articles that clearly have Putonghua as their topic or a central theme only constitute 18% of the total. In addition, those where Putonghua was featured with some importance make up 15% of the total. Although there seems to be some variation in how many articles were published each month, there are no clearly meaningful peaks – the combined number of the first two types of articles per month varied from 0 to 8, with August 2012 being the only month when neither of these types of articles was published. June 2012 featured the peak total of 8 articles of the types 1 and 2.

All in all, it seems that Putonghua comes up rather regularly although it seems that it has not been a particularly "hot" topic during this period given the relatively small number of articles concentrating on it each month. This is probably due to the fact that there have not been any major news concerning the language in Hong Kong during this time period, such as educational reforms or Government policy changes, which would acutely require much coverage and draw public reactions. The most acute interest might

have stemmed from the MTR incident in January 2012, and even in this context Putonghua most often features as a side-note. This discussion is part of the wider "mainlander-mainlandisation" theme which is less acute and seems to be more of a staple of discussion topics in post-Handover Hong Kong. Another such more "acute" topic was in January 2013 the name of the new opera hall, where the suggestion including a word written in pinyin according to the Putonghua pronunciation drew negative discussion, again, linked to the theme of "mainlandisation".

Apart from such relatively rare topical news stories, many of the articles where Putonghua featured centrally or with some importance belong to the genres of general coverage of the background of some issue or argumentative writing expressing the views of the author, who can be SCMP staff writers, visiting writers,[57] or readers (in the case of opinion letters). The relatively high number of articles apart from news stories with particular timely connections to specific matters that have happened or are happening in the society is not surprising – the keen interest in language issues that appears to exist among people in Hong Kong, which was also noted in the background section and in the description of the first round of data-gathering, makes it predictable that discussion over languages is by no means limited to times of actual changes in language-related matters. Marginal mentions, for their part, appeared in all types of articles regardless of the genre. However, significantly, there is one important genre which is all but absent from the data, namely editorials. This also suggests that Putonghua has not featured during this period with any particular importance in matters requiring stance to be taken urgently, but that the discussion has rather flowed along the familiar lines. On the other hand, the more general search for articles at the beginning of the data-gathering also only yielded one single editorial[58] which talked about language issues, but this is more due to the fact that editorials were generally hard to distinguish as they were not tagged or otherwise identified as such, and is not likely to suggest that the matter has not been addressed in editorials at all.

57 Sometimes in the case of the former two it is not clear which one the writer is, although often visiting writers are introduced with a few words of their background and position.

58 Time to talk sense on the use of Cantonese (2010, July 29). *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/720813/time-talk-sense-use-cantonese This editorial (identified as such by a reference to it in another article) was published in July 2010, and it spoke for the preservation of Cantonese against Putonghua, which was seen as overshadowing native dialects in the mainland. The immediate context were the July 2010 rallies in Guangdong and Hongkong against the proposal by the CPPCC for the Guangzhou Television to increase the amount of programming in Mandarin.

Judging by the names of the authors, the greater part are Hongkongers[59], but a fair number of foreign-sounding names can be found as well, many of which seem to be from English-speaking countries, which might usually most plausibly point either to British people who have lived in Hong Kong since before the handover, or to expatriates. Mainland-sounding names (i.e. those written in pinyin according to the Putonghua pronunciation) are relatively rare, although this might not reflect the number of writers with mainland roots as many mainlanders in Hong Kong have changed the spelling of their names to resemble the Cantonese pronunciation.

Only a small part of the authors themselves, unsurprisingly, claim to have any specialisation in language matters, although the voices of people working with languages (language teachers, linguistics professors) are variably represented in some articles. This is, of course, where newspaper discussion and scholarly literature on the matter differ.

As noted, the greater part of articles that the search yielded belonged to the category of articles where Putonghua was only mentioned in passing, not extensively treated as a topic of its own. Such marginal mentions were of both positive and negative type. Often reoccurring positive mentions appeared most notably in articles presenting qualifications for different jobs, where Putonghua was often listed as either a requirement or an advantage. Negative ones, on the other hand, were most often encountered in connection with discussion of mainlanders in Hong Kong.

59 This is, admittedly, an insufficient and potentially inaccurate way of predicting who is a "Hongkonger", "mainlander", or an "expatriate/foreigner", as a Chinese-sounding name could also belong to an overseas Chinese, and it also does not give any indication of how long a "foreigner" or "mainland person" might have lived in Hong Kong. Still, it appears to be the only practical way to guess the origin of the author when not otherwise stated, which can sometimes serve as reference when considering where the views come from, as long as such guesses are treated with due caution. The prototype of a what is here called a "Hongkonger" would be a person of Chinese ethnicity who has spent their life in Hong Kong – the term does not here, as it does not elsewhere in this study, take stance in identities (Hong Kong Chinese, Hong Kong person, Chinese etc.)

5. Analysis: Representations of Putonghua in newspaper articles

Discourses are realised in a range of linguistic features, which produce different representations of the social events. These linguistic features include both semantic, vocabulary and grammatical choices within the text (Fairclough, 2003: 37). This section attempts to bring light to the research questions through taking up specific examples which contribute to forming the discourses found in the data, as well as to link the discourses with the specific Hong Kong context discussed in the previous chapters.

It is important to note that what we are looking at here is "what discourses is Putonghua *in*", rather than only discourses *about* Putonghua. This means that in some of the discourses that will be presented below, Putonghua is not the central topic, but just one element in the wider discourse, sometimes more and sometimes less central. In any case, by virtue of being mentioned, it contributes to each discourse and therefore has a role in them. The aim here is not to create a clear picture of the discourses in their entirety, examining all of their aspects, but concentrate on *how Putonghua is represented within those discourses (whose discourse, i.e. spoken in whose voices, from whose positions etc.)*. Of course, in order to understand the context, some understanding is needed of the discourses more widely.

It should be noted that even though in the last section marginal mentions were separated from others to give an idea of how much discussion there has been directly around the topic of Putonghua during the time period, when it comes to discourses, all of the mentions of Putonghua are inherently as important. The passing mentions are in fact a powerful way of passing some discourses as "truths": they are usually embedded in assumptions, as opposed to being explicitly asserted and therefore opened for discussion (see Fairclough). Of course, in the analysis, it is indicated which type the examples belong to if deemed relevant in terms of overall understanding of the context and prominence of the discourse.

Unless otherwise stated, the names of the discourses were created for this research based on the writer's understanding gathered from the background readings of earlier research on Hong Kong's linguistic situation and Hong Kong's history. The starting point was to look at the data and observe "what is there", and earlier research was then called upon to make sense of the first-hand observations. However, at some points this

approach is mixed with the opposite approach, in which the starting point is earlier research, in cases where the earlier research seemed to bring interesting insight into the matter at hand – after all, significant absences are as important as what *is* there, and in order to be able to realise what is missing one needs to know enough to look for it.

The exact numbers of the occurrences of each representation type or discourse presented in this chapter are hard to give due to the fact that they may be present in differing degrees of prominence and assertiveness and in various combinations, so that one article can contain a large number of representations and draw from various (usually mutually compatible) discourses. However, the representations presented here have been selected so as to avoid presenting such representations for which evidence was found only in one or very few articles, in order to minimise the effects of idiosyncrasies[60].

In addition to seeing the presence of several alternative discourses, another important issue is to understand the configuration of different discourses together (see Fairclough, 1995: 98). Therefore, after identifying the different representations and describing them largely in isolation, i.e. how Putonghua is represented within individual discourses, three articles will be taken up to illustrate some examples of how these discourses have been combined and articulated together in texts in which Putonghua is a central topic.

It should be noted that *all emphases in the citations from the data are added by the current author unless otherwise stated*. This is to save space and simplify the look of the page as it allows the avoidance of loading each individual citation with the same disclaimer.

5.1. Putonghua and the advantage to the individual

As noted in section 2.1.4., secondary students in the 1980s had mainly instrumental motives for learning Putonghua (Humprey & Stratt, 2008: 316). Lai's (2012: 105) recent study of secondary school students' language attitudes similarly points to an increase in the vitality of Putonghua in Hong Kong particularly in the instrumental domain, even though attitudes on the *integrative* domain remained more sceptical (as also illustrated

60 Unless such discourses seemed particularly interesting or valuable in terms of their explanation power; in such cases it is pointed out that they were rare.

in Sullivan's (2012) study). Lai remarks how, after the economic downturn, Hong Kong businessmen turned to the mainland and Hong Kong was opened up more for mainland investment, visitors and students in order to boost the economy.

The instrumental aspect, linked to economic advantage, features prominently in representations of Putonghua gathered from SCMP over the 14-month period in 2012-13. The most prominent positive context in which Putonghua appeared in the data set (in terms of the number of instances where it surfaced) – and indeed one of the strongest discourses among all – was the *advantage that knowing the language can bring to the individual* in their future prospects, e.g. on the job market. Lai (2012: 107) mentions that promotion of Putonghua as a language for better business and job opportunities has recently started in TV advertisements in the similar vein as has been the case for English for longer. While the current data did not include advertisements, this job opportunities aspect was featured in a large number of cases where Putonghua was mentioned in the data. Most straightforwardly this was the case in articles which listed it as a **job qualification requirement**. This first analysis section below, which looks at this particular representation, will be slightly longer than others as it also explains the operationalised use of some of the core analytical concepts of textual analysis presented in a more general fashion in section 4.1. Later on, to save space, only the most relevant features are pointed out in each individual case.

5.1.1. Putonghua as a qualification requirement for jobs

With a total of 24 occurrences in the data set, the single most often reoccurring immediate context for the word "Putonghua" in the data set was its mention as a job qualification requirement, which often appeared in a specific type of article published in the Business section and written with the purpose of introducing to the readers different jobs, their characteristics, and their qualification requirements. The jobs treated in these articles ranged from hotel staff and entry-level customer service jobs at Disneyland Hong Kong to sales personnel, accountants, architects, engineers and law firms. In each case, knowledge of Putonghua was listed either as a "requirement" or as an "advantage" (alongside with knowledge of Cantonese and English).

A valuation job includes on-site data collection, management interviews, financial modelling

> and report writing. Applicants must be fluent in English, Cantonese and Putonghua.[61]

Some of the companies explained the need for Putonghua with their particular business connections with the mainland, while others referred to the growing importance of the mainland in general:

> Fluency in Putonghua is generally expected, according to Wan. Putonghua is the native language of domestic private firms' founders. They are open to talented people from any background but prefer those who are able to speak Putonghua and can understand Chinese culture, she said.[62]

Or simply:

> 'For new hires, we prefer applicants with a good knowledge of [Putonghua], as we also have a reasonable amount of mainland business,' Halliday adds.[63]

In the absence of comparison data showing how many articles of this type were published during the 14-month period which did *not* mention Putonghua, it is impossible to draw any far-reaching conclusions over whether or not Putonghua is a very pervasive feature in these articles more generally. In any case, some of the articles highlight the importance of Putonghua rather forcefully:

> 'One of the most important things for an architect in Hong Kong now is language - even locals need to learn Putonghua,' [he] says. 'One must also be willing to travel and to work on the mainland.'[64]

Analysis of texts is concerned both with their meanings and with their forms – these two are in reality difficult to separate, as meanings are realised in forms, so that differences in form mean there must be some difference in meaning (Fairclough, 1995: 57). Discourses are concretely realised on the level of language in the semantic, vocabulary and grammatical choices and relations within the text (Fairclough, 2003: 37). Such relations include: semantic relations (between words and longer expressions, between

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61 Zavadszky, A. (2012, March 16). American Appraisal values each staff. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/995552/american-appraisal-values-each-staff

62 Yu, S. (2012, August 1). Headhunters drafted into top-tier mainland searches. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1008244/headhunters-drafted-top-tier-mainland-searches

63 Zavadszky, A. (2012, April 13). Bigger, higher Standard Life. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/998071/bigger-higher-standard-life

64 Clarke, B. (2012, March 17). Building blocks of the future. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/995666/building-blocks-future

elements of clauses, between clauses and sentences, and over larger stretches); grammatical relations (tense, mood); and vocabulary/lexical relations (relations of collocation i.e. patterns of co-occurrence between items of vocabulary). In internal relations there are both *syntagmatic* and *paradigmatic* relations: relations between what *is* in the text, and between what is and what is not but *could have been* (significant absences) (2003: 37). For example, many of the mentions of Putonghua in job requirements show a clear future orientation, or a change that is taking place in the importance of Putonghua. This particular characteristic can be observed in grammar in the use of the present progressive as the tense of the clauses concerning Putonghua: ("increasing mainland work *is putting pressure* on local and international architects to learn Putonghua"[65]) or lexical choices which point at the future, sometimes combined with the use of the future tense ("'For *new hires*, we prefer applicants with a good knowledge of [Putonghua]"[66] or "proficiency in Putonghua *will be a must in future*"[67]) or reference to a change in the near past "[the company] *has also made* significant additions to its Putonghua-speaking team"[68].

It is also important to look at where these discourses come from – who is the one speaking, and who is the one presenting them. Strikingly many of the job requirement articles are written by the same author, Andreas Zavadszky, clearly a non-Chinese person. When referring to the "author" of the text, I follow Fairclough's (2003: 12) example in that I do not problematise the author's role in the text production, even though in practice it could be that in addition to the person who puts the words together, whom we call the author, there might be other roles in the text production occupied by other people (the "principal", whose position is put in the text, or the "animator" who actually uttered the words), or the authorship of e.g. a news report might be collective without that being made obvious.

Of course, self-censorship, as was discussed in section 3.2.2., is one more factor affecting the relationship between the words and the real intentions. More specifically, the question of self-censorship is relevant for predicting differences between the *reality*

65 *Ibid.*

66 Zavadszky, A. (2012, April 13). Bigger, higher Standard Life. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/998071/bigger-higher-standard-life

67 Wong, Y.H. (2012, May 11). Uncorking a vintage career in selling fine wines. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1000626/uncorking-vintage-career-selling-fine-wines

68 Clarke, B. (2012, March 3). A matter of trust at Withers. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/994268/matter-trust-withers

of how Putonghua is perceived in Hong Kong (by those who discuss it in the media) and its *representations* found in the media. As for the analysis of media representations themselves, which are the focus of this study, since the researcher cannot know what people really think, but is limited to studying the public representations of it (Brown, 2004, as cited in Lee, 2012: 5), we must rely on written or otherwise uttered representations, and therefore Fairclough's approach is in this case the only one that can be applied with any consistency. The author's commitments to the truth value, obligations, etc. shall therefore be taken by virtue of choices in wording,

The above applies to cases where the other possible actors behind the text are invisible, but the case is of course different when the text opens up difference and promotes dialogicality by bringing other voices into a text and explicitly attributing them to others. This is a feature of the *intertextual* relations of the text. Whereas grammatical and semantic relations, which we have looked at so far, belong to *internal relations* of texts, intertextual relations are external relations of the text, i.e. relations between a text and other texts, and show how other texts and other voices are intertextually incorporated – how they are alluded to, assumed, dialogued with etc. (Fairclough, 2003: 36). Fairclough (2003: 61) notes that while analysis of textual elements is more descriptive, analysis of intertextual relations relies more on cultural understanding and is interpretative. The direct quotation seen in the second example above, coupled with the attribution of the words to the respective interviewees (who in each of these cases, as in all of the 24 articles belonging to this category, is a representative of the company being presented), as well as the indirect reporting in the first example, are both examples of intertextuality in that elements of another text (something written or said elsewhere) are presented and attributed to someone. Intertextuality in principle opens up difference and contributes to the dialogicality of a text (Fairclough, 2003: 41). A contrasting tactic, which reduces dialogicality, is presenting other texts as *assumptions*.

What is “said” in a text is always said against the background of what is unsaid – in other words, what is explicit is grounded in what is left implicit. Making assumptions can also be seen as a form of intertextuality, linking the text to the web of what has been said or thought elsewhere, but the difference is that assumptions are not attributed or attributable to specific texts (Fairclough, 2003: pp. 17, 40), and unlike attributed views, they do not open up difference but assume common ground. They are also features of

the external relations of texts. Both intertextuality and assumption can be seen as claims on the part of the author that what is reported was actually said, or that what is assumed has been said or written elsewhere. Of course, people may make unsubstantiated implicit claims either mistakenly or manipulatively (e.g. passing assertions as assumptions) (Fairclough, 2003: 40).

Furthermore, in between attributed voices and assumptions, which are at the opposite ends of dialogicality, there are other options: views presented in the article may also be *categorical* or *modalised assertions*. The former are declarative non-modalised sentences (of the type "applicants must be fluent in English, Cantonese and Putonghua") while the latter lessen the author's commitment to the truth value of the sentence through modal verbs ("speaking Putonghua *may* well be as important as speaking English").

On the other hand, despite the clear attribution of words to the company representatives in the first two examples, we cannot speak of true dialogicality (explicit presenting of different views) within the text, as the structure of the text is such that it brackets difference by hiding the views of the author – the discourse remains constant throughout, consistent with the words of the representatives of the company quoted. It is often the case in articles that some matters are dialogised, while others are not (Fairclough, 2003: 41), and in this case we can say that the role of Putonghua in the companies in articles of this type typically is not.

In the examples above, the clear indicators of the timeliness of rise of the importance of Putonghua are presented in the influential voices of the representatives or spokesmen of companies which presumably interest current or future job seekers in Hong Kong, which are undoubtedly an important addition to the representations of Putonghua in the newspaper, despite their marginal role which would exclude them if we were to limit ourselves to only looking at discussion *focusing* on Putonghua.

Apart from these reoccurring passing mentions in the job context, where the only important voices are those of the company representatives (although they, too, are only the *animators* voicing the position of the companies, the real *principals* behind the words), the view according to which Putonghua is an important language on the job

market and/or future of the individual came up as a more central theme in at least 8 articles, out of which one addressed this topic exclusively. Lulu Chen's article "Putonghua rises in jobs importance" is centred around explaining the trends in the financial service job market (which is a major employer in Hong Kong) affecting in which jobs the importance of knowing Putonghua is rising most rapidly and where knowledge of Putonghua is (as of yet) not necessary. As the title suggests, the article asserts that Putonghua is increasingly important in most positions, but there are some exception :

> In general, senior-level appointees were not yet expected to speak Putonghua, as candidates at vice-president and director levels were seen as adding value through other skills and experience.[69]

The message of the article, in which the attributed voices are, again, exclusively those of recruitment companies' managing directors, is clear: the importance of Putonghua is rising in almost all job openings within the industry, and although there are jobs where it is not a must, the use of adverbs such as "yet" and "still" strongly point to the change that is about to take place.

In addition to the "top-down" voices seen so far, i.e. voices of institutions and businesses involved in the setting of the agenda, voices of individual job seekers and others hoping to benefit from their knowledge of Putonghua (which we could call **bottom-up voices**) reverberate the same theme of advantage in the job market/economy in many articles, especially wherever reasons for individual educational choices are discussed. In one article, for example, a Hong Kong business student describes his summer internship in the mainland in very positive terms, mirroring the voices of the company representatives in saying that experience from the mainland is important in the job market, and adding that it was also "a perfect chance for him to brush up his Putonghua", and that now he would have no worries if the job interview was conducted in Putonghua[70].

Hongkonger Felix Wu writes in his opinion letter:

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69 Chen, L. (2012, October 29). Putonghua rises in jobs importance. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/business/banking-finance/article/1071957/putonghua-rises-jobs-importance

70 Wong, Y.H. (2012, May 4). Internships unlock China's great wall. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/999974/internships-unlock-chinas-great-wall

> Speaking [Putonghua] can also *boost our job prospects*. The *mainland's economy is booming* and is one of the strongest in the world. Considering China's international standing, speaking Putonghua may well be as important as speaking English.[71]

In another article, managing director at the Hong Kong Language Learning Centre talks about the reasons for students' learning Putonghua:

> Many students, she notes, want to develop their Putonghua skills *to improve their employment options*, while others are *encouraged by their companies* or by a desire to build up their existing Putonghua capabilities.[72]

One can note here the overwhelmingly positive stance towards the Putonghua-friendly attitudes of students, realised in expressions showing assumed evaluation: words such as *robust*, *helped*, *wealth of*, and *opportunities* are inherently positive. Yet the indirect reporting hides whether these words actually belong to the discourse of the students, or whether they are the exact words of the interviewed director, or whether they have been transformed into the discourse of the author.

In another article which talks about a video meant for teaching children Putonghua, the author describes the motivation of the makers:

> *Recognising the importance of Putonghua in a world where China is set to be the leading economy*, the pair decided to draw children's interest by combining elements they can relate to, such as hip hop, hating vegetables and watching YouTube.[73]

This is a good example of what Fairclough calls a a *factual assumption*: an assumption of "what is or can be or will be the case", which is triggered in sentences by the use of certain 'factive' verbs such as 'realise', or, as in here, 'recognise'. Other types of assumptions beside factual assumptions are *existential assumptions* (assumptions about what exists, triggered by markers of definite reference such as definitive articles and demonstratives, e.g. "*the* importance of Putonghua", which is almost omnipresent in this discourse) and *value assumptions* (assumptions about what is good or desirable, triggered by certain verbs such as 'help') (Fairclough, 2003: 55).

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71 Wu, F. (2012, July 26). Letters: Putonghua is a vital language for us. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007780/letters

72 Davis, C. (2012, March 3). Big demand for Putonghua tutors. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/994271/big-demand-putonghua-tutors

73 Yung, V. (2012, March 25). A pair of characters. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996504/pair-characters

In fact, references to the growing economic/business-related importance of China and its effect on the importance of learning Putonghua are mentioned as further evidence of the need to increase the presence of Putonghua in virtually all articles whose argumentation includes the claim that the presence of Putonghua ought to be increased[74]. This omnipresence is combined with the relative rareness of the oppositional discourse in the instrumental domain (i.e. views contesting the instrumental importance of Putonghua). This must be due to the fact that the rise of China's economic importance – to which these representations invariably link – is in itself a relatively uncontested discourse, which is safe to take up as a further backing for the importance of Putonghua even if the main premises for the argument of the text are based on something else (see page 70 for some more detailed breakdown of the generic structure of an argument). See, for example, the following passage, which simultaneously draws upon the discourses of "belonging to China" (discussed later) and the economic importance as the reasoning for the importance of Putonghua:

> Given the fact that Hong Kong is an integral part of China, with Putonghua being the national lingua franca, *not to mention the ever-growing business with the mainland* and its visitors continuing to flood the city with their oversized suitcases, the language could not be any more important in today's Hong Kong.[75]

While some of the detailed linguistic observations presented above might not seem to reveal any particularly important points about these specific cases, detailed analysis is valuable, as only through that can one access the "hidden meanings" that van Dijk sees as central in the meaning construction. They may shape the audience's views inadvertently exactly because they are not as easily as assertions recognised as views coming from a certain points of view (see section 3.1.).

To sum up, a defining feature of the discourse looked at here is that Putonghua is seen in clearly *instrumental* terms – i.e. it is valued because it can bring (economic) advantage to the person knowing it (cf. symbolic capital). The emphasis on the individual (job opportunities are the concern of the individual) makes it that this could be labelled the *individual instrumental* discourse.

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74 I use this vague expression "increasing/decreasing the presence of Putonghua" to include the different claims that are made about any domains of the society; e.g. the teaching of Putonghua in schools, or its official use or use in other public domains in the society, or claims of the type "people ought to speak it more/see it as more important" etc.

75 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong-kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

5.1.2. Expatriates, language-learning and Putonghua

As an English-language newspaper, SCMP features relatively many articles from writers with non-Chinese sounding names, and a fair number of articles feature some voices of expatriates. Around 6 out of the total of 36 articles which featured Putonghua with some level of importance were written with a clear expatriate focus, which is percentage-wise a big amount of representation in the paper compared with the actual number of expatriates in Hong Kong. Since the articles found in the data whose topics deal with expatriates and their relation to Putonghua have some tendencies in common, notably a strong tendency towards an instrumental focus on language, some common features of such articles will be grouped together here.

The instrumental discourse features prominently wherever Putonghua is mentioned in connection with expatriates' language learning. The following example, a response of an expatriate family to an SCMP Debate[76] concerning the education system in Hong Kong, is one of the clearest ones:

> We also believe that a possible way forward is to switch the medium of instruction of schools to Putonghua [from Cantonese]. Then it would be more reasonable for us to send our children to public schools, since *that language is the future*.[77]

While the instrumentality present in this statement is also found in most other expatriate statements on languages, this one is atypical in how strongly it contrasts Cantonese and Putonghua. In many other cases such strong evaluative statements are avoided even if a preference for Putonghua can be detected in the "hidden meanings", as in an example where an expatriate talking about their child's language learning in Hong Kong only speaks of Putonghua and how hard it is to make the child learn it, while making no single mention of Cantonese in the text. In fact, one expatriate mother made the following rather curious comment in her article:

> As a family that call Hong Kong home and with no plans to leave, we believe it is essential

76 A form of article appearing regularly in SCMP which includes a short introduction to a current topic, followed by usually three questions related to the topic. Then a number of respondents, usually six, from different areas of life, some of whom may be decision-makers or other public figures, and some of whom are just laymen, in turn respond to each of these questions at some length.

77 "SCMP Debate". (2012, April 2). *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/997215/scmp-debate

> that our children speak the language of our neighbours to the north.[78]

This, of course, begs the question why she is not concerned with whether her child can speak the language of her next-door neighbours inside Hong Kong – even though, in fact, the same mother has just described her choice of having her child learn Putonghua as a way to learn about the "local culture". Thus the asserted aim is not only instrumental but rather more integrative, but what is left unsaid is as important as what is asserted: the exclusion of any mentions of Cantonese excludes it from consideration, and the reader is left wondering whether or not this is because Cantonese is not regarded as important instrumentally, as was more explicitly the case in the previous example. The leaving outside of Cantonese is repeated in other articles dealing with expatriates' language learning. Yeung, for example, in an article titled "Early steps to fluency"[79] mainly concentrates on the practical challenges of language learning when none of the parents is a Putonghua-speaker.

On the other hand, some articles opt to only speak of "Chinese" and thereby avoid making any distinction. It thus leaves open the question whether the expatriates in question also hold Cantonese in value. The following passages, both from the same article, are examples of such (perhaps intentionally) unclear references to "Chinese" in the Hong Kong context:

> As Hong Kong parents scramble for places in international schools, some non-Chinese families are enrolling their children in the local system where Cantonese - and increasingly Putonghua - is the medium of instruction. Some parents are keen to take advantage of the heavily subsidised education system; others want their children to have a good grasp of Chinese and become well versed with the culture. They employ different strategies to help their children learn the language and adjust to school life of a different sort.[80]

> Web designer and comedian Vivek Mahbubani, whose stand-up routine provokes as much laughter in Cantonese as it does in English, recommends that youngsters from non-Chinese families attend schools with the same level of Chinese learning as anyone else if they see their future in Asia"[81]

In the first passage, the utterance is presented in the writer's own voice. Judging by the name (Nora Tong), the writer seems to be a Hongkonger. In the second passage, on the

78 Tomasis, R. (2012, May 20). Tongues of potential. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1001452/tongues-potential
79 Yeung, L. (2012, June 25). Early steps to fluency. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1004884/early-steps-fluency
80 Tong, N. (2012, June 24). Gift of tongues. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1004819/gift-tongues
81 *Ibid.*

contrary, the words are attributed to Vivek Mahbubani, yet they are not direct quotations but are written in indirect speech. This is a classic example of a case where it is not possible to determine whether the use of the word “Chinese” was Mahbubani's original wording or whether the contents of what he said were transformed into the writer's own discourse.

All in all, however, whose words are used in these particular examples is not of crucial concern here. What is more important to notice is the tendency towards presenting the “Chinese” learning of expatriates in an unproblematic light: save for the one comment by an expatriate family quoted above, where Putonghua is clearly placed ahead of Cantonese in importance, there are no cases in the data set where the Chinese learning of expatriates would be linked with the preferences concerning Cantonese or Putonghua, even though it is clear that in practice everyone needs to make the choice of which form(s) of Chinese they or their children are to learn. Yet this does not suggest that expatriates are completely outside of the discussion over the preferences over Cantonese and Mandarin in other ways, at least when it comes to foreign-sounding names of the writers of several articles dealing with the matter (as shall be seen in the course of the analysis).

As some of the examples may already have hinted at, although it has not been mentioned in the analysis yet, the instrumental discourse of future advantage is in some expatriates' cases supplemented (or even shadowed) by another discourse, which we could call the “communicative value discourse”. The difference is that instead of a focus on the future (economic) value of the language for the individual, the communicative value discourse adds the softer value of mutual cultural understanding, or more simply the practical ability to communicate in daily life and through that being able to relate to the daily life of others. The use of affective vocabulary such as “speak[ing] the language of our *neighbours* to the north”[82] can be seen to belong to this discourse – even if in this case the strikingly obvious omission of Cantonese from the text calls to question the real motives behind the statement. One interesting case where learning Cantonese or Putonghua is seen less in instrumental terms and more clearly in terms of communicative value is an interview of the Austrian Andreas Laimbock, in which he recalls that during his exchange in Hong Kong he wished to learn either Cantonese or

82 Tomasis, R. (2012, May 20). Tongues of potential. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1001452/tongues-potential

Putonghua but was not offered the possibility, and was unsatisfied with that due to the reason that

> [b]ecause I didn't speak the language, I felt hidden from a world I couldn't explore, one which my classmates would not bring me to, because even though they spoke English, they did not want to speak it after class.

However, the communicative value discourse is not only limited to the voices of expatriates, as will be seen in the next section.

5.1.3. Communicative value

The "communicative value" discourse differs in some respects when the assumed parties of the communication are Hongkongers more generally and Putonghua-speakers in the mainland and elsewhere.

> More than a billion people speak the language, mostly on the mainland and in Taiwan as well. That means knowing Putonghua can help you to communicate with many people.[83]

The following example borders on the "communicative value" and "economic value" discourses:

> Businessman Peter Ho, whose two children attend international schools in Hong Kong, has been looking for options to improve their proficiency in Putonghua. 'Everyone speaks English in the playgrounds of their schools. I try to speak to my children in my mother tongue, but they won't respond. I want them to be able to read and write Chinese. *If you can do that, you can deal with 1.3 billion people*.'[84]

Although the communicative value is here seen to be an advantage to the individual, which is why it is included in this section of the analysis, this line of thought is more often found in connection with societal-level discourse which treats Putonghua as a way of understanding the mainland and reducing the juxtaposition of Hong Kong and the mainland, which I have called the "reconciliation" discourse (section 5.3.4).

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83 Wu, F. (2012, July 26). Letters: Putonghua is a vital language for us. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007780/letters

84 Yeung, L. (2012, January 15). Schools that blend the rules. *SCMP.* Retrieved from www.scmp.com/article/990207/schools-blend-rules

5.1.4. Comparison with English: positive vs. negative

There is another curious detail that came up in a fair number of articles in connection with the instrumental discourse: namely, when evaluating or describing the level of importance of Putonghua, English is often taken up as a point of comparison. The factual assumption behind sentences of the type "Considering China's international standing, speaking Putonghua may well be as important as speaking English"[85] is that English is incontestably an important language, against which it makes sense to measure the potential importance of Putonghua. Such comparisons may or may not be favourable for Putonghua. In the following passage, the interviewees are representatives of two international schools in Hong Kong:

> 'In Hong Kong, *everyone thinks English is an international, important language*. *It will continue to be, but I can see a rise in parents seeing the importance of Chinese*. The majority of the parents who come to our school say they see how important it is for their children to get bilingual skills to be competitive,' Chan says."The demand for *bilingual education* from our perspective is growing rapidly. Many of the families seeking to enrol their children at our school have already come to the conclusion that their children will need more than one language in their adult working life to be successful. Increasingly, they are also concluding that *Putonghua and English are the two languages their children will need professionally in this region*,' Pritchard says.[86]

The first interviewee brings an element of dialogicality to the claim about English by attributing it to "everybody" and toning down affirmativeness with the verb "think" instead of e.g. "know", which would show a clear factual assumption. On the other hand, the factual assumption is present in the next sentence, which states that it will "continue" to be – the only logical interpretation is that it is important at the moment. He then goes on to compare Chinese with English, with a favourable outcome. The second interviewee, likewise, attributes the view comparing the two languages to "many families". In general, this passage is a good example of how English is typically represented in discourses where Putonghua appears. Lai's (2012: 104) claim that "English is indispensable for Hong Kong, at least psychologically, if not practically" seems to be true.

In the following writing by Andrew Nunn, English and Putonghua are again put side by

85 Wu, F. (2012, July 26). Letters: Putonghua is a vital language for us. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007780/letters

86 Yeung, L. (2012, January 15). Schools that blend the rules. *SCMP.* Retrieved from www.scmp.com/article/990207/schools-blend-rules

side, but here the symmetrical importance is implied, with no assertions:

> The government should try to promote a more positive image that embraces Putonghua and English in order to give locals more incentive to learn these languages, as well as to find more good-quality Putonghua and English teachers. The overall problem with language skills in Hong Kong applies to English, Putonghua and Cantonese, as these are the main spoken languages in the city.[87]

So far the examples that have been discussed have featured exclusively positive attitudes towards Putonghua. However, as has been noted already, this is only one side of the matter. The first examples of the other side of the coin are those seemingly similar to the ones just discussed, i.e. where the importance of Putonghua is measured against that of English, but here the outcome that the writer sees is different: Putonghua is put side to side with English in order to argue that it is *not* as important. Andrew Au's letter provides an example of such conclusion:

> Since the handover, English has become less important. However, many Hongkongers have not embraced Putonghua instead, and they prefer to stick to Cantonese. […] I think the emphasis should not be on Putonghua, but on the development of English-language skills from kindergarten. […] I would like to see English always being used at tertiary level and extended to secondary schools. It is much more important than Putonghua.[88]

The argumentation is rather uneven, in that it is at first difficult to tell whether the writer is in favour of Putonghua (the use of the positive expression "*embraced* Putonghua", contrasted with a negative one about Cantonese ("*stick to* Cantonese") creates an image of a praise of Putonghua. Yet this is in the end refuted, as the importance of English overrides that of Putonghua, although no arguments are provided why this is the case.

Here, the essential thing to note is that the two are no longer seen as two languages which can *both* be taken as goals contributing to the common goal to making the citizens of Hong Kong multilingual and competitive on the job market, but on the contrary, the two are implicitly constructed as *mutually exclusive alternatives* on the instrumental arena of language learning. In other words, to trace the generic structure of the argument according to Fairclough (2003: 81), the *claim* that emphasis ought to be shifted from Putonghua to English (asserted) is based on the *grounds* (premises) that it is more important (asserted, although it is not asserted *why* this is the case). The

87 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong-kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

88 Au, A. (2013, January 3). Letters to the Editor: Putonghua has limited appeal in Hong Kong. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1118585/letters-editor-january-3-2013

warrants for this claim (what justifies the inference from the grounds to the claim) is that Putonghua has contributed to the decline in attitudes towards English-learning. *Backing* (support for the warrants) is that Putonghua and English are alternatives (not asserted, assumption). This kind of "alternatives" assumption will be seen as an important premise in the argumentation in some of the societal level discourses. In fact, this letter is what sparked the response by Andrew Nunn quoted above, where the two languages were returned to being equally important, and even more importantly, not mutually exclusive alternatives. As a sidenote, these two texts were also one of the rare cases where one article specifically claimed to be a response to another specific article.

On the ground of mutual exclusiveness, the increase of Putonghua is accused in some articles to be a reason for the falling English standards:

> Chiu said some Hongkongers might have shifted their focus from learning English to Putonghua, causing their drop in rank.[89]

Such direct accusations are not many in the data, but it is curious how a few articles take up the latest Census figures from 2011, which for the first time showed that Putonghua has surpassed English as the "second most widely spoken language"[90] in Hong Kong with 48% compared with 46% – for example, the inclusion of this information in an article talking about English, directly after a paragraph describing the falling standards of English, creates a text the coherence of which has to be drawn from a notion that the increased proficiencies in Putonghua are somehow relevant information when looking at the decreased proficiencies in English.

To summarise some important points from the section 5.1., what we have seen is that in the instrumental domain, Putonghua is seen in a very positive light. We have noted the presence of two different presumptions (again, van Dijk's "hidden meanings") concerning the language situation in Hong Kong, which produce different claims (asserted or assumed) as to what is or should be the role of Putonghua: whether Putonghua is seen as an *addition* to the languages of Hong Kong or as an *alternative,*

89 Lee, A. (2012, October 26). HK drops in global survey of English proficiency. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1069774/hk-drops-global-survey-english-proficiency

90 Chong, D. (2012, March 17). English tests for trainee teachers. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/995725/english-tests-trainee-teachers

potentially excluding the continued use of the others. Most of instrumental discourse in favour of Putonghua is based on the first assumption (evident in e.g. the usual lists in job requirements which mention all three languages). Later on it will be seen that the differences in these underlying presumptions are one factor behind the opposing views found in the societal-level Putonghua vs. Cantonese debate as well, even though the asserted claims and warrants are different from those used in the English vs. Putonghua discourse[91].

5.2. Putonghua and mainlanders in Hong Kong – marker of difference

An individual visitor scheme was launched between Hong Kong and the mainland a decade ago which allows mainlanders to apply for multiple entry permits to Hong Kong. The effects of this scheme are now being felt as increasing numbers of mainlanders cross the border for different reasons, and these effects are a topic of continuing discussion. On the one hand, the scheme has been important in boosting Hong Kong's economy after the blow delivered by the SARS epidemic of 2003[92]. On the other, the increasing number of mainlanders coming to Hong Kong both as tourists and with other agendas has sparked negative discourses, which routinely point to the limited space and resources in Hong Kong being used up by these mainlanders.

Lai (2012: 105) makes somewhat contradictory comments about how the influx of mainlanders has affected attitudes towards Putonghua in Hong Kong. While his findings concerning perceptions of the instrumental value of Putonghua appeared clear and relatively uncontested, what he says about perceptions of integrative values is less so. He writes: “In the integrative domain, the huge demographic power of the mainland group has also brought Hong Kong people into closer contact with Putonghua speakers

91 Yet after all that has been said about articles where Putonghua is discussed in connection with English, a disclaimer should be made about the discussion about English lest the reader is led to the impression that discussion about English is confined to these instances. In reality, the number of articles where such comparisons are made between the two languages is still small compared with the number of articles where English is discussed with no reference to Putonghua – which, according to casual observations made in the first round of data-gathering, seems to still constitute a much bigger number than the number of articles where Putonghua is discussed.

92 Chuen, L.P. (2013, February 27). Hong Kong could learn to be more gracious towards mainland visitors. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1159234/hong-kong-could-learn-be-more-gracious-towards-mainland;

Lo, B.C. (2013, March 16). Dealing with tourist influx requires joined-up thinking. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1191647/dealing-tourist-influx-requires-joined-thinking

and thus *fostered a more accommodating attitude* among them toward the language and its people." (emphasis mine). On the other hand, at another point in the same article he makes the following statement:

> Common people use `mainlandization' as a general term to refer to any practices or social phenomena (from neutral to negative) which resemble those on the mainland.
> It is this wave of mainlandization tha*t helps Putonghua to land softly in Hong Kong*, yet it is also the resistance to mainlandization that *undermines the positive attitude* toward the language. (Lai, 2012) (emphases mine)

As will be seen, there is indeed another discourse in which Putonghua features often, which appears in this "mainlanders in Hong Kong" context and generally depicts Putonghua as a *marker of difference between Hongkongers and mainlander*s. As it was noted in section 2.2.4., many studies have noted for over a decade that Hong Kong people differentiate themselves from the Mainland Chinese through their language choices (Chen, 2012: 4; Bolton, 2000). In the data set, this context was similar to the job requirements context in that it appeared more often in cases where Putonghua is a seemingly marginal mention instead of being a central part of argumentation. This makes it that much is seen in assumptions, and the representation of Putonghua is simplistic. Despite Lai's contradictory evaluations of the effects of mainland influence on Hong Kong, the newspaper discourses are relatively consistent in tending towards negative representations of Putonghua when the context is that of "mainlandisation".

The following passages provide some examples of implied links between Putonghua and the different manifestations of influx of mainlanders in Hong Kong, even though the logic for this link is not explained:

> With the ongoing cross-border feud, whether it involves parallel traders, migrants, tourists or business people, tensions between locals and mainlanders have reached boiling point, and this may have hindered the popularity of Putonghua in Hong Kong.[93]

In January 2013, speculation concerning the English name of a newly-built opera house sparked debate as the name was rumoured to include the pinyin rendition of the Putonghua word 'xiqu', meaning 'opera'. In a news story concerning the debate, Vivienne Chow establishes the context in the following way:

> The debate comes amid a rising anti-mainland sentiment that has been fuelled most recently

93 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong-kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

> by parallel traders from the mainland buying up infant milk powder in Hong Kong.[94]

Note that she begins her explanation, meant to provide information on the context in which the debate takes place, by introducing the anti-mainland sentiment. In order to make sense of the explanation, a valid connection needs to be established in the reader's mind between anti-mainland sentiment and the use of Putonghua. Another good example of the tedious link between the unwanted "mainland invasion" and Putonghua is the following quote from Alex Lo's article:

> The thundering herd from the mainland has sparked much sound and fury. Hongkongers have gone to great lengths to express their displeasure at the mainland invasion. Yet, strangely, everyone here seems to acquiesce on the need to learn Putonghua.[95]

This formulation begs the question what exactly is supposed to be the connection between the displeasure due to mainlanders coming to Hong Kong and Hongkongers' willingness to learn Putonghua. Although the truth value of the proposition "everyone seems to acquiesce on the need to learn Putonghua" itself is contentious, what is more interesting here is the relationship between the two sentences. The conjunction "yet" establishes a link between these two. In order to make a coherent interpretation of what is being said, one must assume that there is a link between "mainland invasion" and "people's feeling of a need to learn Putonghua", which Lo assumes in a normal case would produce the opposite outcome, i.e. people's refraining from learning Putonghua. This is a good example of the "hidden assumptions" present in texts that Critical Discourse Analysis aims to reveal in a text: hidden assumptions are harder to contest, as they are not explicitly asserted and may therefore not be recognised by the reader to be presentations of the matter from a certain perspective.

Similar assumed, not asserted, links can be found in a myriad of articles where Putonghua is mentioned in passing – in contexts where one is unlikely to stop to think about the matter any further while reading the article, as the mention of Putonghua is usually not central to the topic of the article. Whether it was written there deliberately to

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94 Chow, V. (2013, January 31).West Kowloon arts hub has 'open mind' on Xiqu Centre name. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1139603/west-kowloon-arts-hub-has-open-mind-xiqu-centre-name

95 Lo, A. (2012, February 27). A culture shrivels without its own tongue. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993807/culture-shrivels-without-its-own-tongue

point at certain connections or interpretations, or just casually mentioned with no clear intention, we cannot know (as this would require analysis of the production process of the article and access to the writer(s) and editor(s) themselves), but once the text is written as it is, the motives of the writer become irrelevant, as the effect to the readers is still the same. When this type of seemingly innocent mentions are repeated again and again in different articles, it has the potential to shape the reader's perceptions subconsciously. Of course, determining to which extent this is the case would require us to extend our analysis to the consumption of texts, or reception analysis (Fairclough, 1995: 50), but this is outside the scope of this paper.

5.2.1. Putonghua as an illustration of the increased presence of mainlanders in Hong Kong

The most often occurring context is within a form of "the great (increasing) number of mainlanders in Hong Kong is a problem" discourse, where the writer describes their hearing Putonghua in various situations in Hong Kong as a *concrete illustration of the extent of the problem*. A few examples of this suffice to illustrate this context, similar instances of which were found in a total of 13 articles.

> The office was overcrowded and loud with everyone fretting in animated Putonghua and trying to talk over everyone else.[96]

> At Fung Kai Kindergarten yesterday, hundreds of parents, many speaking Putonghua, formed a queue that stretched across the road outside. […] The pressure on northern kindergartens is expected to grow as more children born in Hong Kong to mainland parents reach school age.[97]

The first example is from an article talking about "mainland mothers" and the second from an article talking about how children born to mainland parents in Hong Kong are taking school places from Hong Kong children – both of which have recently been topics of heated discussion.

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96 Hart, K. (2012, February 27). Are specialists fanning flames of controversy over mainland mothers? *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993801/are-specialists-fanning-flames-controversy-over-mainland-mothers

97 Chong, D. (2012, October 10). Thousands apply for schools as mainland kids born in Hong Kong return. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1057224/thousands-apply-kindergartens-mainland-kids-born-hong-kong-return

It is noteworthy that in the instances above, the context where Putonghua was heard is a clearly negative one even though Putonghua is not directly pointed as the cause (indicated by words such as *overcrowded*, *fretting*, *pressure*). Some writers are more direct with the link between Putonghua and negative values:

> Sometimes when I visit I can barely recognise [Hong Kong]. It is full of *rude people speaking Putonghua*.[98]

Here a "Putonghua-speaker" becomes analogous to a "rude person". The same representation of Putonghua as a negative distinguishing feature is also found in an article which in fact speaks *against* the discrimination of mainlanders in Hong Kong – here the representation is formulated as an imitation of the voice of the "general thought", although it is unattributed and left for the reader to recognise, which further shows the pervasiveness of this form of thinking. The writer also neatly sums up the "wrongdoings" of the mainlanders angering Hongkongers the most, judging by the news discourses:

> They're everywhere, changing the very character of Hong Kong. In some districts, Putonghua is heard more than Cantonese. They compete with locals for iPhones, baby milk powder, flats and maternity beds. They drive up property prices, making homes unaffordable for locals. And their spending power attracts international brand-name retailers who force out local stores from prime shopping districts by agreeing to higher rents.[99]

For comparison, only one instance was found where hearing Putonghua in a place is used as an illustration where the tone was neutral or positive:

> [I]n 15 years, while Hong Kong has worked to maintain its place as the most cosmopolitan Chinese city and the financial centre of the region, China has become the world's second-largest economy. During that time, Hong Kong has grown by a million people to reach a population of seven million. Walking the streets or visiting various malls in this 'paradise of shopping' or in our offices, *it's easy to hear Putonghua-speaking people around us - mainlanders working in or visiting Hong Kong*. [100]

98 Law, A. (2012, March 26). Letters: Once-vibrant HK now has no soul. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996651/letters

99 Chugani, M. (2012, December 31). Stemming inundation of Hong Kong overrides perceived loss of judicial autonomy. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1116036/stemming-inundation-hong-kong-overrides-perceived-loss

100 Tam, T. (2012, June 29). Still a struggle for hearts and minds. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1005293/still-struggle-hearts-and-minds

In this example Putonghua clearly serves to illustrate the cosmopolitan nature of Hong Kong.

5.2.2. A person who has done something dubious introduced as a Putonghua-speaker

This context differs from the previous one in that Putonghua no longer serves as an epithet of the general mass of mainlanders, but is included in the description of individual people – again, with striking consistency in the negative nature of the contexts. The following three passages are from three different news stories:

> Three Putonghua-speaking robbers escaped with HK$370,000 in cash and valuables from a three-storey house in Sai Kung early on Thursday, after threatening a businessman, his wife and a maid.[101]

> Outside the Wan Chai branch yesterday morning, around a dozen banknote traders, most speaking Putonghua, waited to pounce on anyone who left the bank with the commemorative paper bag that indicated they were among the lucky few buyers.[102]

> The culprits spoke Putonghua when they ordered the victims not to shout for help, according to the source.[103]

These examples, and the three other very similar ones found, beg the question why the language that the person spoke is mentioned in the news story. Does it really have relevance to the information value of the story? Or could the inclusions of this seemingly irrelevant information be guided by prejudices? What can be said for sure is that they also contribute for their part to feeding the negative connotations.

5.2.3. Putonghua-speakers treated differently in Hong Kong

A similar but slightly different context is one where a Putonghua-speaker is treated in particular way, apparently due to the fact that they speak Putonghua, in Hong Kong.

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101 Lo, C. (2012, September 27). Robbers take HK$370,000 in cash and valuables from Sai Kung house. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1048708/robbers-take-hk370000-cash-and-valuables-sai-kung-house

102 Lo, W. (2012, March 21). Traders swoop on banknote buyers. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996067/traders-swoop-banknote-buyers

103 Lo, C. & A. Lee. (2012, April 27). Police guard billionaire's family after kidnap bid. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/999391/police-guard-billionaires-family-after-kidnap-bid

Here the language features in a more central role than in the above examples, as the language is seen to actually influence the behaviour of others – although it is not in itself the reason for the behaviour, but rather a trigger in that it reveals the speaker as a mainlander, which might otherwise be left unnoticed. This discourse comes in two different configurations: Putonghua-speakers being treated *better* (usually only in luxury shops; implying a link between being a mainlander and being a rich customer) and on the other hand, Putonghua-speakers being treated *worse* by a Hongkonger due to a discriminatory feeling towards mainlanders that persists in Hong Kong. An example of the first situation, from the perspective of a Hongkonger who feels discrimination, is the unattributed quote (published by itself in the section "Quotes of the day", not in an article): "When you don't speak Putonghua in shops selling top brands, you get worse service from staff."[104] This quote clearly points to the disputes over the different treatment of mainlanders and Hongkongers, which were a heatedly discussed topic at the beginning of 2012 when a luxury brand shop allegedly denied the right to take photos of the shop from Hongkongers, while allowing the same practice for mainland customers. Around the same time, the use of simplified characters instead of traditional ones in a Giordano shop and a few cafés angered Hongkongers[105], but all in all, these disputes are only marginally visible in the current data. In any case, the language is construed as the concrete marker that tells the shop personnel who you are and determines how you are treated.

Such practice is also confirmed by the voice of an American-educated mainlander Kelly Yang in an article written by her as a guest writer:

> This month, I experimented with speaking Putonghua exclusively outside work. I braced for the glares. To my great surprise, I received much better treatment, especially in stores.[106]

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104 "Quotes of the week". (2012, January 22). *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/990862/quotes-week

105 Chan, T. (2012, May 29). Giordano's Chinese labels have activists up in arms. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1001547/giordanos-chinese-labels- have-activists-arms;

Cheung, S. & K. Wong. (2012, August 16). Store adds traditional Chinese characters to tags and brochures after complaints. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1015593/store-adds-traditional-chinese-characters-tags-and-brochures-after;

Lo Wei & T. Chong. (2012, April 3). Cafe menus cook up 'discrimination' row. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/997314/cafe-menus-cook-discrimination-row

106 Yang, K. (2012, February 8). Cachet of cash. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992024/cachet-cash

Behind the instances presented above is the assumed connection between a Putonghua-speaker and buying power, which stems from the fact that there is a part of the tourists from the mainland that are wealthy and come to Hong Kong to buy luxury products – to the extent that it has become one of the popular stereotypes of the mainlander, along with the quite contrasting "country bumpkin" stereotype, which both share common characteristics of rudeness and bad behaviour (cf. Lai's list of some of the sources of negative images of Putonghua speakers: the "bad quality of Chinese products" and the "fact that many of the new arrivals from the mainland come from a lower social stratum", which has "detach[ed] the language from a positive association with education, intelligence, and wealth"). The connection between Putonghua-speaker and money is so naturalised that one can find passing mentions such as the following, both from different articles describing the art sales market and more specifically particular art sales auctions in Hong Kong:

> Henrietta Tsui, of Hong Kong's Galerie Ora-Ora, said this year's buyers were more cautious. "Less Putonghua was heard," she said.[107]

> 'In the Grand Hyatt ballroom, the few middle-aged men in polo shirts at each table seemed underdressed compared to most of the other attendees, but they were doing most of the bidding in the auction, which was carried out in Putonghua.[108]

Another article describes changes made in the Jockey Club to better accommodate mainland visitors:

> Dedicated Putonghua rooms are part of the Jockey Club's refurbishments at both racecourses, but "to cater to the increasing tourists' demand" the club yesterday revealed it also planned to provide special Putonghua zones in selected off-course betting centres.[109]

On the other side are the (rarer) Hong Kong and mainlander voices which talk about the discrimination that mainlanders face in Hong Kong. Mainland-born Hong Kong resident Amy Li shows in an article she guest-authored a generally positive view of Hongkongers, claiming that she has not encountered discrimination. Yet she mentions a few incidents which show negative sentiments towards mainlanders, and specifically

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107 Chow, V. (2012, October 9). Wary mainlanders out of the picture at art sales. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1056650/wary-mainlanders-out-picture-art-auctions

108 Chen, L. (2012, May 7). Mainland's richest see glitter that's not gold. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1000342/mainlands-richest-see-glitter-thats-not-gold

109 Aitken, A. (2012, September 5). Increased services for mainland tourists. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/sport/racing/article/1029609/increased-services-mainland-tourists

emerging in situations where the language one speaks reveals that one is a mainlander:

> Most Hongkongers I meet are friendly. Many have generously offered me help. One of them is my friend Jimmy. I had met him only once before, a few months back in Sichuan while was on a business trip. Once I moved here, he and his girlfriend, both Hong Kong locals, volunteered to escort me on exhausting flat-hunting trips despite their busy schedules. "*I wanted to make sure my Putonghua-speaking friend gets a decent deal*," he said.[110]

Here, it is implied that the Hongkonger knew a Putonghua-speaker might end up being treated differently in the flat-hunting situation.

Li goes on to describe an example of a situation which she interprets to have been triggered by the fact that the Hongkongers were annoyed by the presence of mainlanders, which they noticed from the fact that they spoke Putonghua:

> One evening I was eating in a small restaurant in Wan Chai when several guys started shouting angrily in Cantonese at two mainland women nearby. It turned out the waiter had mistakenly served to the women dishes ordered by locals from another table.
>
> And this apparently infuriated their friends, who continued to throw angry stares at the women after the dishes were withdrawn, even though it was obviously the waiter's fault.
>
> The women looked frightened and clueless. *They probably had no idea what they did wrong – except for having spoken Putonghua*. It was hard to tell if it's discrimination or simple rudeness. But thinking about what happened there still bothers me.
>
> If one could *get into trouble for merely speaking Putonghua* in Hong Kong, then something is seriously wrong.[111]

The last paragraph implies that the situation is not unique but that similar situations happen more widely. Alex Lo´s description of an 11-year-old girl from the mainland living in Hong Kong who is ashamed of her origin also bears witness to the negative views that being a Putongua-speaker may evoke in Hong Kong, and how they have been internalised already by a young child:

> She was raised speaking fluent Cantonese and Putonghua. But now she has forced herself to unlearn Putonghua. When the girl's father speaks to her in Putonghua, she pretends not to hear. She has refused to write e-mails to her grandparents on the mainland in simplified characters, the Chinese script used on the mainland. She would not let her mother anywhere near her local school because her friends and their parents would realise she was from the

110 Li, A. (2012, November 27). Fresh off the boat in Hong Kong. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/blogs/article/1091941/fresh-boat-hong-kong
111 *Ibid.*

mainland.[112]

A different example of the different treatment is a news article about a taxi driver who overcharged a Putonghua-speaking customer:

> Hon So-man, 49, was arrested in a police operation this month when he charged an undercover female police officer, who was speaking Putonghua, HK$80 for a route that normally costs less than HK$30.[113]

The following, last example of this discourse is related to two topics which have been discussed heatedly in Hong Kong press in late 2012 and early 2013: those of parallel trading in the New Territories, and mainlanders' buying so much baby milk formula in Hong Kong that there is not enough for locals. Emily Tsang and Amy Nip report:

> [A Hong Kong man] was told that a certain brand of formula was out of stock and his Putonghua-speaking niece could buy two tins in the same store just two minutes later, but with an extra charge of HK$100 per tin.[114]

The implication is that the Putonghua-speaker (and therefore probably a mainlander) is perceived to be able and willing to pay more to get the baby milk formula. The question raised by this is whether this is a common practice, and whether this is the reason why there is supposedly not enough milk formula for Hongkongers to buy. This could also be classified as the "Putonghua-speakers doing something dubious" discourse, depending on whether one believes the "Putonghua-speakers" or mainlanders are paying a higher price to buy the stocks out knowingly, and especially if what is being hinted at is the practice of parallel trading, as seems to be the case in this example given that the whole article is talking about parallel traders.

As was mentioned at the beginning of the section 5.2., what is common to all of the examples treated here is that nothing refers to the language in itself being the target of the hatred or the different treatment, but it is a trait that reveals one's background and leads to the outcomes through this strong connotation with the label "mainlander"

112 Lo, A. (2012, July 23). We must stop feeding mainland cringe. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007521/we-must-stop-feeding-mainland-cringe

113 Chiu, A. (2012, September 28). Six month bar, 100 hours community service for taxi driver cheat. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1049321/six-month-bar-100-hours-community-service-taxi-driver-cheat

114 Tsang, E. & A. Nip. (2013, January 25). Parallel traders hoarding milk formula. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1135462/parallel-traders-hoarding-milk-formula

which in itself bears the negative labels that are targeted at in the different situations. Also representational of the treatment of Putonghua-speakers in Hong Kong are the few examples below which describe Hongkongers' behaviour towards speaking Putonghua themselves.

5.2.4. Expected language of communication with different people

A few passages were found in the data set describing Hongkongers themselves speaking Putonghua with mainlanders in actual situations.

> Some mainland netizens have complained that Hongkongers are discriminating against them. My response is that I welcome them. *If a new migrant politely asks me for directions in Putonghua, I am happy to reply in the same language.*[115]

Here the writer tries to mediate an image that he is open-minded, but the tone of the statement is actually such that it implies that speaking Putonghua is a *favour* towards the mainlander, which continues the inherently negative discourse of Putonghua.

A Western expatriate writer echoes the same in the voice of his American friend's, whose perceptions of Hong Kong are being described in the article, which adds a notion of language being used consciously by Hongkongers to distinguish themselves from mainlanders:

> When visiting [the writer's American friend's] Beijing office, [Hongkongers'] immaculate suits immediately set them apart. However, it was not their manner of dress that irked him, but *an insistence on speaking English and using a Chinese translator to communicate rather than attempting Putonghua*. On the streets of Hong Kong, he had noticed the disdain more obviously - mainland visitors on the MTR were scowled at, spoken rudely to and whenever possible, avoided.[116]

The writer of an article commenting on the MTR incident is along the same lines in asserting that Hongkongers have no obligation to talk to mainlanders in Putonghua in Hong Kong:

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115 Chan, K.L. (2012, February 17). Letters: Both sides must work for harmony. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992870/letters

116 Kammerer, P. (2012, November 13). We're China's New York - big of mouth but small of heart. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/article/1080911/were-chinas-new-york-big-mouth-small-heart

> In response to the video, Kong said 'many Hong Kong people are dogs and thieves' because Ken had complained in Cantonese. […] Hong Kong people were enraged by these comments. It is important to respect different cultures. *We have no obligation to talk to mainlanders in Putonghua, at least in Hong Kong*.[117]

Clearly, speaking Cantonese in Hong Kong is valued higher than speaking Putonghua. However, it must be noted that the language proficiency that is expected from an individual so as to be accepted is not the same for everyone but depends on the person's background, as was implied in the examples about expatriates and the largely non-problematised discussion of their choices concerning the learning of Putonghua or Cantonese. The following examples, from two different articles, refer to persons of Chinese origin but raised in another country:

> Hong Kong Chinese tend to expect *people with Chinese faces* to speak Cantonese - or *at least* Putonghua - and are usually unsympathetic towards those who cannot manage a conversation in either dialect and instead have a European mother tongue.[118]

> Some characterisations of 'local' have implicitly suggested that this is a matter of race and ethnicity - so, depending on the colour of your skin, you might always be regarded as a foreigner. Or, is being a Hong Kong local a matter of language, culture and mannerisms? In which case, does one only become a true local by mastering Cantonese? Or is Putonghua *sufficient*? It would seem that language is a necessary prerequisite for full integration in society - yet it is possible to get by in Hong Kong for years with only a passing knowledge of the local language.[119]

The wordings of both examples clearly show that for a person of Chinese origin knowing Putonghua is taken to be less sufficient than knowing Cantonese. Such distinction was nowhere to be seen in the case of (non-Chinese) expatriates (section 5.1.2.).

As a brief summary of the section 5.2., while Putonghua is usually not mentioned as a reason for the negative feelings as such, it is noteworthy how often it is taken up in these (usually) negatively-coloured discussions concerning the presence of mainlanders in Hong Kong as a concrete, audible sign of their presence. In other words, it is a trait that can be used to recognise a mainlander, and it is therefore often used as a kind of an epithet to refer to “the mainlanders”. Thus, even though no negative feelings are

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117 Liu, C. (2012, February 9). Mind the gap between HK and the mainland. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992159/mind-gap-between-hk-and-mainland

118 Wordie, J. (2012, July 29). No place like home. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007947/no-place-home

119 Tsang, R. (2012, January 26). Battle lines. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/990947/battle-lines

explicitly targeted at the language, its use in the negative context, and more specifically as a *marker of difference/otherness*, is so widely-spread that it would indeed hard be to disregard it as irrelevant to shaping the representations of Putonghua in the press.

In fact, Flowerdew *et al.* (2002) who studied discriminatory discursive practices concerning mainlanders (among which one could undoubtedly count the ones described above) in SCMP's articles and editorials in the context of the issue of mainlanders claiming right of abode in Hong Kong in 1999-2000, found that news articles were more discriminatory (wittingly or unwittingly reproducing the discriminatory discourses of the Government of the day) than editorials (which tended to adopt a liberal and democratic stance, in line with its elite readership (p. 343). Even though Flowerdew *et al*.'s research is 10 years old and as such might not provide accurate predictions of the current reality, as affiliations in the media can change quickly (the Post, for example, has had over five different editors-in-chief over the past decade), their findings serve as a reminder of the importance of observing possible differences in different types of texts. The observed difference between the editorials and other articles prompted them to ask the question, which in their study was left unanswered, of what the true institutional ideology of this influential newspaper is. Since the data set of this current paper included no editorials, it is not possible to make a comparison, but Chan and Lee's (2007) findings concerning strategies used in Hong Kong newspapers in dealing with politically risky topics might shed some light on the matter. These strategies will be considered in section 5.3.3. on page 102.

On another note, however, this relatively consistently negative presentation of mainlanders in Hong Kong, and of Putonghua as a marker of it, might in fact be an example of what Lee (2007) termed (section 3.2.3.) as issues within the “local-national debate”, which he found to belong to the sphere of consensus in Hong Kong media, in other words, in a sphere where no neutrality is expected, but where the media is expected to be on Hong Kong's side. It was speculated whether Putonghua might be included in such issues, to which its important connection with Hong Kong vs. mainland identity matters seems to point. While such considerations did not emerge in the instrumental domain, in the “mainlanders in Hong Kong” discourse this does seem to be true to some point, at least as a strong tendency if not an absolute rule, as the

negative representations of mainlanders in Hong Kong may be seen as defensive of Hongkongers' rights to their own territory where they are felt to be infringed by the mainlanders taking up the resources.

5.3. Putonghua and the society

The implications of Putonghua for the individual in the instrumental domain were found to be overwhelmingly positive and Putonghua was understood in most cases as an addition to the language abilities of a person. Such is also the discourse of the Hong Kong government, which advocates a biliterate trilingual policy.

Despite this, at the moment it is clear that the reality in Hong Kong is not that all three languages would be used symmetrically. The situation between English and Cantonese before 1997 has been described as diglossia in that English was the language of the coloniser and Cantonese the vernacular (Lai, 2012: 86). With the addition of Putonghua, language of the new supreme ruler, the picture became more complicated. Themes which touch upon the *societal* role and legitimation for the presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong are highly visible in the empirical data of the current paper. These are, more often so than the individual-level themes, which were most numerous in mentions more or less marginal to the central argumentation of the article itself, taken as the central topic of articles.

The discourses in this section are different from the previous ones in that they include more explicit argumentation about *whether the presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong ought to be increased or not*. In fact, a rather direct relevance could be found between the current debate over Cantonese versus Putonghua and the comment by Llewellyn *et al.* from 1982 quoted in section 2.1.1., in which they presented the choice between English and Cantonese as being a choice between *endangering the culture to guarantee a sufficient number of English-speakers* on the one hand, or of *valuing the whole and conserving the culture while accepting the loss of capacity to deal with the international community and risking a decline in economic prosperity* on the other. Of course, this representation is missing one important element complicating the discussion in the case of Putonghua, the connection with the “mother country”. Each side of the

representations will be looked at in turn in this section. Basically the differences between the discourses come from different configurations of the following elements: opinion about the increasing presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong (whether it is desirable or not); presumptions about whether Putonghua is an *addition* or an *alternative* to the languages of Hong Kong; and whether the matter is looked at on cultural or political grounds. In short, what seems to be assumed in all of the societal level discourses below is the view that *there is an important connection between the role and presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's relations with the mainland, and Hong Kong should (and could) somehow affect and/or proclaim the relations with the mainland through its language choices.*

The connection between language and social identification has been marked often (e.g. by Sullivan *et al.* who studied in the Hong Kong context and found results consistent with predictions, see section 2.3.). Different identifications are, indeed, seen in the data as the probable primary reasons behind different discourses, but a closer look at the discourses reveals some more details on what different grounds this identification rests (or is said to rest), which also affects – or is affected by – how Putonghua's role is seen in this picture as an item of the cultural, political or other relations.

5.3.1. Instrumental societal discourse - "Hong Kong's competitiveness"

Recalling the close connection between two discourses found by E. Chan (2002) in her research that set light on Hongkongers' attitudes towards English at the time of the mother tongue MOI policy (discussed in section 2.2.1.), one in which English was seen as social capital for the individual students (individual instrumental discourse), and another where English was seen as important for the competitiveness and the character of Hong Kong as a player in the international arena (habitus), it was interesting to see whether a similar discourse of the second type had developed around Putonghua as well.

Again, remembering that what Chan found about the habitus discourse concerning English showed that it was not only constructed as economically important, but also as a factor distinguishing Hong Kong from the mainland, we can predict that in a societal level discourse concerning Putonghua, the "belonging/distinction" part is going to differ in certain respects from the one concerning English. In fact, there are a number of

different societal level discourses found in the data.

The first societal level discourse to be discussed is one based on instrumental values as it is so clearly connected with the individual level instrumental discourses presented earlier.

The findings show that although an instrumental point of view is sometimes brought up to support Putonghua on this more societal level setting as well as on the individual, this discourse turned out to be much rarer and the cases more ambivalent. Andrew Au talks about the continued importance of English for Hong Kong society. At first he implies that Putonghua could be a valuable language skill if Hong Kong people were to embrace it:

> Many people appear to have given up on English, but Putonghua does not appear to have become the new second language. If there is a decline in citizens' language skills, it could adversely affect *Hong Kong's competitiveness in the region and the nation*.[120]

Yet a little later he refutes this view, first through reverting to talking about English only:

> We used to feel we had an advantage with the widespread use of English, but many mainlanders now have a better command of the language. We are losing the advantages we enjoyed in the past.[121]

and later asserting his view of this order of importance:

> Putonghua should be treated as a third and dispensable language for it is not an academic lingua franca. I would like to see English always being used at tertiary level and extended to secondary schools. It is much more important than Putonghua.[122]

Even Andrew Nunn, whose article is a response to Au's letter, aiming to reassert the view that Putonghua is as important as English, seems to hesitate when it comes to Putonghua's "habitus" value. He starts with talk about the "competitive edge" of the city (Hong Kong's relation to the outside world), but quickly returns to claims concerning the importance *inside* Hong Kong when he talks about Putonghua:

120 Au, A. (2013, January 3). Letters to the Editor: Putonghua has limited appeal in Hong Kong. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1118585/letters-editor-january-3-2013
121 *Ibid.*
122 *Ibid.*

> This worrying trend [of declining English standards] undoubtedly needs to be reversed if the city is to maintain its competitive edge over rival cities such as Singapore and Shanghai. However, I don't agree with Mr Au's view that English is considerably more important than Putonghua. Given the fact that Hong Kong is an integral part of China, with Putonghua being the national lingua franca, not to mention the ever-growing business with the mainland and its visitors continuing to flood the city with their oversized suitcases, the language could not be any more important in today's Hong Kong.[123]

The rareness of the societal instrumental discourse could be due to the fact that on the societal level Putonghua is so heavily linked with the question of Hong Kong's identity in relation with the mainland. It could be that this complicated relationship, which in itself is drawing much more attention, discourages discussion which does not take this (more profound) question into account. When the instrumental importance of Putonghua is discussed, it is probably safer to stay on the level of individuals, which is more concrete and easier to back up with examples of job requirements and the like.

Furthermore, one theme that comes up in this discourse which is important and can be compared with the opposite tactic in another societal discourse is the downplaying of the instrumental importance of Cantonese to serve as a contrast for that of Putonghua. An example of an implied preference for Putonghua over Cantonese is Andrew Au's opinion letter lamenting the possible decline in the competitiveness of Hong Kong on the international arena: "many Hongkongers have not embraced Putonghua instead, and they prefer to *stick to* Cantonese."[124] The verb *stick to* carries somewhat derogatory connotations which seem to imply that Cantonese is something belonging to the past, which Hongkongers perhaps ought to rid themselves of in favour of something more suitable.

The focus of the Government's action, as has been noted by some (e.g. Lee & Leung, 2012), is based on such discourse: even though the Government's official asserted discourse values the three on equal terms, it has been noted that the biliterate trilingual policy tends to put more emphasis on the instrumental value of Putonghua and especially English – and some have also noted that in this respect, the general public agrees with the government in that teaching English and Putonghua is regarded as more

123 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong-kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

124 Au, A. (January 3, 2013). Letters to the Editor: Putonghua has limited appeal in Hong Kong. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1118585/letters-editor-january-3-2013

important than Cantonese (Lee & Leung (2012: 9).[125] Even where Cantonese is made the MOI, it is confined to the role of the medium of teaching and learning, but is not a learning objective in itself (Lee & Leung, 2012).

5.2.2. Belonging to China/national language

Again, when we move away from representations based on purely instrumental grounds, identity starts to be a relatively more important factor determining affiliations and representations. Mathews *et al*. (2008) have elaborated on the issue of Hongkongers and their relations with the mainland and distinguished three different discourses among Hongkongers, which they found to depend on the amount of actual experience that the people have had with the mainland. They call the aversion that some Hongkongers, notably those with limited mainland experience, feel towards mainlanders the "de-nationalised discourse" (2008: 108). Another discourse they have named "re-nationalisation", which they say is mostly on practical grounds, among people who have had various contacts with the mainland – no enthusiasm for the Chinese nationalism is seen here, but it is seen in some ways as better than the colonial government (*ibid.*, 109). They feel the antagonistic de-nationalisation discourse to be to detached from reality, but they do not feel comfortable with full nationalist feelings either. Instead, they "mix and match different discourses about the Chinese nation to adhere to their own career objectives and personal agendas" (*ibid.*, 110). The last group that Mathews *et al.* identify are people who have migrated to Hong Kong from the mainland. They are, unsurprisingly, found to be more patriotic, but still able to find both good and bad things about Hong Kong relative to China (fair justice, freedom of speech; but also lack of nationalism, lack of space etc.). Such differences can also be found in the different voices voicing different representations of Putonghua, although the essence of the representations are somewhat different from those found by Mathews *et al.*

Representations of Putonghua in what I here call the "belonging to China" discourse correspond mostly with Mathews *et al.*'s discourse belonging to those who migrated from China in that the connection with the "motherland" is rather strong. The essence is the view that increasing the presence of Putonghua is a natural state of matters within

125 In a survey conducted by Lee & Leung (2012: 9), over 50% replied that if they had the resources, they desired to improve their language proficiency in English or Putonghua, whereas for Cantonese, an ability to conduct the daily conversations was seen to be enough.

the political situation where Hong Kong belongs to China – i.e. emphasising the "one country" part of the "one country, two systems" slogan. Still, none of the arguments are explicitly political in that they would speak of belonging to the political system – rather than using words that would refer to the hard political side of "belonging", the argumentation is often based on affective words such as "the nation" and the "motherland".

Bill Wong's text, which appears to be an opinion letter but is for some reason published with a title of its own instead of being grouped together with other opinion letters, begins with an expression found more often in the instrumental discourse (that Hong Kong will be *marginalised* due to its language choices) but continues in words which show that he is more concerned about the unity between Hong Kong and the mainland:

> I am really concerned that Hong Kong will be marginalised in the near future. One of the reasons is Hong Kong's education system. Mrs Ip says: 'The most exasperating part is the mother tongue used is not the *language of the nation.'* I share her worries.
>
> Our teaching medium is Cantonese, which is not the *national language* and most of the reading material used in our primary and secondary schools is written in traditional characters, unlike the simplified version in the mainland.
>
> […] This method of teaching is a legacy of our colonial past. This education policy by the colonial government was aimed at *separating Hong Kong people from the motherland.* The government should rectify this and do it quickly, by adopting Putonghua as the medium of instruction in most of our schools.[126]

This writing it unusually aggressive in that it directly accuses the colonial government of its language policies.[127] It points directly at education policy, which is something often implied in calls for changes regarding languages but is more often than not left unsaid (see also section 5.4. on education-related discourses). The Mrs Ip that the author attributes the language of the nation discourse is the member of Legislative Council Regina Ip, formerly a prominent government official, who has according to Lam (2003: 171) been among the leading officials criticised for an approach focusing too hard on pleasing Beijing.

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126 Wong, B. (2012. August 12). Make Putonghua the medium of instruction in our schools. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/600501/make-putonghua-medium-instruction-our-schools

127 In fact, scholarly research says little about the colonial government's policies concerning Putonghua, but as was seen in section 2.1.3., much of the research agrees that the use of Cantonese in education was encouraged, even though oppositional interpretations can also be found in which the British government is seen to have acted to "guarantee the privileged status of English" as a high language and "relegate Chinese to the status of a low language in a diglossic society (Chung, 2003: 15).

Here, more clearly than in many other examples belonging to this discourse which are more ambiguous in this sense, Putonghua is advocated as an alternative (replacing Cantonese as the MOI etc.) rather than addition to the languages of Hong Kong. Many other examples refrain from taking stance in the role of Cantonese alongside Putonghua. For instance, the following sentence is from Felix Wu's opinion letter:

As Hong Kong is part of China, we should all speak Putonghua. It's a vital language for us.[128]

Yet apart from these two letters by Bill Wong and Felix Wu, who both appear to be Hongkongers, strikingly many of the instances where Hong Kong is described as "part of China" or Putonghua "national language" are either written by people with foreign-sounding names, or the person to whom the words are attributed are quoted directly, thereby distancing the discourse from that of the author's voice. For example, in the following passage (by a Hong Kong writer) the international school representative Pritchard's words are in quotation marks:

> 'We take the view that five-year-old children entering our school in 2012 will be 40 years old in 2047, at the peak of their careers and earning power. *In the lead up to that transition and in the years following 2047, Putonghua skills will be valuable, if not indispensable, attributes for leaders and professionals in Hong Kong*.' [129]

Pritchard's words do not explicitly assert Hong Kong's belonging to China, but the clearly positive vocabulary choices (*valuable, leaders, professionals*) entail evaluative assumptions about the increasing need for Putonghua for both political and economic reasons in the apparently predetermined future of the SAR. The following two examples, for their part, are found in two different articles written by non-Chinese people:

> *Given the fact that Hong Kong is an integral part of China,* with Putonghua being the *national lingua franca*, not to mention the ever-growing business with the mainland and its visitors continuing to flood the city with their oversized suitcases, the language could not be any more important in today's Hong Kong.[130]

> With China poised to become the world's economic leader within the next few decades, the

128 Wu, F. (2012, July 26). Letters: Putonghua is a vital language for us. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007780/letters

129 Yeung, L. (2012, January 15). Schools that blend the rules. *SCMP.* Retrieved from www.scmp.com/article/990207/schools-blend-rules

130 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong-kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

> mainland's expanding influence in the international business community is helping to boost the popularity of learning *the national language*.[131]

The "belonging to China" discourse partly overlaps with another discourse which can be drawn up in advocating Putonghua, namely the discourse of "cultural heritage" in which Putonghua stands for one feature of the "Chinese culture". Despite the similarities, the former discourse is clearly stronger in its claiming that Hong Kong "belongs" to China as the nation – the difference to the cultural heritage discourse is that the latter one is talking about "common cultural heritage" rather than a relationship of belonging; no stance is taken on the question of Hong Kong's international standing.

Cherry Wong writes about the importance of Putonghua in her opinion letter "Let's return to our cultural roots", in which the cultural connection to China is the main argument for the increased presence of Putonghua:

> As an international city, Hong Kong has absorbed the cultures of other places. But we are also responsible for passing on our Chinese culture. After Cantonese, English is the most common language in Hong Kong. But what about the language of our motherland?[132].

The following extract from an article discussing an international school continues along the same lines:

> The Chinese programme is also under review. Since 2007, schools have offered a daily programme covering aspects of Chinese history and culture taught in Putonghua for all primary students. In some schools, like South Island School, it is compulsory for Year 7 and 8 pupils to study Chinese. […] ESF Chinese adviser Wang Xiaoping points to the importance of keeping up ties with the local community. 'Chinese is the language of Hong Kong. If we lock ourselves up in an international school mindset, we are not connecting to the local community, and it's not good for our students,' he said. [133]

In a way, it could be seen as anachronistic to talk about Putonghua as a link between the mainland and Hong Kong on cultural terms, given the fact that the language was adopted in the mainland in the time when Hong Kong was not part of it. Thus the discourse invoking images of common Chinese cultural heritage could in Putonghua's

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131 Davis, C. (2012, March 3). Big demand for Putonghua tutors. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/994271/big-demand-putonghua-tutors

132 Wong, C. (2012, April 4). Letters: "Let's return to our cultural roots". *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/997403/letters

133 Yeung, L. (2012, June 25). An all-round education. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1004893/all-round-education

case perhaps be more accurately reworded as willingness to embrace the cultural heritage of the sovereign power. If one looks at it as referring to "Chinese culture", the obvious question arises how the Chinese culture in non-Putonghua speaking areas is understood.

The distinction between the *belonging to China* and *cultural heritage* discourses might well be a distinction mainly on the level of rhetoric, while the real differences in the motives behind the words used in any given example may be hard to determine. In any case, it seems justified to separate these two discourses, as the possibility of the existence of significant distinctions is real – in studies about different identities in Hong Kong, the variety of identifications in relation to the mainland based on different grounds includes views in which a cultural connection is felt with the mainland as part of common Chinese culture while at the same time rejecting the political system. In Mathews *et al*.'s terms, the cultural values discourse does not really correspond to any of the three that they distinguished, as the identification is not really on "practical" grounds, but their description of "mixing and matching different discourses about the Chinese nation to adhere to their own career objectives and personal agendas" might describe the discourse well. In any case, what we are primarily interested in are the additions that these discourses bring to the representations of Putonghua. In the above example, the use of words such as "language of our motherland", although clearly belonging more directly to the belonging to China discourse, mixes easily with the argumentation based on the grounds of cultural common ground.

5.3.3. Putonghua as a threat to Cantonese and the cultural heritage of Hong Kong

Alex Lo describes in his article how Putonghua has made advances in the education system in Hong Kong and ends his article in the words "Hong Kong may soon become the last bastion for Cantonese speakers, a cultural heritage well worth protecting."[134] The metaphor "last bastion" evokes images of a small stronghold valiantly countering the forces of a giant (Putonghua-speaking area). This discourse is in sharp contrast with the ones seen above in the defensive position that it takes towards preserving the distinction between Hong Kong and the mainland.

134 Lo, A. (2012, February 27). A culture shrivels without its own tongue. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993807/culture-shrivels-without-its-own-tongue

Looking at earlier scholarly research, Chung (2003) claimed Hong Kong society to still be indecisive in 2003 as to the meaning of "Chinese". He stated: "[Hong Kong people] will go on interpreting the definition of Chinese in their favour under the 'One country, two systems' policy, and the plural nature and the political ecology of the Hong Kong society of the time will make it difficult to reach a consensus about the direction towards which the language policy should move." His claim seems to be well valid ten years later. To counter the discourses in favour of the increasing role of Putonghua in Hong Kong on the grounds of cultural and/or political belonging to China seen above (tending to emphasise the first part of the slogan), which for most part do not take stance in what this means for Cantonese, there is also a strong discourse in which Cantonese and Putonghua are contrasted and Putonghua is argued to be threatening Cantonese and thereby the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. The relevant level of culture is understood to be the local culture rather than that of the "nation" as in the cultural heritage discourse adjacent to the "belonging to China" discourse. In some ways, it could be seen to be comparable to the "de-nationalisation" discourse found by Mathews *et al*., but in fact this discourse seems to be much less inclined to referring to politics. If it emphasises the "two systems" part of the slogan, it does so mainly implicitly, through appealing to culture, while largely steering away from the political implications of the language issue.

> *Cultural invasion* is another drawback. Putonghua and simplified Chinese characters are everywhere and I don't like them.[135]

The mutual exclusiveness implied in all of the examples of this discourse is more clearly asserted in the example below, and the connection with "dilution of culture" is also made explicit:

> As so often when frustrations boil over into confrontation, the real reasons may lie somewhat deeper (inflation, 'property hegemony', abuse of Hong Kong's right-of-abode rules, promotion of Putonghua *at the expense of Cantonese*, *dilution of culture*). It is very tempting - and understandable - for Hong Kong people to want to vent their anger at mainland visitors, but this usually only escalates the problem.[136]

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135 Hau, H.T. (2012, October 8). (Reply to) SCMP Debate: can HK accommodate any more mainland visitors. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1056016/scmp-debate-can-hk-accommodate-any-more-mainland-visitors

136 Williams, J. (2012, February 4). Don't condemn mainland visitors for knowing little about our unique culture. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/991687/dont-condemn-mainland-visitors-knowing-little-about-our-unique-culture

Despite Chung's (2003) concern with the "interpretation of Chinese", neither of the more or less oppositional stances – "increase the presence of Putonghua" or "limit the advance of Putonghua" – makes any claims as to the definition of "Chinese" in the Basic Law; the debate is more concentrated on the level of attitudes on the one hand, and on educational policies (as the practical means through which changes in language proficiencies can be pursued) on the other. The generic structure of the argument is usually as follows: Grounds: the promotion of Putonghua weakens the position of Cantonese. Warrant: Cantonese can be preserved through resisting the advance of Putonghua. Claims: the presence of Putonghua should not be increased.

Alex Lo also contrasts the cultural heritage discourse with the instrumental discourse:

> The economic incentive to learn Putonghua - to find mainland jobs, to cater to big-spending mainlanders in Hong Kong and, if you work in government, to climb the career ladder - is too great to resist. But Cantonese is about who we are and how we want to live.[137]

That Putonghua and Cantonese are assumed to be "alternatives" is seen for example in the use of "but" to dramatically contrast the true nature of Hongkongers with their instrumental willingness to learn Putonghua – incentive which is framed in a belittling way as "catering to big-spending mainlanders": a clear contrast is created between the inner self and shallow motives of running after the money, with the two languages standing for the representations of these two. An alternative way of framing the issue, of course, would be to assume that Hongkongers can have *both.* The backing for the grounds of the argument, which negates this possibility, is often drawn from experiences in the education sector – which, again, portrays the crucial role played by language-in-education matters. Below are a few examples of how educational choices are pointed out as the problem; further education-related discourses will be looked at in section 5.4.

> Education officials have been urged to review their policy of using Putonghua to teach Chinese language and literacy in Hong Kong, amid fears that *Cantonese is becoming marginalised and is at risk of dying out within generations*. More than 160 of the city's 1,025 government primary and secondary schools are using Putonghua in Chinese language lessons after a government policy encouraging a switch was introduced in 2003. Before that Cantonese had been used.
> However, linguists say studies indicate *the policy is accelerating the decline in the use of Cantonese in Hong Kong and could contribute to the ultimate disappearance of the*

137 Lo, A. (2012, February 27). A culture shrivels without its own tongue. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993807/culture-shrivels-without-its-own-tongue

language as Putonghua becomes more widely used.[138]

Authority to this view is derived from attributing the connection between the policy and the decline in the use of Cantonese to the undefined group of "linguists" (who, presented in this way, appear to be a unified group who have reached consensus on the matter). Voices of individual linguists are presented in many instances of this discourse, as will be seen in the examples below. Despite the prominence of the voice of linguists in this particular discourse, on the whole Chan and Lee's (2007: 172) observation about the "conspicuous role" that is played in Hong Kong's media discussion by social opinion leaders, who are often academics, experts, veteran journalists, and representatives of civic groups, does not seem to apply to any relevant degree in the case of Putonghua. All of these groups, and especially academics, were noted by Chan and Lee to be treated as the third party in controversies as they command high credibility and are perceived to be free of conflicts of interest or to be experts in certain areas. One could ask whether this is not the common practice found anywhere; Chan and Lee do not provide comments in comparison with other countries to indicate whether this practice is somehow more pronounced in the media of Hong Kong. In fact, such tendencies were not particularly detected in the data of the current paper. In connection with the representations of Putonghua, scholars were cited rather infrequently outside of the "preserving Cantonese" theme, whereas voices that were heard more often included those of, for example, company representatives and school directors. A few veteran journalists (notably SCMP staff writer Alex Lo) seemed to be writing on the topic recurrently, but many of the articles found were argumentative writings by either different staff writers or visiting journalists, which generally portrayed relatively few attributed voices besides the voice of the writer themselves.

Turning back to the discourse at hand, the reason for the detrimental effects of the Putonghua MOI policy have in some studies found to be that students who are taught in Putonghua start to use it outside the classroom as well instead of Cantonese:

> Stephen Matthews, associate professor in linguistics at the University of Hong Kong, said a study conducted by one of his Masters students indicated that *children taught Chinese language in Putonghua were beginning to use it in the playground as well.* 'She [the student] also did a survey of languages at home and found there was more Putonghua used in the children's home,' he said. 'Again, that is shifting the balance. There is less Cantonese in the

138 Parry, S. (2012, May 27). Schools may be killing dialect. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002132/schools-may-be-killing-dialect

children's life and more Putonghua.'[139]

Further evidence is drawn from studies of parallel situation in the case of other dialects. The following is a quotation from Stephen Matthews, associate professor in linguistics at the University of Hong Kong:

> 'We have seen [death of a language] happen in other language-shift situations,' said Matthews, who has studied the decline of the Hakka and Chiu Chow dialects. 'It generally happens over three generations. It is sad when that happens.'[140]

The importance to preserve Cantonese is based in the same article on the grounds that it would severe the link of communication between generations, and also undermine the cultural value:

> The effect of the language dying would be that children *could not talk to their grandparents* and *traditions such as Cantonese opera would disappear* as fewer young people spoke the language, he said.[141]

Within the discourse of a fear of Putonghua taking over Cantonese in Hong Kong one can find negative presentations of voices who are seen to *act assertively* concerning the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong. Usually these people or entities, be they the government or individual citizens, are framed as mainland voices, whose words or actions are presented as a threat from the mainland. Especially where the government is included, the cases are more overtly political than most of the tones within the "preserving Cantonese" discourse, but they are treated here as they seem to specifically draw upon the discourse of the threat that the government's promotion of Putonghua imposes on Cantonese.

As it has been mentioned, the scholarly view is that the central government has largely kept its promise of not meddling with Hong Kong's internal affairs regarding language. Yet, it has also been marked that the feeling among many people in Hong Kong does not necessarily correspond with this, but that perceived assertiveness by the central

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139 Parry, S. (2012, May 27). Schools may be killing dialect. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002132/schools-may-be-killing-dialect

140 *Ibid.*

141 Parry, S. (2012, May 27). Schools may be killing dialect. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002132/schools-may-be-killing-dialect

government in promoting the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong is feared as one sign of "assimilation". Therefore it is somewhat surprising that the whole data set contained but two references to the assertiveness by the Beijing government, one of which at the same time was the only reference to the local government's abiding by the rules of the central government, which in some non language-related matters has been a much debated topic especially after Leung Chun-ying, who is often described as Beijing-minded, was elected as the Chief Executive in March 2012[142]. Alex Lo voices these fears in his article after mentioning the latest Population Census figures from 2011, which showed the number of self-proclaimed Putonghua speakers to surpass that of English-speakers for the first time:

> Of course, Cantonese remains dominant, with 96 per cent of residents able to speak it. But we must not take it for granted, as *the mainland has been promoting Putonghua often at the expense of local dialects, while the Hong Kong government, taking the cue, has been promoting Putonghua*. *Beijing has no qualms about encouraging Putonghua at the expense of such local dialects as Cantonese and Shanghainese.* And this has alarmed speakers of those dialects as well as linguists and human rights activists. Guangdong authorities have been trying to replace Cantonese programmes with Putonghua on state-run TV. In 2010, a huge public outcry forced a temporary official retreat.[143]

Here, Lo focuses on the agency of the central government in the promotion of Putonghua, with detrimental effects to local dialects, and of the Hong Kong government in copying this agenda. There was more discussion about what was happening to dialects in the mainland in 2010 (and again in 2011), when rules of Cantonese broadcasting were tightened in Guangdong (see page 22), but it seems that the government's assertiveness is not a staple of discussion concerning languages when no such topical events are at hand. In any case, this quote from Lo's article serves to show that criticising the government is not a taboo, even if the absence of this theme from most articles might show that fears of this are not willingly taken up too often when there is no specific reason.

The only other mention of the central government shows the close connection of the discussion over what ought to be done about languages with education, which has also been seen elsewhere in the "cultural value" discourse:

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142 As noted in section 2.2.4. page 23 footnote 32 about the negative attitudes towards the Beijing-mindedness of both the first Chief Executive and the current one.

143 Lo, A. (2012, February 27). A culture shrivels without its own tongue. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993807/culture-shrivels-without-its-own-tongue

> 'The core foundation training in Chinese should be taught in Cantonese. That doesn't conflict with developing a high proficiency in Mandarin,' [linguistics professor Thomas Lee Hun-tak] said. Lee said he was worried the Hong Kong government would follow the 'underlying assumption of central government policy' that Putonghua should be promoted over minority dialects, in the mistaken belief it is socially and economically beneficial.[144]

Again, the government's policies are viewed negatively. Here, again authority is drawn again from the words of a linguistics professor.

Even with the near absence of the discourse of governmental assertiveness, however, there are many instances where negative evaluations are made of individual mainlanders who are in some situations perceived to be acting in an assertive way concerning the presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong. In a SCMP Debate titled “Can HK accommodate any more mainland visitors?”, Sheung Shui resident Hau Hiu-tung talks about what difficulties the increasing number of mainlanders has brought to him. He takes up two examples of his friends' unpleasant interactions with mainlanders. One of his examples describes a mainlander's assertive approach to the use of Putonghua in Hong Kong:

> Another friend was knocked down by a child in Sham Shui Po. The parent just laughed and walked away. Then there was a friend who said "excuse me" to a tourist as the sidewalk was so crowded. The man said: "Why don't you speak in Putonghua?" These conflicts are occurring much more often, and in my opinion we are on the edge of an outburst.[145]

The function of the question "Why don't you speak in Putonghua?" in this context is to say that the Hongkonger ought to have spoken Putonghua – which, in turn, only makes sense if it is assumed that a Hongkonger ought to speak Putonhua (when speaking with a mainlander). Of course, the person who uttered the question might not have thought through the matter and sought to express a firm stance, but as in other cases, the words themselves reveal the basic logic behind them and we can therefore assume that there has been at least an unconscious thought along the lines “Hongkongers ought to speak Putonghua (to mainlanders)”, which is what the author takes offence from.

The most widely-published example of such assertive stance taken by a mainlander is of

144 Parry, S. (2012, May 27). Schools may be killing dialect. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002132/schools-may-be-killing-dialect

145 Hau, H.T. (2012, October 8). (Reply to) SCMP Debate: can HK accommodate any more mainland visitors. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1056016/scmp-debate-can-hk-accommodate-any-more-mainland-visitors

course the “MTR incident” (discussed e.g. on page 27 footnote 35), where a quarrel, which started from an action unrelated to language, quickly developed into a quarrel where comments were made on both sides about the use of Putonghua/Cantonese in a disrespectful manner. Mabel Sieh describes part of the argument in an article which recounts the timeline of the incident and its backwash and discusses Hongkong netizens' and some public figures' reactions to them:

> During the argument, the Hong Kong people spoke Cantonese and the mainland passengers spoke Putonghua. Ken Wai, the Hongkonger who sparked the row, said on Facebook: 'The wrangle was sparked by one of the mainlanders laughing at my poor Putonghua, but ignoring [the mainland girl's] wrongdoing of eating.'[146]

The first sentence is interesting. It inherently creates an image of a dichotomy based on the language difference: the Putonghua speakers on the one hand, and the Cantonese speakers on the other, even though it is not actually stated whether or not all of the Hongkongers united in the situation to oppose the behaviour of the mainland passengers.

The row gained much more publicity when the mainland professor Kong Qingdong appeared on a mainland TV channel commenting on the incident and criticising Hongkongers for “failing their responsibility to speak the 'real Chinese language' because of 'residues of colonialism'.”[147] Alex Lo also describes Kong's reaction:

> A prominent leftist professor has denounced the Hongkongers as 'dogs'. It was a reference to our superiority complex of being able to speak English when we should all be speaking Putonghua.[148]

Similarly, C. Liu links Kong's use of insults directly to the language issues, but interprets it as Kong's opposition towards Cantonese rather than English:

> In response to the video, Kong said 'many Hong Kong people are dogs and thieves' because Ken had complained in Cantonese. [...] Hong Kong people were enraged by these comments. It is important to respect different cultures. We have no obligation to talk to mainlanders in Putonghua, at least in Hong Kong. […] Kong owes us an apology.[149]

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146 Sieh, M. (2012, February 14). Storm in a noodle pot. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992562/storm-noodle-pot. The event is recounted in virtually the same words in Chan, M. (2012, January 21). HK people labelled as dogs by mainlander. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/990698/hk-people-labelled-dogs-mainlander

147 *Ibid.*

148 Lo, A. (2012, January 21). No need for shouting at your own people. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/990710/no-need-shouting-your-own-people

149 Liu, C. (2012, February 9). Mind the gap between HK and the mainland. *SCMP.* Retrieved from

The use of expressions such as “the real Chinese language” and the Hong Kong people's “responsibility” to speak it strongly identify Kong's discourse as that of “belonging to China”, even if Hong Kong's belonging to China is not asserted but is an underlying assumption justifying the views that Putonghua ought to be spoken. This, in turn, is framed in the SCMP articles in a way that makes clear that it is resented by Hongkongers.[150] Behind this is a fear of assimilation. Danny Chung expresses through exaggeration his fear that Kong's aim is to purge foreign influence from a Hong Kong that fully belongs to China:

> I would also be interested to know if all foreign-language learning should be banned so as to enforce a strict Putonghua-speaking regime.[151]

The potential occurrence of self-censorship as a factor affecting representations and discourses in the newspaper was speculated on in section 3.2.2. It was noted that the effect it might have had on texts is hard to detect by looking at texts alone.

The near lack of references to the government, together with the expressions referring to culture rather than politics in the discourse opposing Putonghua, as compared with the broader base of arguments evoked in the discourses for Putonghua, might possibly be signs of caution from too overtly political disseminating of views contrasting with those of the central government, or due to the political line of the paper. Whether this really is the case, of course, cannot be established by looking at the articles alone. In any case, the “de-nationalised discourse” that Mathews *et al.* (2008) described in their study is hardly visible in a politicised form in relation to Putonghua although from other studies (e.g. Sullivan *et al.*, 2012) it can be inferred that language is a matter directly linked with social identification, which is also displayed in more overtly political discourse in the case of some “belonging to China” representations.

Chan and Lee (2007: 163), however, pointed out a list of “strategic rituals” they found to have been developed in Hong Kong newspapers to ensure professionally justifiable

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http://www.scmp.com/article/992159/mind-gap-between-hk-and-mainland

150 Although in fact both of the above cases, after denouncing Kong's harsh words, end in reconsiliatory remarks indicating that it would after all be better for the Hong Kong-mainland relations if Hongkongers behaved so as to make language less of a matter for controversy.

151 Chung, D. (2012, January 28). Letters: Tell us more, Professor Kong. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/991094/letters

and politically less dangerous reporting of sensitive topics. The three strategies they list are those of *juxtaposition*, in which critical views are balanced by views supportive of the power centre in the name of "balanced reporting" and "neutrality"; secondly, the use of factual and plain narrative forms in news coverage; and thirdly, they note that some newspapers have toned down the criticisms of their own editorials, while at the same time continuing to invite columnists to express critical views in feature sections. (This is what might, in fact, help to partially explain Flowerdew *et al.*'s finding that editorials in SCMP were less discriminatory than news articles when talking about mainlanders (section 5.2.4.)). In the current research, the absence of editorials in the data makes comparison impossible, but one might wonder whether the absence of mentions of Putonghua in editorials is in itself a significant absence in the vein of Chan and Lee's strategies, as the absence of editorials is countered by the abundance of columns and other argumentative writings critical of the promotion of Putonghua (if in most cases with no reference to the central government) such as the ones seen above (or else involving discriminatory representations of Putonghua-speakers as seen in section 5.2.).

5.3.4. Reconciliation

A discourse which opposes the "mainlanders are different" discourse seen in section 5.2. can be found in a number of articles. However, as will be seen in the examples, the role of Putonghua is not necessarily much different in all of them, but sometimes ends up acting as a marker of difference even in the context where this is not meant in a discriminatory way.

Mainland master student who has lived in HK for half a year laments the negative images that persist of mainlanders in Hong Kong:

> Besides speaking Putonghua and having some eating habits, we are not that different from our Hong Kong classmates.[152]

Despite the point of the article, saying that mainlanders are not that different from Hongkongers, Putonghua is still a sign of the difference.

152 Ting, P. (2012, February 13). There's much more to mainlanders than nouveau riche and impolite tourists. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992515/theres-much-more-mainlanders-nouveau-riche-and-impolite-tourists

Taiwanese minister Lung Ying-Tai talks about how Hongkongers ought to embrace mainlanders:

> That appreciation of subtle differences between different Chinese groups allowed her to offer some advice to Hong Kong people, especially those feeling uneasy with an influx of immigrants and visitors from the mainland. [...]
> It's so noticeable, even on the University of Hong Kong campus during my stay there, that you heard Putonghua spoken. I think Hongkongers should think very seriously, that they should not take the mainlanders as a liability but as a blessing. Both parties must have passion and vision for the future. This is really a test of how far your vision is and how authentic your compassion in humanity is.[153]

Again, Putonghua is treated in a value-neutral way, but still, on the concrete level of the concrete sentences written into the text, it is taken up as a marker that points out the presence of mainlanders. So in these examples, only the tone has changed to be a positive one as contrasted with the negative tone in the representations looked at in section 5.2., but the role of Putonghua as a marker of difference has not changed. Therefore, if we look strictly at the function of the entity "Putonghua" in these examples, they could very well be grouped together with the representations found in the "mainlanders are different" discourse. Yet despite the close connection with the section 5.2. these representations were chosen to be presented here because they could also be seen as a part of a scale of reconciliatory representations: there are articles where Putonghua is not actively good, and then there are those where it is actively proposed to be good (cf. the communicative value discourse; but there the focus was more on the gain to the individual).

In the examples below, we are moving away from the contrasting value: the first mention of Putonghua is such, but the second one argues that the difference is disappearing as Hong Kong children learn more Putonghua. Moreover, the use of inherently positive words such as "catch up" marks this as a positive development:

> Some insist that Hongkongers are indeed different from mainlanders. To that extent, one can always find *subtle differences* between, say, the citizens of Guangzhou and those of Shenzhen. For one thing, *the former are mostly Cantonese speakers and the latter tend to use Putonghua in general communication.*
> To me, the more visible differences between Hongkongers and mainlanders are narrowing fast. Only a decade ago, you could easily tell them apart just by the way they were dressed.

153 Chou, O. (2012, November 28). Lung Ying-tai: Minister on a quest for understanding. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1092492/lung-ying-tai- minister-quest-understanding

> *Now you cannot tell the difference even from their speech, as the general level of Putonghua proficiency of our children is catching up fast*. Today, it is extremely difficult to tell a mainlander from a Hongkonger on the street.[154]

Likewise, in the following example the implication of Putonghua is definitely positive, as the fact that children "mix songs in English with songs in Putonghua" is used as an illustration of a multicultural environment:

> The tolerant, multicultural element of Hong Kong also makes it an attractive location to raise children. Nearly all of our eldest child's friends come from a multi-cultural family. In fact, he has very few friends whose parents share the same native country, let alone language or religion. As a result, there is this mass of children who understand and respect one another, irrespective of their background or what they eat. If I ask my five-year-old son where he comes from, he answers, 'Hong Kong'. [...] They mix songs in English with songs in Putonghua and speak as excitedly about Lunar New Year as they do any other holiday.[155]

In addition to these grassroots level positive notions of Putonghua, there are also more assertive notions about its role in the Hong Kong-mainland relations**.** Here, Putonghua in itself is construed to reduce misunderstanding and increase knowledge and understanding about China.

In the following example, related to the MTR incident, Carmen Liu, despite her asserted stance that Hongkongers have no "obligation" to speak Putonghua to mainlanders, argues that mastering Putonghua nevertheless is good in that it can reduce misunderstandings between Hong Kong and the mainland:

> In response to the video, Kong said 'many Hong Kong people are dogs and thieves' because Ken had complained in Cantonese. […] Hong Kong people were enraged by these comments. It is important to respect different cultures. We have no obligation to talk to mainlanders in Putonghua, at least in Hong Kong. […] Kong owes us an apology. *Mastering Putonghua won't do us any harm though. Then we can boost harmony and avoid misunderstandings*.[156]

The same idea is present, although with emphasis on knowledge (as in, things that can be learnt at school) rather than understanding, in the following examples, which are

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154 Lau, N.K. (2012, October 12). False nostalgia for Hong Kong identity holds us back. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1058829/false- nostalgia-hong-kong-identity-holds-us-back

155 Tomasis, R. (2012, February 5). There's no place like home. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/991768/theres-no-place-home

156 Liu, C. (2012, February 9). Mind the gap between HK and the mainland. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992159/mind-gap-between-hk-and-mainland

contributions to the debate surrounding national education, which was at its highest in the autumn of 2012, when Hong Kong government planned to make an obligatory part of school curriculum in primary schools. The first one opposes the implementation of this plan, while the second one supports its:

> To learn about a nation, you study its history, culture and language and as regards China that is already done in the current curriculum through Chinese history, Putonghua and liberal studies.
> As we have these subjects, there is no need to add a separate national education course.[157]

And:

> As I understand it, the controversial point is whether to make national education an independent course. Some say the objectives can be achieved within the current curriculum, via subjects such as liberal studies, Putonghua and Chinese history.
>
> Just learning about the language and history may develop in students a deep sense of their nation. Although liberal studies teach students about national issues, it's still inadequate in other ways, so there should be a new, separate subject.[158]

Putonghua, here understood to mean the school subject, is understood in both as a contribution to children's learning about the "language of the nation". In the first example it could also be interpreted to contribute to the learning of history and culture (although, given the main point of the article, which is opposing the national education, it is not clear if the ultimate thoughts of the writer about this function of Putonghua are positive or negative). The second example points out the connection between learning Putonghua and "developing a deep sense of the nation", which is clearly said in a positive light, and the writer wishes to see this education even more extensive.

Whereas in the above examples the knowledge and understanding was gained directly from the school subject of Putonghua, in the following example, which is also another contribution to the national education debate, the understanding brought by Putonghua does not come from the school subject but from the actual use of the language as a medium in personal contacts:

> Also, as many of [Hong Kong students] speak Putonghua and cross the border on visits, they are able to speak to mainlanders and this enriches their knowledge of the country.[159]

157 Tsang, W. (2012, August 17). Letters to the Editor: An erosion of 'one country, two systems'. SCMP. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1016453/letters-editor-south-china-morning-post-august-17-2012

158 Tam, C. (2012. October 5). Letters to the Editor: Educated choice based on facts. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1054096/letters-editor-october-5-2012

159 Fang, M.F. (2012, September 13). Letters to the Editor: Difficult to brainwash HK students. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1035234/letters-editor-september-13-

The following article lists suggestions for how the juxtaposition of Hongkongers and mainlanders could be reduced. Encouraging Hongkongers' learning Putonghua is listed as one such method:

> Once the air has been cleared, the Hong Kong government could raise public hospitals rates for non-residents to private levels; start a campaign on the benefits of learning Putonghua; and, most importantly, resolve to condemn future storm-in-teacup protests, offensive full-page ads and discrimination, such as the prevention of specific people taking photographs in public areas.[160]

5.4. Putonghua and education

As was noted in section 2.1.3, language-in-education policies, and more specifically, the choice of MOI, have been a contested issue in Hong Kong due to the importance that schools have in providing the key service in the socialisation of students, and that after a less politicised period before the Handover, a strong political orientation re-emerged in the discussion on language-in-education policies in the post-colonial period due to the changed political situation (Poon, 2009). Despite the importance of language-in-education discussion and the importance of the educational system as as major mechanism for realising the aims expressed in the different discourses in the society, in the current paper it is only taken up as a separate entity so late exactly because it is inherently included in so many discourses – articles demanding for changes in the language situation are often at least implicitly linked with demands of changes in the educational policies, and sometimes explicitly so, as has been noted here and there in the preceding sections. For example, the dispute over whether Cantonese or Putonghua is more appropriate for Hong Kong is usually not without its links to the Cantonese/Putonghua MOI issue (as was seen in section 5.3.3). This section concentrates on those discourses concerning education which have not come up earlier – namely discourses relating to *practicalities of education*: the *falling standards* (of students and/or teachers), and *tips to boost the learning,* and the *pedagogical value* of Putonghua.

It is interesting that the same "cultural heritage" argument that is used to defend

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2012

160 Shamdasani, P. (2012, February 12). About face. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992351/about-face

Cantonese from Putonghua with some fierceness by the voices of ordinary Hongkongers has also been used, with much less overall prominence, to defend Cantonese against English in the MOI issues, the latest of which was the 2009 policy change which made it again freer for schools to choose their MOI. In general, the division lines in the Cantonese-English MOI issue were very different from those concerning Putonghua vs. Cantonese: in the former, the scholarly research (Chan 2002) shows that parents were much more united in overlooking the pedagogical arguments put forward by the government and some language professionals over the discourse of social capital in support of English.

There is one mention which stands out from others in that it introduces a perspective not often seen in the discussion – a child's own preferences as the guide for choices over subjects to be studied, including language:

> What energises your child? To insist your child study Putonghua, economics or information communications technology (ICT) because they are popular now, when he does not have any interest or aptitude is probably setting him up for failure.[161]

Yet of course what is referred to by Putonghua here is just an optional course, which is different from the MOI. When it comes to the question of MOI, which is the one mostly discussed, a discourse of "optionality" in education is rare (perhaps excluding expatriates). One might ask why this is the case; why the absence of conciliatory views suggesting increasing the choices in schooling as a compromise between the "cultural values" arguments speaking for the preservation of Cantonese and the "instrumental value of Putonghua" and "belonging to China" arguments speaking for the increase of Putonghua? Could it not be simply that the presence of Putonghua brings a wider range of choices in HK society (Putonghua as an addition) which individuals can choose from according to their needs (alternatives/addition)? Could this seemingly obvious course of action satisfy, at least temporarily, both the opponents and the proponents of Putonghua? Yet it seems that in reality such suggestions are few.

The setting bears similarities with that studied by E. Chan (2002) in the aftermath of the 1997 mother tongue MOI policy. Based on her findings, we can assume that one reason

161 Hazari, A.A. (2012, September 23). Learning Curve: Choosing school subjects. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/family-education/article/1042300/learning-curve-choosing-school-subjects

for the “either or” mode of thinking is that, in the highly competitive education system of Hong Kong, the choice of public schools is not free. As recounted in section 2.2.1., fears of a form of “class division” made attitudes towards the mother tongue MOI policy negative, resulting from the situation where the most desired schools (in this case those schools which were allowed to keep English as their MOI) became seen as elite schools, while those students who did not manage to get in these schools were at risk of losing the opportunities for the desired future education and career path.

But a compromise is suggested in a different form by a linguistics professor:

> 'The core foundation training in Chinese should be taught in Cantonese. That doesn't conflict with developing a high proficiency in Mandarin,' he said.[162]

Most of the discourses which take stance in the Cantonese/Putonghua MOI debate consist of those presented earlier (notably the threat to Cantonese vs. instrumental value discourses) but there is one more discourse which did not seem to be very prominent in the data but which is interesting due to the comparison that can be made with what E. Chan (2002) found earlier about the discourses concerning Cantonese and English in the MOI issue. This is a discourse of pedagogical values, which, somewhat surprisingly, was found to be in favour of Putonghua:

> Our teaching medium is Cantonese, which is not the national language and most of the reading material used in our primary and secondary schools is written in traditional characters, unlike the simplified version in the mainland. *As a result, the proficiency of our students in the written Chinese used in the rest of China is far inferior to their mainland peers*.[163]

Another article describes a school that has made the change of MOI:

> The change of language [from Cantonese to Putonghua] has had positive results for students, according to Cheung and Ng. 'Students' spoken Mandarin improved markedly, and so did ours,' Cheung says. Ng adds: 'Writing skills improved, too. In the past, I'd find colloquial Cantonese terms in essays, but now students are able to write well in Chinese.'

In both examples above, the pedagogical value of Putonghua derives from the

162 Parry, S. (2012, May 27). Schools may be killing dialect. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002132/schools-may-be-killing-dialect

163 Wong, B. (12 August 2012). Make Putonghua the medium of instruction in our schools. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/600501/make-putonghua-medium-instruction-our-schools

advantage it gives students over mastering the written standard Chinese. The following example, from the same article where the first example was taken from, finds another advantage of Putonghua in its use of pinyin, which is claimed to be advantageous in the learning of "phonetic languages" including English:

> Furthermore, mainland students have an advantage in learning English. They learn Pinyin (phonetic Putonghua) from when they are in kindergarten. They are thus used to phonetic languages from when they are toddlers. On the other hand, our children never have a chance to link the language they speak daily to a phonetic system, and they learn English, a phonetic language, in completely the same way as they learn Chinese characters, by memory. Few of them master English fast and well. […] The early use of pinyin in learning Mandarin gives an advantage to mainland children: they can learn phonetic languages faster.[164]

Apart from those discourses which attempt to argue for the use of either Putonghua or Cantonese in education, Putonghua also appears in contexts which can best be described as "practicalities of language learning/teaching". They are not of interest in terms of their argumentation, but rather for the clear assumption that is behind all the discussion about the standards of teachers' qualifications, or tips for children's language learning: that Putonghua is, indeed, a language worth learning. The same themes have been discussed in relation to English for longer already, and the volume of this discussion concerning Putonghua is undoubtedly still small compared to English, but there are nevertheless several articles in the data set where such discussion can be found. Dermot Cooper, for example, in his opinion letter joins the discussion over teachers' qualities and argues against a view according to which non-native Putonghua speakers can be as good teachers as native speakers:

> Ms Cheong gives the example of Kevin Rudd [as a person educated by non-native speakers], and writes that he 'speaks better Putonghua than half of my peers'. Mr Rudd began studying Putonghua in Australia, but he moved to Taiwan to finish his studies at the National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei. His teachers were native-educated Putonghua speakers, and it is for this reason that his Putonghua is perfect.[165]

The question of teachers and their qualifications is indeed one that has received some attention during the year, sometimes combined with laments about the current quality of the teachers: it is mentioned in passing in several articles, and the increasing need for

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164 Wong, B. (12 August 2012). Make Putonghua the medium of instruction in our schools. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/600501/make-putonghua-medium-instruction-our-schools

165 Cooper, D. (2012, August 9). Letters: No substitute for native speakers. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1014382/letters

Putonghua-teachers is also treated as the topic of one article, “Big demand for Putonghua tutors”, in which the representatives of the two schools interviewed are eager to take up the qualifications required from their respective teachers:

> When hiring teachers, Wu says he looks for candidates who are native or near-native Putonghua speakers. They should also hold a relevant master's degree in disciplines related to language education, and be familiar with current trends and practices in teaching Chinese as a second language.[166]

And:

> All of our material is written by the centre's staff on the basis of their long experience,' she says, adding that the HKLLC primarily employs native speakers who have passed China's exam for teaching Putonghua.

Furthermore, the following two examples are from two different articles:

> This problem is exacerbated by the lack of quality Putonghua teachers.[167]

> The government should try to promote a more positive image that embraces Putonghua and English in order to give locals more incentive to learn these languages, as well as to *find more good-quality Putonghua and English teachers*. The overall problem with language skills in Hong Kong applies to English, Putonghua and Cantonese, as these are the main spoken languages in the city.[168]

One further important education-related theme is how children could most efficiently learn the language. This includes tips about gadgets and iPhone applications which can boost language learning, tips about how parents can boost the learning of their children, and other such themes. The example below addresses the role parents have in exposing the children to the language outside school, although the main emphasis is on English:

> For now, the burden is perhaps on parents to expose their children to more English - on top of Putonghua. But they'd better make sure their children are building the right foundation to use the language, rather than merely getting prepared for examinations.[169]

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166 Davis, C. (2012, March 3). Big demand for Putonghua tutors. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/994271/big-demand-putonghua-tutors

167 Au, A. (2013, January 3). Letters to the Editor: Putonghua has limited appeal in Hong Kong. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1118585/letters-editor-january-3-2013

168 Nunn, A. (2013, January 18). Hong Kong citizens need to be trilingual. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/1130505/hong- kong-citizens-need-be-trilingual

169 Yeung, L. (2013, February 3). Hong Kong trails rival Singapore in students' English skills. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1142100/hong-kong-trails-rival-singapore-students-english-skills

The above example is from an article titled “Hong Kong trails rival Singapore in students' English skills”. In fact, the experience of Singapore as Hong Kong's “rival” (as another developed economy and hub of commerce where English is widely spoken) is often drawn upon and Hong Kong is contrasted with it, especially in the “falling standards” discourse lamenting the decline of English, but now sometimes also in relation with Putonghua. Although these comparisons are mostly drawn in the instrumental discourse, a contrasting view has claimed that the downside of the promotion of the instrumental languages in Singapore has been a dilution of the local culture (argument supporting the “threat to Cantonese” discourse in Hong Kong). Such instances did not appear in editorial material in the data set, but they were seen in a number of comments left by readers in this particular article (an option which, as a sidenote, is available in all articles published in the SCMP website for subscribers, although the comment section for each article is apparently open only for a few days after the publication of the article. In most articles found in the data there were no comments posted.)

The following extracts from two different articles introduce learning material to parents who are not Putonghua-speakers themselves but who wish to provide more resources for their children to learn it:

> For parents who want to introduce Putonghua stories to their children but are themselves are [sic] non-speakers, I recommend the picture books of Lai Ma. Not only do his books come with English translations as well as a CD of readings in English and Putonghua, but he is also my favourite writer and illustrator of children's books in Chinese.[170]

> Elizabeth Tan from the United States, who has three sons, aged one, three and six, says there are not enough fun and interactive apps for learning Putonghua on the market. […] One such app is Learn Chinese (Mandarin) by Mindsnacks. The objective is to keep users engaged in acquiring useful knowledge while they play. […] So instead of playing Angry Birds, you can practise Mandarin instead.' […] Another game, Galactic, helps learners practise the tones of Putonghua. The target words or phrases are read aloud, and the learner has to identify as many tones as possible before the timer runs out. This adds auditory feedback, which many developers have yet to include in their apps but is necessary in learning a tonal language.[171]

Another long article describes a music video combining English and Putonghua, the aim

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170 Ho, A. (2012, June 3). They're the brainy bunch. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1002836/theyre-brainy-bunch

171 Tan, L.A. (2012, March 25). Putonghua is child's play. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996508/putonghua-childs-play

of which is to teach the languages to children in a funny way:

> 'Parents are now so pressured to get their kids to learn Chinese that they buy flashcards and educational games. But through something more fun like a music video we hope that they can get that enjoyment as well as take in what they need to learn [such as] the vocabularies and concepts.[172]

The following extract is from a news story telling about the development of a new Putonghua exam by a Hong Kong institution:

> The English Schools Foundation (ESF) is developing a new international exam for Putonghua learners that could appeal to students worldwide.[173]

As the title of the article, "Chinese talk appeals", reveals, the increasing language-learning is framed very positively.

5.5. Putonghua and (Simplified) characters

The last section presenting a new aspect of representations of Putonghua takes up an interesting aspect which is not as such linked to the discourses discussed above, nor can really be described as a discourse in itself. The analogies linking Putonghua with the question of characters are potentially interesting due to the controversial nature of Chinese characters themselves in Hong Kong.

While Putonghua enjoys a form of official recognition on the level of language policies (biliterate trilingual), simplified characters are not a recognised part of everyday life in Hong Kong to the same extent. It seems somewhat intuitive that the two would have similarities in the minds of Hongkongers, both being essentially a feature coming from the PRC and gaining global recognition as the forms being taught to students of Chinese around the world. As we have seen, the representations of Putonghua are manifold and different conclusions are drawn for its role in Hong Kong based on instrumental vs. identity-based grounds. With the character issue, this duality seems to be much less present, despite the partly overlapping representations with Putonghua.

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172 Yung, V. (2012, March 25). A pair of characters. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996504/pair-characters

173 Yeung, L. (2012, May 14). Chinese talk appeals. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1000991/chinese-talk-appeals

Putonghua and simplified characters are often linked together in contexts where they primarily serve as symbols of the mainland, as in the following examples from three different articles:

> Sometimes when I visit I can barely recognise [Hong Kong]. It is full of rude people speaking Putonghua. Most of the posters I see at the border checkpoints are in simplified Chinese.[174]

> Cultural invasion is another drawback. Putonghua and simplified Chinese characters are everywhere and I don't like them.[175]

> Our teaching medium is Cantonese, which is not the national language and most of the reading material used in our primary and secondary schools is written in traditional characters, unlike the simplified version in the mainland.[176]

Despite this analogy, it only pertains to a limited range of contexts. By far most often it comes up in examples such as the two first ones – in connection with the "mainlandisation" discourse. In this context, even more so than Putonghua, issues surrounding Chinese characters have been topical in Hong Kong in 2012. The outcry of the cafés' and shops' use of simplified characters has been mentioned earlier in the paper. It is interesting that the discourses are very similar (the issues of mainlandisation and mainlanders in Hong Kong are taken up in both) but the character issues seem to have an especially emotionally-laden nature, where the other side's views are rejected completely.

Apart from these contexts, the overall discussion of the traditional vs. simplified characters is different from that of Cantonese vs. Putonghua in that the former seems to lack any strong discourse supporting the simplified characters comparable to the strong instrumental discourse supporting Putonghua. They seem to be more confined to the view in which they are seen as "bowing to the mainland".

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174 Law, A. (2012, March 26). Letters: Once-vibrant HK now has no soul. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/996651/letters

175 Hau, H.T. (2012, October 8). (Reply to) SCMP Debate: can HK accommodate any more mainland visitors. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1056016/scmp-debate-can-hk-accommodate-any-more-mainland-visitors

176 Wong, B. & F. Ling. (12 August 2012). Make Putonghua the medium of instruction in our schools. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/600501/make-putonghua-medium-instruction-our-schools

Still, the strong connection can sometimes even result in the two being partly mixed up in expressions which seem to imply a direct equivalence between Putonghua and characters. Three examples of this, all from different articles, are:

> Shopbop.com carries more than 400 brands on its website and last year launched a *Putonghua site* to attract mainland shoppers.[177];
>
> "Xiqu" represents the *Putonghua characters* for Chinese opera[178];
>
> Sunny Xu admits that her ability to memorise *Putonghua characters* is fading[179]

Although all make the same curious mix-up, in all of these three contexts the actual relationship between Putonghua and the characters is different. The first one clearly indicates that the website is to use the simplified characters, but it might also include an additional reference to the strict use of standard grammar, which raises the question of whether the original site is merely written in traditional characters (in which case it would suffice to say the new site will use simplified ones) or whether the original site is also "Cantonese" in that it features "written Cantonese", i.e. the use of characters not found in standard written Chinese and the grammar of spoken Cantonese, which differs from that of Putonghua and Standard Written Chinese. The term "Putonghua characters" can, indeed, sometimes be found in a context where it is used to refer to the challenges of writing other dialects of Chinese, which may have words for which there are no equivalent characters in the standard writing system of modern Chinese, which is based on Putonghua. Therefore, one can find mentions such as "There are some spoken Cantonese words that have no corresponding Putonghua characters" (in the entry for "Chinese" in *Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World,* 2010: 218).

The second example, which refers to the pinyin and therefore to the Putonghua reading rather than the characters themselves, could be seen as a contraction of the phrase *Putonghua reading of the characters meaning Chinese opera*.

The third instance is also an interesting one, both in terms of what is being referred to

177 Chen, V. (2012, April 20). Online retailer has more than 100,000 reasons to love actress Jennifer Tse, a loyal customer. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/998717/online-retailer-has-more-100000-reasons-love-actress-jennifer-tse-loyal-customer

178 Lai, Y.K. (2013, January 23). Chinese opera theatre name sparks fears of 'mainlandisation'. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1134564/name-new-chinese-opera-theatre-sparks-fears-mainlandisation

179 Yeung, L. (2012, June 11). Chinese skills of children on the slide. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1003606/chinese-skills-children-slide

and in who exactly it is that uttered this mixing of Putonghua and the characters. Here the "Putonghua characters" does not appear to refer only to simplified characters, but to Chinese characters in general. The whole article is talking about the decline in Hong Kong students' Chinese character writing skills and no distinction is made between simplified and traditional characters. The sentence containing the mention of "Putonghua characters" is attributed to a female student (i.e. it is her *voice* that speaks it), but it is represented in indirect reporting, which leaves it open whether the term "Putonghua characters" belongs to what the girl said, i.e. whether the reporter merely recounts her words, or whether it is the voice of the reporter herself that came up with this term.

All in all, whoever the discourses belong to, it is interesting to note the strong connection that the spoken language has with characters at least in the minds of some, whether as a conscious combination (specifically with simplified characters) standing as concrete examples of the presence of mainland influence in Hong Kong, or on a more subconscious level, as the somewhat careless use of Putonghua as a definer for the word "characters" despite their actual belonging to two different mediums, spoken and written respectively, hints at.

5.6. Voices

As a short summarising caption of what voices can be found represented in the discourses discussed above, one can say that the voices heard in the articles either directly (as the writers of the articles) or through quoted or indirect speech attributed to them within articles are varied: they include laypeople, both Hongkongers and expatriates, including e.g. university students or mothers of school-aged children; journalists, company representatives, school directors and teachers, Education Bureau, as well as some individuals who have been prominent in the media during the year such as the mainland professor Kong and the Hong Kong man who was one of the initiators of the MTR incident. Of course, the extent to which each of these groups is present varies, as does the nature of the contributions that they make to the discussion. ("discussion" here being used in an extended sense to mean all references to Putonghua, which together contribute to building its representation in the newspaper). One

interesting feature is the small extent to which governmental voices are present. Prominent part of the representations of Putonghua come from voices which are clearly not specialists in language matters but rather write due to the personal interest they have in the topic. Only a few articles present voices of academics and other experts, although in the educational discourses education professionals are often given a fair amount of space.

5.7. Configurations of discourses within articles: case study of three articles

Up until here, the discourses found in the data have been treated separately, as if they appeared in isolation (although mentions of some recurring connections have been made here and there). In fact, however, usually one article draws upon several different discourses. In the current research it is not usually the case that many of them would be directly relevant, as we are concentrating on the representations of one word only, while most other discourses in the articles centre on something quite different. However, this is mostly the case when the representation of Putonghua appears in a marginal mention, whereas in those articles where Putonghua is a central topic, the configuration of different discourses is in fact interesting and relevant. Due to the large number of articles, looking at each article and the discourses they evoke in turn would take too much space, which is why a small sample of three articles will be looked at instead to provide an idea of the configurations that can be found. The articles are a subjective sample, chosen because they were felt to display some recurring and interesting connections between different discourses.

It is natural that some discourses go together more easily than others. Those pointing to the same policy objectives (i.e. increase the presence of Putonghua vs. decrease the presence of Putonghua in the society or in the chosen domain of the society) are often drawn upon in the same text, whether or not any backing is provided for the discourses.

The first article is an opinion letter by Felix Wu, which has been referred to many times during the preceding sections due to the variety of discourses it displays:

> Putonghua is a vital language for us
>
> Putonghua, also known as Mandarin, is the mainland's official language. In Hong Kong, it is the third language all students have to learn as a core subject.

> More than a billion people speak the language, mostly on the mainland and in Taiwan as well. That means knowing Putonghua can help you to communicate with many people.
>
> As Hong Kong is part of China, we should all speak Putonghua. It's a vital language for us.
>
> Speaking the language can also boost our job prospects.
>
> The mainland's economy is booming and is one of the strongest in the world.
>
> Considering China's international standing, speaking Putonghua may well be as important as speaking English. Besides, we should treasure Putonghua because it's part of our cultural heritage.
>
> Felix Wu[180]

In this short opinion letter, which was published in the "Letters" section together with four other letters on July 26, 2012, Felix Wu strongly argues for the increasing presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong. He addresses the letter primarily to other Hong Kong citizens using the inclusive "we" pronoun throughout the letter. The letter is a good example of an opinion letter whose action has a strategic rather than communicative orientation (i.e. the text is indented at producing effects rather than communicating information; see section 4.1.). The effect it wishes to produce is that Hongkongers would think better of Putonghua (although no concrete action as such is being proposed in which this change in thinking would play a part). The action is strategic very explicitly, with no attempt at masking it as communicative: the article consists primarily or assertive clauses, some of which are connected with each other with conjunctions and other connecting words, but the most important factor producing a coherent reading of the text is that each of the sentences serves as separate arguments supporting the claim that attitudes towards Putonghua ought to be more positive. The generic structure of the argument is: Grounds: current attitudes towards Putonghua in Hong Kong are (too) negative; warrants: Putonghua is important in many respects; backing: several different discourses supporting the warrants (detailed below); claim: attitudes of Hongkongers towards Putonghua ought to be more positive.

At the beginning, Putonghua's role is compared in Hong Kong and the mainland, even though it seems that the status in Hong Kong is not actually taken up to show how different it is but to act as one more case for its importance. The author does not express discontent with the official policies or demand governmental action in order to change this difference in the official status of the language. Instead, he addresses his letter to

180 Wu, F. (2012, July 26). Letters: Putonghua is a vital language for us. *SCMP*. Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/1007780/letters

other citizens, and uses an inclusive “we” as method of persuasion, which is a common feature in opinion letters, as is the brief format and the use of short declarative sentences. Discourses drawn upon as backing to the warrants which state that Putonghua is important (which in itself justifies the claim that it should be thought of more positively) are many: communicative value (“can help you to communicate with many people”), Hong Kong part of China (“As Hong Kong is part of China, we should all speak Putonghua”); instrumental value in increasing job prospects (“can also boost our job prospects”); and comparison with English is also made to support this discourse (“Considering China's international standing, speaking Putonghua may well be as important as speaking English”). Finally, the author adds in the discourse of cultural heritage, in the form where the implied referent of “culture” is the Chinese culture comprising both the mainland and Hong Kong.

It is noteworthy that each of these discourses is presented in one to four simple clauses, with a minimal amount of explanations or supporting arguments added around the discourses. This must be due to the fact that the details of each of these discourses are familiar to the readers. The letter was published in the middle of the year, in July, by which time each of the said discourses had appeared in 2012 several times. In addition, none of the discourses emerged for the first time in 2012 – as the historical background section has shown, almost all of the discourses have their origins or counterparts in the history, stretching back years or even decades – so the same arguments have definitely been heard earlier. Thus it is possible to take up all the discourses supporting the same outcome in quick declarative statements, since it will be clear that the readers will be able to infer the main points related to those discourses from their earlier knowledge. The effectiveness of such an approach, which does not bring anything new into the discussion but rather expresses one individual's stance in believing that these discourses are valid, can of course be questioned. In any case, the practice of quickly mentioning the other discourses compatible with the main argument (either in short sentences of assertive nature or assumptions) is very usual. It is such “casual” mentions of the discourses over and over again in different texts that intensifies the feeling that they are well established and the relevant points are known by all, so that they can be inferred from the knowledge of what you have read or heard earlier to produce a coherent understanding of the text, even if you do not agree.

All in all, this opinion letter is a somewhat extreme example of a tendency that can be found in many articles: the calling up of several more or less loosely related discourses which support the same conclusion (usually, either of the type “Putonghua is good and should be pursued” or “Putonghua is not good and should not be pursued”) while connections may or may not be made between these different discourses through wordings. Reference is made to education, although the specific nature of the action that is asked of the readers is not clear here (since all students are already learning it at school, it doesn't seem that what is being proposed is more education as such), but seems to be about attitudes.

The second example is a longer article by SCMP staff writer Alex Lo. Like the first example, this is an argumentative writing which draws on a number of different discourses to support its claim, which is to influence the minds of the readers through strategic action. The difference is that the conclusion is the opposite, that the promotion of Putonghua is not good, and therefore the article draws on those discourses which can be seen as oppositional to the ones seen in the above example.

A culture shrivels without its own tongue

The thundering herd from the mainland has sparked much sound and fury. Hongkongers have gone to great lengths to express their displeasure at the mainland invasion. Yet, strangely, everyone here seems to acquiesce on the need to learn Putonghua.

For the first time in Hong Kong, according to census figures, the number of residents who speak Putonghua has exceeded those who speak English. Forty-eight per cent of Hongkongers can now speak Putonghua, compared to 46 per cent who can speak English. A decade ago, only a third of Hongkongers could speak Putonghua.

Of course, Cantonese remains dominant, with 96 per cent of residents able to speak it. But we must not take it for granted, as the mainland has been promoting Putonghua often at the expense of local dialects, while the Hong Kong government, taking the cue, has been promoting Putonghua.

Beijing has no qualms about encouraging Putonghua at the expense of such local dialects as Cantonese and Shanghainese. And this has alarmed speakers of those dialects as well as linguists and human rights activists. Guangdong authorities have been trying to replace Cantonese programmes with Putonghua on state-run TV. In 2010, a huge public outcry forced a temporary official retreat.

In Hong Kong, Putonghua has been a subject in primary schools and public exams since at least 2000. More and more prominent international schools have opted to teach in Putonghua instead of Cantonese, and in simplified rather than traditional characters. The economic incentive to learn Putonghua - to find mainland jobs, to cater to big-spending mainlanders in Hong Kong and, if you work in government, to climb the career ladder - is too great to resist. But Cantonese is about who we are and how we want to live.

> Hong Kong may soon become the last bastion for Cantonese speakers, a cultural heritage well worth protecting.[181]

Lo's article draws upon a wide range of those discourses countering the spread of Putonghua in Hong Kong. It mentions the influx of mainlanders (with strikingly negative vocabulary choice: “thundering herd” and “mainland invasion”). It contrasts Putonghua with English through taking up the Census figures. This paves way for an interpretation of Putonghua as an alternative to the languages of a Hongkonger rather than as an addition, a view which is also confirmed in the following paragraph where it is asserted that the Beijing government is encouraging its use at the expense of local dialects, and the same is argued to be the case in Hong Kong, but not directly through the central government but rather through cooperation by the Hong Kong government. Putonghua is parallelled with the simplified characters – which in itself could be seen as something highlighting the negative side of Putonghua, given the overwhelmingly negative connotations that the simplified characters seem to evoke in Hong Kong. The instrumental discourse supporting Putonghua is taken up only to be refuted through a formulation which sets it against Hongkongers' ability to “be who they are”. Lastly, Cantonese is asserted to be cultural heritage and as such worth protecting.

Lo's article is different from Wu's letter in that it elaborates much more on the discourses it draws from. This is, of course, due to the nature of the article: as a staff writer writing on a topic of interest to the readers, Lo was allocated a certain amount of space, while opinion letters in the section in which Wu's letter was published tend not to exceed much the length that Wu's letter was. It is also more intertextual: voices of several different actors (government, schools etc.) are taken up and attributed, although sometimes vaguely, as in the case of “everyone's” willingness to learn Putonghua, a claim which in itself is contested.

Like Wu's letter, Lo's article does not call for specific action from the readers, but attempts to influence their minds. It uses affective vocabulary choices, such as the inclusive “we” (“who we are and how we want to live”) and metaphors such as “the last bastion” for Cantonese speakers.

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181 Lo, A. (2012, February 27). A culture shrivels without its own tongue. *SCMP.* Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/993807/culture-shrivels-without-its-own-tongue

The third example is a long article written by a guest writer, an American-educated person born in the mainland, who identifies herself as a native Putonghua-speaker:

Cachet of Cash

I am a native Putonghua speaker and, all my life, I remember trying to hide it. Only recently have I truly begun coming out of the language closet.

Growing up in California, I remember wishing I spoke Putonghua with a Taiwanese twist. Though the words were the same, my thick Beijing slur sounded harsh compared to the soft and poetic tone of my Taiwanese classmates. That was in the 1990s, when most Americans still thought China was in Japan. My Taiwanese friends wore better clothes, had nicer homes and ruled the school. To fit in, I started copying their accent. I became so proficient that, when I returned to my native Beijing in 1996, everyone thought I was a foreigner.

On moving to Hong Kong seven years ago, I was told two things. The first was that Hongkongers look down on mainlanders, so, if you want to be respected, speak English. The second was that if you want the best treatment from shopkeepers, speak Putonghua. What I could make from the advice was that all mainlanders are disliked, some less than others.

I decided to steer clear of being mistaken for one of the mainlanders that Hongkongers tolerated yet quietly complained about. So, once again, I locked my Putonghua away and relied on my English.

Unlike Chinese, English is not a complicated language. The only things Hong Kong people can determine from my English are: American born or American educated. Conversely, if I speak Putonghua, a long list of questions pops up. She must be from the mainland; who did she marry to get here? Were her children born here; did they take up valuable hospital beds? Does she have property here; is she rich? She's not carrying a brand-name bag; is she a tourist from a village?

For years, I avoided those questions by speaking only English. But now, as my children get older and I encourage them to speak Putonghua, I find myself using my mother tongue more. This month, I experimented with speaking Putonghua exclusively outside work. I braced for the glares. To my great surprise, I received much better treatment, especially in stores. At the big brands, the minute I spoke Putonghua, the salespeople would come running over. The difference was so great that I went back into the same chain weeks later speaking English, only to be shown the cheapest line and the sale section.

And yet, speaking Putonghua in those stores felt wrong. It was as though I was leading people on to believe I was the money-is-no-object, nouveau-riche mainlander they thought I was. And who was I kidding? I wasn't. I really did just want to look at the sale section.

The truth is that I am proud Putonghua has come such a long way since I was a child. Yet, I wish the prestige of the language had to do with something other than shopping. It won't take stores like Dolce & Gabbana apologising to change this, though. Or making all seven million Hongkongers identify more with China than with Hong Kong. It will take more mainlanders working hard every day to contribute positively to society, all the while proudly, boldly and skilfully speaking their beautiful language.

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This article is similar to the other two in that it is argumentative, but it differs from the others in that it has a strong explicitly personal orientation: it aims to describe the experiences of the writer herself, and specifically to bring the perspective of a Putonghua-speaker into the discussion. Yang makes observations about how Putonghua acts a marker of difference: firstly, what she had heard to be the case from others, and secondly, her own experiences. Like in the other two articles, a comparison is made between English and Putonghua, but the perspective is different: here the author examines the difference that it makes whether a person with a Chinese face is an English or Putonghua-speaker. As this part of the text is framed within what were the author's earlier suppositions, it is not sure to which extent she still believes the distinction to be true, but the assumption she makes about Hongkongers' feelings is that the connotations that speaking Putonghua bring to Hongkongers' minds are, in addition to being mostly negative, complicated as they raise questions belonging to all the negative discourses about mainlanders (notably the one where mainlanders are seen to be using up resources belonging to Hongkongers). After her own experimentation of speaking the language, however, her impression is that Putonghua is now primarily taken to be a sign of money and therefore it ensures better treatment in shops, which she takes as something to be proud of as it shows a betterment compared to the earlier despise. Yet she still feels that this is not the right grounds for the newly-found prestige of the language. She ends her article by leaving the responsibility for the mainlanders themselves to convince Hongkongers about their worthiness and thereby the worthiness of their language. The main message of the article is to say that mainlanders ought to be proud of “their language” - by contrast, nothing is mentioned about Cantonese or whether mainlanders ought to also learn to speak it while in Hong Kong. This is perhaps answered by how she describes her own use of languages, as someone who has lived in Hong Kong for seven years, but presenting her choice as one between Putonghua and English.

182 Yang, K. (2012, February 8). Cachet of cash. *SCMP.*
Retrieved from http://www.scmp.com/article/992024/cachet-cash

6. Conclusions

This final section shortly summarises what has been presented in this paper and further discusses the findings and their links with earlier research. Lastly, the limitations of the paper are evaluated, and some suggestions are made for possible courses of further research on the topic.

6.1. Summary of the paper and discussion on the findings

This thesis has presented different representations of Putonghua in Hong Kong's leading English-language newspaper South China Morning Post, looking at these representations in the context of the different discourses in which they appear. The representations were taken from articles which were published in the paper between January 2012 and February 2013. Different aspects of the representations and discourses in which they are embedded have been taken up, and at the same time some considerations have been made about media discourse from the point of view of the representations' relationship with self-censorship and discriminatory practices, with identity and instrumental considerations, and other such themes that have surfaced in earlier research in the domain.

The paper began with an extensive presentation of historical developments in Hong Kong's complex language scene. Scholarly research about interesting developments was taken up both from the pre-Handover and post-Handover periods, and as the focus was on the developments with relevance for the current role of Putonghua, some crucial themes were also discussed at some length which are not strictly related to languages, notably Hong Kong's relations with the mainland. The aim was to detect developments and attitudes with potential relevance or parallels to the context of Putonghua today.

After the historical background, attention was turned to considerations of media and its power in producing and perpetuating representations and discourses in the society. Characteristics of Hong Kong media were looked at briefly, with focus on the role of the English-language newspaper media and of South China Morning Post within the field of the media in Hong Kong. Some core concepts and aims of discourse analysis, and of textual analysis as its concrete point of departure, were then described as the

methodology behind the analysis. This was followed by a description of the process through which the newspaper articles that were used as the empirical data were gathered and processed, including details of what was included and why. Some remarks were then made about the data to provide, mainly for reference, a general idea of the temporal distribution of the articles and of the range of topics they dealt with.

Finally, the analysis section presented the representations of Putonghua found in the data one by one, locating the discourses in which the representations appeared and pointing out textual-level observations about vocabulary, grammar and semantical choices which served as evidence of both the explicit argumentation made about the language, and of non-asserted assumptions and hidden meanings in the text, which contribute to creating and perpetuating certain discourses in certain contexts and connections.

The variety of themes found was wide, and it seems that none of the issues that came up in a survey of earlier academic research on Hong Kong languages is a downright taboo in SCMP, but of course some discourses are much more prominent than others, while some views are only heard occasionally or represented in a cautious fashion. Some of the most distinctive representations and the discourses in which they appeared were found to be the following:

Discourse	**The most relevant representation of Putonghua**
Instrumental value for the individual	Putonghua as social capital
Othering of the mainlanders	Putonghua as marker of distinction
Belonging to China	Putonghua as a symbol of unity
Cultural distinctiveness of Hong Kong	Putonghua as a threat to Hong Kong's history and culture (which Cantonese stands for)

These differed from each other in their prominence and in the voices that enacted them: for example, “belonging to China” discourse was relatively rarely heard in Hongkongers' voices, although a less openly political “common Chinese culture” and Putonghua as its symbol seemed to be more palatable to Hongkongers as well. Expatriate voices generally showed little sensitiveness to the distinctions between the

societal roles of the languages, focusing more on the individual instrumental and/or communicative value discourses.

Fairclough (1995: 98) argues for the importance of looking at the configurations of discourses, i.e. how they are articulated together within discourse types, or in the coverage of specific issues. While “Putonghua” might not be a specific issue in the same vein as “disarmament, peace and security issues” that Fairclough quotes as an example, it is possible to say something about dominant and oppositional discourses affecting the representations of Putonghua in the newspaper discussion.

Sullivan *et al.*'s (2012: 28-29) study of social identification/instrumental considerations determining the choice for official language in Hong Kong among university students showed that there is a strong link between the choice of Cantonese and a social identification with Hong Kong, and similarly, choice of Putonghua and social identification with the mainland. These affiliations were clearly an important factor in the societal-level discourses found in the current study, as positive views about increasing the presence of Putonghua in Hong Kong were clearly linked with the “belonging to China” discourse, which was rarely presented in the voice of Hong Kong Chinese people, although the less explicitly political “cultural unity under the Chinese culture” seemed to enjoy wider acceptance. In contrast, negative views about Putonghua's advance in Hong Kong often represented it as a threat to Cantonese and thereby the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. What was different from Sullivan's findings, however, was the lack of consideration in her study of the strong instrumental discourse that in the current study was found to work in favour of Putonghua, as she mainly limited her discussion of instrumental values to English.

The instrumental value of Putonghua was a strong discourse which often appeared on its own detached from the societal identification discourse, but in addition to this it was often added as a further warrant for any other arguments promoting Putonghua. This is probably due to the relatively uncontested nature of the discourse in which it is embedded, namely the economic influence of China, which makes it a relatively uncontested discourse in itself as opposed to the more contested identity-related discourses. The increased importance of China is assumed either in the form “importance of China in the world” and/or “importance of the mainland for Hong

Kong". Thus, Putonghua can be seen as important *inside* Hong Kong due to the increased presence of mainland influence and money; but on the other hand it is important *for* Hong Kong outside its borders if Hong Kong is to retain its advantage as an international city of commerce.

It could be said that the representations of Putonghua are rather strongly divided into positive and negative ones. Apart from the ones listed above, which are the most prominent discourses, there are several more specific contexts in which Putonghua appears, which are more or less closely linked with the ones presented above. They have been discussed in the subsections under each primary discourse. Examples of these are: Putonghua having *communicative value* both for the individual and for the society as it enables communication and cultural understanding between Hong Kong(ers) and the mainland(ers), and with other Putonghua-speakers in Asia and around the world; or the emerged need for and supply of new interesting ways (gadgets, apps, songs etc.) to help the absorption of Putonghua of children whose parents do not speak the language. On the negative side, there is the unfavourable comparison with English which sees that Putonghua is not as important as English, and that the shift in the focus of language learning promotion to Putonghua is to blame for the falling standards of English in Hong Kong, making Hongkongers and the society at large worse off.

Linked with the division into positive vs. negative attitudes, and closely following the same division line, is a distinction between a fundamental assumption underlying the stance towards Putonghua, namely whether it is seen as an *addition* or as an *alternative* to the language choices of Hong Kong and Hongkongers. It is interesting to note that in almost all of those discourses representing Putonghua in a negative way, the language is (implicitly) seen as an *alternative* to the language choices of Hong Kong, either as a *threat* to Cantonese, the vitality of which the spread of Putonghua is endangering, or as the language towards which the language-learning efforts have *shifted* from the more important English. On the other hand, those discourses which are in favour of the spread of Putonghua tend to see it as an *addition* to the language proficiencies of Hong Kong and Hongkongers: a concrete example of this are the job qualification requirement listings which usually mention Putonghua alongside Cantonese and English. Such assumption is also most clearly behind the government's discourse and the policy of "biliterate, trilingual", although some wonder whether the actual concrete actions beside

the words tend more to the "*shift* from Cantonese to Putonghua". An exception to the "strong connection between positive attitudes and assumption of Putonghua as an addition and vice versa" rule is the branch of the "instrumental value of Putonghua" discourse which sees Cantonese as unimportant in instrumental terms, as a rural language of the past, and therefore promotes Putonghua as a replacement for it. (In the representation of Putonghua as a marker of difference of the mainlanders this division is perhaps less valid, as it does not address the language choices of Hongkongers but treats Putonghua as the language of the mainlanders only.)

This fundamental difference in the assumptions, which are usually non-asserted and therefore belong to the category of "hidden meanings" which are hard to detect and therefore tend not to be addressed directly in discussion, is probably one reason for a relatively weak dialogicality between positive and negative views of the increase of Putonghua in Hong Kong.

As for the discourse concerning mainlanders in Hong Kong and Putonghua as a marker of their difference from Hongkongers, an observation was made about a possible "sphere of consensus", as mainlanders in Hong Kong and Putonghua as a marker of them are consistently treated with little attempts at neutrality, being instead often presented clearly from the point of view of a Hongkonger's rights to claim the territory and its resources. Flowerdew (2002) noted the "Hong Kong's side" mode of reporting to be the preferred mode in Hongkongers' minds in cases of conflict between Hong Kong and the mainland. But even if we, based on these observations, assume the existence of such "sphere of consensus", it seems to be limited to this context. Quite apart from the Hong Kong-centred approach in this discourse is the seemingly toned-down nature of the critical views of Putonghua on the societal level, notably, how the somewhat political "belonging to China" discourse arguing for increased presence of Putonghua is mainly opposed by a much less openly political "cultural value" discourse arguing for the reverse. It can only be speculated whether this is due to a level of self-censorship or otherwise affiliations of the newspaper with the mainland, since other studies (which as such do not mention the role played by languages) have detected more overtly political discourses concerning Hong Kong's relations with the PRC among Hongkongers, notably a *de-nationalised* discourse (Mathews *et al.*, 2008) which would somewhat more symmetrically oppose the "belonging to China" discourse (which is in some ways

similar to the *re-nationalised* discourse found by Mathews *et al.*).

Given the extent of state control of the media in Mainland China, and the fears that have been voiced over Hong Kong press self-censorship, possible topics that might end up being downplayed include especially those critical of the central government. How sensitive Putonghua is perceived to be is an empirical question which cannot be answered through looking at the articles alone, but in addition to the comparison with what has been found about societal views in other studies, as mentioned above, possible influences have been considered through looking for some strategies that have been marked in earlier studies on Hong Kong media to have been used as ways to ensure a safer reporting of potentially sensitive matters. The absence (during the 14-month period) of editorials mentioning Putonghua, while at the same time an abundance of columns and articles was touching upon the matter from different points of view, yet relatively rarely criticising or hinting at criticising the central government or opposing Putonghua on explicitly political grounds, could be a sign of a cautiousness in the paper's editorial line. Yet it seems that there are no strict taboos, as views critical of the central government *were* found, and views lamenting the advance of Putonghua as a sign of Hong Kong's tighter assimilation into China were found to be strongly presented. However, as mentioned, the former were rare, appearing only in a couple of articles, and the latter was found mostly in a form which chose to talk about the matter on cultural rather than political grounds. Especially in the former the question is left open whether this is due to self-censorship of the paper or rather to the fact that there has not been anything urgent to trigger the discussion over governmental assertiveness over language in 2012. For the latter interpretation speaks the fact that the central government has been criticised in SCMP in many other contexts during the same period, and there is little in the background data that suggests that Putonghua should be a more sensitive topic than others.

In any case, whether for the fear of the central government or because it has not been topical, it seems that top-down assertiveness from the central government is not a staple of the discussion concerning Putonghua even though it has been marked in both popular discussion and scholarly research that the central government is a strong proponent of the increasing use of Putonghua in Hong Kong. The role of Hong Kong government is also fairly small in the discussion. When it is mentioned, it is usually called upon to do

something (“government should ...”) rather than directly blamed for its choices.

6.2. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

Some of the limitations of this study have been evaluated especially in the section on media, where it was noted that as an English-language newspaper, South China Morning Post might not be an accurate reflection of the discourses to be found in the society, especially as language matters can be expected to be language-sensitive in the sense that people preferring to communicate in a certain language are already positioned in a specific way towards the language, and possibly other adjacent languages as well – therefore, South China Morning Post is most likely to reflect views of those whose preferred mode of written communication include English, which constitute a minority of Hong Kong population. Correspondence between attitudes towards English and attitudes towards Putonghua have not been studied with precision, so it is not possible to make substantiated claims about how exactly the discussion might differ in Chinese-speaking media. Therefore, this study should be taken as a case study, while further research is needed to complete the picture of the representation of Putonghua in Hong Kong's media discussion through comparing the findings to representations in other newspapers and other English- and Chinese-language media. Comparisons could also be made between different years to see whether there have been any major changes in the representations over the years, or for example related to some special language-related events such as the 2009 revision of the mother tongue MOI policy.

Another limitation of this study has proven to be its broad nature. Due to its broad aim, to present all interesting discourses surrounding the newspaper representations of Putonghua during the 14-month period, the amount of data turned out to be so large that a truly in-depth analysis of any discourse became out of the scope of this paper due to space limits. A narrower focus on some of the discourses would have allowed for a more in-depth study, potentially turning out more substantial results, but as it is, this paper serves more as an exploratory study into what can be found, while an in-depth study of the most interesting representations and discourses found is left for future research to pursue. Furthermore, the explorative part of this study could be made use of as the basis for determining the relevant words and collocations to be looked for in

quantitative research using content analysis, which would bring statistical rigour and could better confirm the tentative findings made here about the strength of each discourse.

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